The following pages are more expansive notes for my book,

*Sex and the Office: A History of Gender, Power and Desire*
(Yale University Press)

*Julie K. Berebitsky*
INTRODUCTION

4. Early polls showed that 47% of Americans thought the charges probably were untrue and 21% thought they probably were true (Elizabeth Kolbert, “The Thomas Nomination; Sexual Harassment at Work Is Pervasive, Survey Suggests,” New York Times (October 11, 1991), A1). By the time the confirmation hearings were over, 28% of Americans believed Thomas, 11% believed Hill, and the majority of Americans believed neither had told the complete truth. For more on this issue, see Kathleen Frankovic and Joyce Gelb, “Public Opinion and the Thomas Nomination,” PS: Political Science and Politics 25 (September, 1992), 482-483.

6. Harassment, recent historical and legal studies make clear, varied from occupation to occupation, from one era to the next, in its form, purpose, and intensity and in terms of the degree to which it was accepted and how it was explained or justified. In turn-of-the-century garment sweatshops, Daniel Bender argues, men used vulgar jokes and unwanted touching to mark the workspace as male; a range of sexually hostile behaviors towards female interlopers solidified the gender hierarchy in which men occupied the skilled, higher-paying positions (“Too Much of Distasteful Masculinity: Historicizing Sexual Harassment in the Garment Sweatshop and Factory,” Journal of Women’s History 15 (2004), 91-116). Steve Meyer has shown that on the automotive shop floor the intensity
of harassing behaviors, workers’ interpretation of such behaviors, and management’s response changed dramatically in the period from 1930 to 1960. In the pre-war, pre-union years, some of the few women employees kept their jobs only by dating their foreman or entertaining salesmen. During the war, however, labor shortages and the large number of women workers prompted management to adopt a harder line towards men who taunted or pursued their female co-workers (an excessively rigid position, in the union’s view). Managers vigorously watched for any signs of flirtation because, they argued, sexual or romantic relationships hurt morale and productivity (“Workplace Predators: Sexuality and Harassment on the U.S. Automotive Shop Floor, 1930-1960,” Labor 1 (2004): 77-93).

There were also differences in various occupations in terms of the tools women had at their disposal to construct a response and, even in discrete workplaces, individual women’s perspective on how to address the problem could differ. In Missouri in the late nineteenth century, white domestic servants under the age of 18 could use a new legal statute to bring charges against employers who sexually “defiled” them. No such laws protected African American women, who tried to avoid working in white homes in the South where sexual “dishonor and degradation” too often awaited (Sara McLean, “Confided to His Care or Protection: The Late Nineteenth-Century Crime of Workplace Sexual Harassment,” Columbia Journal of Gender and Law 9 (Fall 1999), 47-50). For more on African-American women see Gerda Lerner, ed., Black Women in White America: A Documentary History (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 155-59, 165, and Tera W. Hunter, To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 34, 106. On the differences in the ways that employers treated black and white women in the South, see Dolores Janiewski, “Southern Honor, Southern Dishonor: Managerial Ideology and the Construction of Gender, Race, and Class Relations in Southern Industry,” in Ava Baron, ed., Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), Chapter 3.

Military nurses during World War I disagreed on how to solve the problem of their workplace’s “Coney Island Dance Hall” atmosphere, and, though the difference did not divide neatly along class lines, class-based views infused the debate. Most elite nursing leaders and many rank-and-file nurses argued that granting nurses military rank would afford them protection against unwanted sexual advances (and retribution) and the authority to demand a more professional environment. The military’s most powerful nurse, however, believed that nurses could stay safe if they adopted a passionless, genteel demeanor. Meanwhile, other rank-and-file nurses opposed rank. These women had no faith that it would curb officers’ come-ons, nor did they believe that acting lady-like would bring out these men’s gentlemanly side. They did worry, though, that rank would create a distance between them and the enlisted men with whom they wanted to socialize and shared a social background (Kimberly Jensen, “A Base Hospital Is Not a Coney Island Dance Hall,” Frontiers 26 (2005): 206-235. Also on nurses, see Patricia M. Hanrahan, “How do I know if I’m being harassed or if this is part of my job?” Nurses and definitions of sexual harassment,” NWSA Journal 9 (Summer, 1997), ).

8. For more on the relationship between sexuality and work, see Christine L. Williams, Patti Giuffre, Kirsten Dellinger, “Sexuality in the Workplace: Organizational Control,


11. The numbers for men and women who labor in the kinds of business or legal offices that this study examines are approximations. In determining these numbers, I have used data contained in a number of government labor and census reports, though this task has been complicated by the fact that census takers have made numerous changes to their occupational categories during the period covered by this study. For example, included in my numbers for 1910 are all clerical workers (which includes, for example, accountants, bookkeepers, clerks, credit agents, and stenographers and typists), lawyers and judges, bankers, insurance agents and managers. As job categories changed, I made a determination as to whether or not a job would have been performed in an office such as those I am studying. For consistency’s sake, I have only included male workers in the following categories: Management occupations, except farmers and farm managers; Business and financial operations occupations; Computer and mathematical occupations; Legal occupations; Office and administrative support occupations. Given that I have not included any Sales, Service or Media occupations, it is likely that many more men spend a good part of their day in an office than I have counted.


For more on the background of male office workers in the nineteenth century and on the transition to white-collar work, see Carole Srole, *Transcribing Class and Gender:*

Theorist Heidi Hartmann also provides an argument for linking these men, an argument that provides an interesting framework for thinking about “Sex and the Office”:
"Relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women. Though patriarchy is hierarchical and men of different classes, races, or ethnic groups have different places in the patriarchy, they are also united in their shared relation of dominance over their women; they are dependent on each other to maintain that domination. Hierarchies ‘work’ at least in part because they create vested interests in the status quo. Those at the higher levels can ‘buy off’ those at the lower levels by offering them power over those still lower. In the hierarchy of patriarchy, all men, whatever their rank in the patriarchy, are bought off by being able to control at least some women." (From "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union" (1979) reprinted in In Linda J. Nicholson, The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory (New York: Routledge, 1997), 100-101).

14. The type and frequency of women clerical workers’ interactions with men differed depending on the size of their office and their specific duties. In small and mid-size offices, limited space, fewer employees, and less job specialization guaranteed men and women’s constant interaction. In very large offices, contact could be much more circumscribed. Already in the 1890s, for example, Metropolitan Life Insurance had physically separated men and women by creating distinct spaces for gender segregated tasks; women toiled alongside other women all day in typing pools or file rooms, ate lunch in different rooms, and even entered the building through separate doors. These women rarely encountered men (though they might have had a male supervisor), which might have limited their chance at romance or the likelihood of experiencing unwanted or even coercion attentions. This segregation certainly inhibited class mixing: the lowly file girl would not regularly encounter the executive in the corner office. Yet it is possible to overstate this separation. Companies of all sizes sponsored outings for all of their employees, and men and women could also find ways to mingle during work. In addition, the means of getting to the office—walking the city’s streets, taking public transportation or riding the elevator up to your floor—allowed enough contact to provide opportunities for real and imaginary relationships; popular culture fed the desire for the former and provided narrative material for the latter in its abundant images of an eroticized office. Oliver Zunz, Making America Corporate: 1870-1920 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 116-121; Sharon Strom, Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930 (Urbana: The University of Illinois, 1992), 373-76; Angel Kwolek-Folland, Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870-1930 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 120-27; Jerry Bjelopera, City of Clerks (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2005), 54-56. For representations of office space in films, see Alexia Panayiotou and Krini Kafiris, “Firms in Film: Representations of Organizational Space, Gender and

16. In this way, the history of “sexual harassment” is quite similar to that of rape. As Sharon Block argues “rape in early America was both pervasive and invisible. On the one hand, early Americans spoke authoritatively about rape in public and private settings alike... For assaulted women and girls, however, rape was... a private trauma that often did not translate into a believable public wrong” (Rape and Sexual Power in Early America, 1).


25. As late as the 1970s, there was a widespread assumption that office work was middle-class work, despite the mechanized, routine nature of many office jobs (Ilen DeVault, Sons and Daughters of Labor (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), ix). Also see Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975) and Stuart M. Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Other work that emphasizes values in the formation of the middle class, see C. Dallatt Hemphill also emphasizes values in the formation of the middle class in “Middle Class Rising in Revolutionary America: The Evidence from Manners,” Journal of Social History 30 (Winter 1996), 17-44. In Transcribing Class and Gender: Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Courts and Offices, Carole Srole describes how middle-class office workers, especially women, watched their behaviors and crafted a professional identity in an effort to distinguish themselves from members of the working class who might labor in low-level clerical jobs (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010).

31. For two news articles in the black press that note black men’s concerns, see “McKinney says racism behind sexual harassment probe, Philadelphia Tribune (June 20, 1997), 5A, and “Tale of Racism, Bizarre Sex Charges,” Afro-American (September 27, 1980), 1.

Chapter 1: Dangers, Desires and Self-Determination: Competing Narratives of the Sexual Culture of the New, Gender-Integrated Office


Carole Srole expertly analyzes the way middle-class women developed a professional identity to counter their association with working-class women. A “businesswoman” would be safe in a situation that would compromise a “lady,” while the caring aspects of a stenographers’ job and a stenographers’ careful attention to her appearance would serve as a feminine balance to the manliness inherent in the use of the term “business.” Middle-class women and their advocates would further establish their class-standing by associating incompetence solely with working-class women who worked in the least skilled office jobs. In part, women needed to create this identity because the stenographers tried to use class-based sexual slurs against their female competitors (Carole Srole, Transcribing Class and Gender: Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Courts and Offices (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), 6, 8-11, 139, 177-84, 187-88, 130-31).

In 1920 in Chicago, a city with a large immigrant population, 60% of stenographer-typists had immigrant parents (Fine, 48-49). In Philadelphia, over one-third of the clerical workforce in 1920 had immigrant parents (Jerome P. Belofera, City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920 (Urbana: The University of Illinois, 2005), 21-22).

7. Other newspapers also covered this story, see for example, “The Fortier Divorce Suit,” The (Trenton, N.J.) Times (May 29, 1893), 6.

12 On changes in the marriages and gender roles of salaried white-collar men at the turn of the twentieth century, see Margaret Marsh, Suburban Lives (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

13. For other stories that portrayed the young typewriter as home wrecker, see “The Old, Old Story: Pretty Typewriter Raises Family Trouble,” Boston Daily Globe (November 16, 1893), 3; “Has Her Husband Arrested,” Chicago Daily Tribune (June 18, 1898), 4; “Thrashed her Hubby, Pounde His Pretty Typewriter,” Los Angeles Times (April 17, 1901), 13; “Defends Love Pirates,” Washington Post (December 1, 1908), 6.

16. The Phonographic World published numerous stories addressing the various situations female clerical workers would encounter, and it is important to note that most do not end up with the heroine happily married. Most, historian Lisa Fine argues, can be read as “distinctly feminine Horatio Alger tales,” in which women achieve an appropriately feminine level of success through hard work and their feminine characteristics, such as service to others. There is no sexual danger in these stories—for men or women—suggesting that true “womanliness” can neutralize sexuality. Other stories were straightforward office romances that acknowledged the romantic possibilities of a sexually integrated workplace and presented it as respectable site of courtship or a “Cinderella story” hybrid of the first two that showed marriage as the reward for successfully blending the demands of both woman and worker (Fine, 65-75).

“Another Lucky Typewriterist,” which tells of the marriage between a widowed typewriter and her boss, is one of the most ambiguous stories. Lucky’s boss was married when she began to work for him, but she married him when his wife died (which was the same scenario as in “Won a Worthy Husband”). The typewriter’s “luck,” however, does not refer to her marriage, but to the half a million dollars she inherited when her new husband died. Browne’s does not comment on the fact that this woman has lived through the death of two husbands, but rather on her inherited wealth (Phonographic World (October, 1895) 56). Office workers largely avoided the gold digger label in the late nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. However, as Carole Srole points out, the many reports of stenographers and typists marrying their wealthy bosses that appeared in stenography journals and newspapers came perilously close to the line, saved only by assertions that true love motivated these pairings (Transcribing Class and Gender (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 135-36, 147-51, 273, note 16).

In a similar vein, the woman who spent too much time on her physical appearance was often portrayed as just in the office to catch a husband. See “Difficulties of Securing Good Typewriter Operators and Stenographers,” Browne’s Phonographic Weekly 15 (November 17, 1890), 660; Edward Mumford, The Typewriter Lady: A Farce Comedy in One Act (Philadelphia: The Penn Publishing Company, 1914, 20-22). For women trying to use their appearance to secure a raise, see “How She Got a Raise,” Washington Post (January 14, 1906), E3.

17. In 1909, Mrs. Goslin was able to file an “alienation of affection” suit against her husband’s lover, however, initially only husbands could bring suit, since married women did not have any legal standing as individuals until states began to pass Married Women’s Property Acts beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. Even then, though, at least one state’s jurists wondered if it was wise to give women this right. Men led such public lives that they were bound to encounter a designing woman at some point, and wives just needed to accept this, especially since allowing them to sue the “seductress” would clog the courts (Robert C. Brown, “The Action for Alienation of Affections,” University of Pennsylvania Law Review and American Law Register 82 (March 1934), 476-77, 479).
For other examples of newspaper reports that showed men abandoning their families for their “pretty typewriters,” see “How Goslin was Won,” New York Times (January 9, 1909), 4; “Lawyer Sprague Missing,” Brooklyn Eagle (May 7, 1900), 1; “Touring With His Affinity,” Washington Post (June 10, 1909), 4; “Mott Indignant Over White’s Suit,” New York Times (August 6, 1908), 5. Another theme that appears is the stenographer who transgresses class boundaries by marrying her wealthy boss, much to the dismay of his family, see “Mrs. Janney Seeks Divorce” New York Times (September 19, 1905), 10; “Sues Husband’s Parents,” New York Times (October 14, 1911), 1. For an humorous portrayal of the danger and falseness of beauty, see “Her Curls Didn’t Work,” Washington Post (August 26, 1906), A8.

18. David Graham Phillips’s 1911 novel The Grain of Dust is a vivid example of this fear and how it casts female office workers as inherently dangerous. A wealthy, successful businessman develops an obsession with an extraordinarily ordinary stenographer which leads to his downfall (See Lisa Fine, The Souls of the Skyscraper (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 72-73).

The early twentieth century saw a number of narratives that scholar Janet Staiger refers to as the “fallen man” genre. These men have given into their (sexual) desires and have ruined their careers and destroyed their families in the process. Yet the focus is not on the immoral vamp, but rather on the failures of weak men: the vamp’s victim is blamed more than she because he has been a fool (Bad Women (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), Chapter 6). For more on these “melodramas of consumption” which explored the danger desires posed to male authority, see Woody Register, The Kid of Coney Island: Fred Thompson and the Rise of American Amusements (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), Chapter 5, esp.194, 228-39.

19. There are, of course, other ways of reading this story. This could certainly be read as a type of “compensatory fiction,” that helps women accept their limited place in society or their frustration with a specific situation by providing an alternate explanation. Here, a boss’s irrationality and anger is really an expression of love and care and misunderstanding and poor communication have caused the confusion. And as romance, the story also makes the office seem a desirable workplace, full of intrigue and romantic possibility. The latter is a characteristic of stories and books set in the office that scholars believe is one reason why women found office work so desirable.


22. In the late nineteenth century, women in some states were finally allowed to bring charges for the tort of seduction against a man on their own (as opposed to a father suing for his daughter’s lost worth or wages) and some used the law to seek redress for actions we would now define as quid pro quo sexual harassment. An orphan who worked in a
cheese factory in Iowa, for example, sued her employer with whom she had sex after he threatened to fire her. When she became pregnant, he told her to leave, and she later successfully brought a claim for lost wages. These cases were significant in that they acknowledged the “coercive force of words of economic threat”: a woman would not need to show that physical violence had compelled her consent (Lea VanderVelde, “The Legal Ways of Seduction,” Stanford Law Review 48 (April 1996), 894-97). For more on women workers, coercive sex, and changing understandings of consent, see Pamela Haag, Consent: Sexual Rights and the Transformation of American Liberalism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 19-20, 26-31, 42-45. To my knowledge, no office worker used the seduction statute.

25. An example of this double standard can be seen in one “progressive” woman’s argument against divorce in which even adultery was not an acceptable cause since men were “instinctually promiscuous” and women had to tolerate their lapses for the greater social good (William L. O’Neill, “Divorce in the Progressive Era,” in The American Family in Socio-Historical Perspective, edited by Michael Gordon (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1973), 252-3, 256). In a similar vein, an employment guide for women from 1906 reminded its readers, “The world exacts higher standards of women than men, hence you must be most careful in avoiding even the appearance of evil” (Caroline A. Huling, Letters of a Business Woman to her Niece (New York: R. F. Fenno and Co, 1906), 54).

On sexual speech couched in genteel euphemisms in the Victorian period, see Jesse F. Batten, “The Word Made Flesh: Language, Authority, and Sexual Desire in Late Nineteenth-Century America,” Journal of the History of Sexuality 3 (1992), 223-244. Angela Heywood, a Free Lover, believed that more natural and egalitarian relationships between the sexes would develop if society began to speak openly and plainly about men’s and women’s sexual organs and sexuality more generally. This belief developed in part as a result of Heywood’s contempt for respectable men’s sexual hypocrisy. Although in public they posed as refined, they subjected working girls to all sorts of verbal and physical sexual assaults in private (Batten, 234-36).

27. For more on the importance of acting impersonal, see also “Defense of the Stenographer,” Chicago Daily Tribune (January 11, 1890), 10; Mary E. Walter, “Can It Be Your Fault, Miss Stenog, That Your Employer Insults You?” Boston Daily Globe (May 23, 1916), 14; Remington Typewriter Company, How to Become a Successful Stenographer (New York: Stenographic Efficiency Bureau, 1916), 59-60.


33. For socialists’ thoughts on this article, see Philip Foner, Woman and the American Labor Movement (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 275-6.
35. Grant Allen’s 1897 novel, *The Type-Writer Girl* shows the office as a place where women encounter both unwanted sexual attentions and develop erotic feelings (which are not necessarily in the woman’s best interest) towards their employers. Literary scholars have explored how early twentieth century literature expresses the tensions and paradoxes in female office work. Sexual tensions erupted in this allegedly asexual space, and women were expected to be invisible, merely handmaids to the men, even as they were also crucial to those men’s success: women were hired *just* to take down men’s words, but they also often used their knowledge of grammar to fix those men’s words. A secretary and her knowledge are key to the plot of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), for example (see Pamela Thurschwell “Supple Minds and Automatic Hands: Secretarial Agency in Early Twentieth Century Literature,” *Forum For Modern Language Studies* 37 (2001), 137-168).

36. For an author who believed office men were honorable gentlemen, see Grace Dodge, *What Women Can Earn* (New York: F.A. Stokes, 1899), 145-46.

37. For a contemporary assessment of the previous occupations of streetwalkers, see Howard B. Woolston, *Prostitution in the United States* v. 1 (New York: The Century Company, 1921), 63. The occupation of stenographer ranked 4th on the list, after department Store clerks, factory workers, and women who worked in the theater.

39. In the early twentieth century, as more middle-class women entered the office, advocates of female employment often drew a distinction between these women’s refined character and that of working class factory girls (Priscilla Murolo, *The Common Ground of Womanhood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 128-29).

43. For more on Geer, see “Girls’ Employers Wolves, He Cries,” *Chicago Tribune* (January 12, 1907), 5; Dr. Geer’s Women’s Club Starts on its way,” *New York Times* (January 24, 1907), 9; “She Quits Dr. Geer’s Club,” *Washington Post* (January 26, 1907), 3.


50. I only found one other author who argued that women could not control men’s behavior through an impersonal demeanor, see Jeannette Eaton, *Commercial Work and Training for Girls* (New York: MacMillan, 1915), 246-7.

CHAPTER 2: White-Collar Casanovas: Gender, Class, and (Hetero)sexuality in the Office and in Business from Women’s Entrance to World War II

1. For Engle’s denial see “Perhaps a Libel Suit,” Washington Post (March 21, 1892), 12.


10. What we might think of as the white-collar ladies’ man was not the only reformation of manhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. College men increasingly used sexual exploits and an ethic of coercion and conquest to define their masculinity in the early decades of the twentieth century (Nicholas Syrett, The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), Chapter 5).

As the requirements of self-reliant or entrepreneurial manliness became increasingly difficult to achieve, middle class men sought to articulate new ideals and to reorient existing standards to the realities of working as a salaried employee in a large bureaucracy. Men in service-oriented financial industries, for example, celebrated gaining power and control over others and contrasted their “brain” work with the merely mechanical work of female clerks. Other men were able to see the older qualities of loyalty and ambition in their status as a “company man” scaling the corporate ladder. Some white-collar men looked to leadership roles in the Boy Scouts of America as a way to validate their masculinity outside of work. Some men with relatively secure corporate jobs that provided a dependable income and regular hours began to devote more time to their wives and children (Angel Kwolek-Folland, Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870-1930 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 70-74; Clark Davis, Company Men: White-Collar Life and Corporate Cultures in Los Angeles, 1892-1941 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), Chap. 6; Jeffrey P. Hantover, “The Boy Scouts and the Validation of Masculinity,” Journal of Social Issues 34 (1978), 184-95; Margaret Marsh, Suburban Lives (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 75-78, 82).
As opportunities for commercial leisure increased, many middle-class men looked to their time away from work for their identity with attention especially focused on the male body. Its strength, animal instincts, and power were no longer qualities to be consciously contained and controlled, but instead celebrated. The excitement over bodybuilding, football, and prize fighting, the popularity of Westerns, and men’s efforts to reclaim their sense of boyish adventure all reflected this movement away from manly character towards physicality. Men’s bodies—the way they indisputably differed from women—would be the basis of new understandings of what it meant to be a man. These fundamental physical distinctions might counter the challenges to manliness represented by women’s increasing presence in the public sphere of work and politics and replace the emphasis on such manly character traits as autonomy and self-reliance, which were ever more elusive in the bureaucratic world (On middle-class men’s new focus on the muscular, athletic body, see for example, Elliott Gorn, The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize-Fighting in America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Bederman; John F. Kasson, Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001. On this transition from character and respectability to the body and consumption among African American middle-class men, see Martin Summers, Manliness and its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930 (Chapel Hill: University of North Caroline Press, 2004), ).

11. For another joke in which the butt is a moral man who turns down the opportunity for a sexual interaction with a pretty stenographer, see “Easily Remedied,” Chase, 23.


13 On men, humor, and bonding: As a young lawyer, Abraham Lincoln was painfully shy with women. Whenever he found himself in a mixed group, he would pull the men into a corner and regale them with “smutty” stories, a process his biographer argues served a “fraternity-binding” function. In Lincoln’s behavior, we can see how lewd humor worked to unite men. There is the subtle aggression in pulling the men away from the women in the room, an action that clearly marks men and women as different and separate. The “smutty story” increased this division (Robert Wiebe, “Lincoln’s Fraternal Democracy,” in John L. Thomas, ed., Abraham Lincoln and the American Political Tradition (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 26-27, as quoted in E. Anthony Rotundo, American Manhood, (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 198-199. For further discussion of sexual humor as a form of male bonding that is degrading to women see Baird Jones, Sexual Humor (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1987), Chapter 7. Jones uses a joke about a boss and secretary to show how sexual humor portrays women as prostitutes, sexual objects available to powerful men (288).

14. See also “The Pretty Typewriter,” Brooklyn Eagle (December 27, 1891), 6; “His Pretty Typewriter,” reprinted from the Detroit Free Press in the Chicago Daily Tribune (November 20,
16. The issue of male authority and the ability to speak are made even clearer in a story from 1892, which appeared in the Minneapolis Tribune. This anecdote also highlights the importance of the geography of the workplace in structuring sexual interactions, which provided men with differing sexual opportunities depending on their place in the office hierarchy. The story begins with a description of a door that leads from a reception room to a private office. The door is not quite closed—but no doubt thought to be—which allows a man who is there to attend to business the rare opportunity to overhear what goes on in “private.” What he learns is that the private office is just that, providing men with the opportunity to pursue topics at work that are associated with the private—not public—sphere. He hears a man dictating a letter about financial matters to his typewriter, but declarations of desire overwhelm the details of business: “Dear sir—what makes your cheeks so red? They’re pretty as roses—I desire to inform you that—…you’ve got such lovely hands.” After listening for a while, the waiting man grows weary and leaves, wondering what the intended recipient will think of the letter. Here we see the hallmarks of sexual humor: the man’s emphasis on physical gratification, even while working, and the objectified woman, who in this case is nothing more than an accumulation of fetishized parts—red cheeks, lovely hands, curled hair. Of course, she is voiceless, giving us no clue as to whether the compliments are wanted or not, though certainly her silence suggests her powerlessness to speak regardless. Meanwhile, the dictator’s power to speak offsets the possible foolishness of his words; regardless of what he says, his authority goes unquestioned. If anyone is the fool, then, it would be the businessman who listens. It is his time that is wasted while the man in charge plays (“Dictation in Minneapolis,” Minneapolis Tribune, n.d. reprinted in Brooklyn Eagle (July 11, 1892), 2.


I have found about seventy-five cards that portray sexual interactions in the office, the majority of which were printed between 1907-1913, though some appear to be from the 1920s or 1930s. Many of the cards were unsent, but those that were used were mailed to or from all areas of the country with the exception of the South and Southwest. On the used cards, very few of the messages directly referred to the image on the other side. In one, for example, an unidentified sender teases May, the recipient of a postcard featuring an older man with a secretary on his lap, that “this must be George’s case” when he is away from her. Since May is a “Miss,” the nature of her relationship to George is unclear. Is he her boyfriend or betrothed or even his hard-working assistant? (“Busy at Office,” postcard mailed to and from Spokane, WA 1909. In author’s possession.) A Michigan man’s postcard to his niece sent in 1910 is less cryptic. Entitled “A Little Recreation,” this card portrayed a sour matron discovering her
husband’s office tryst. The personalized message said, “Mr. Businessman’s wife dropped in unexpectedly to see how things were coming along at the office. Oh, but you ought to see the next one. Ha Ha.” In this case, the card served as a light-hearted way for family members to maintain contact, the humor of a successful man’s domestic troubles universal enough to be appreciated by a male and female member of two generations. (Postcard mailed to Ann Arbor, MI, from Jackson, MI. In author’s possession.) As these examples suggest, postcards were sent casually, playfully, the image itself a momentary laugh. I found postcards on Ebay, in the “Workers Graphics Collection,” Alice Kahler Marshall Women’s History Collection, Penn State Harrisburg Library, and in Paul Robert, Sexy Legs and Typewriters: Women in Office-Related Advertising, Humor, Glamour and Erotica (The Netherlands: The Virtual Typewriter Museum, 2003), 30-59. For a discussion of mocking or mean-spirited postcards, see Leigh Schmidt, Consumer Rites (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 77-87.


18. The heroine of the film and print serial What Happened to Mary (1912) is a stenographer who, unlike many heroines, is never in need of rescue, never one step away from sexual assault; she is heroic and capable of getting herself out of trouble (Shelly Stamp, Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 137-39).


20. Anne E. Figert has made a similar argument regarding how cartoons and humor have made PMS “real” in the popular imagination. This representation, however, lacks the nuance of medical or psychiatric definitions and simply sends the negative message that women are ruled by their hormones (Women and the Ownership of PMS (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1996), 11-18).


26. Some of these comments were in response to the 1906 murder of architect Stanford White who had been a womanizer.

37. Page Smith earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University. He was on the faculty at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of California, Santa Cruz. He wrote numerous books, including the Bancroft Award-winning, *John Adams*.

For a strikingly similar diary from the 1790s, see Clare A. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006), 248-52.

39. For other examples of office sex see 76, 81, 119, 139, 344. Smith’s claim that women did not mind subway fondling might be overstated. One woman used the occasion to pick his pocket, and in 1909, some New Yorkers complained that during rush hours women “suffered from ‘insults and indignities’ which they were powerless to avoid.” (Clifton Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*) Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, reprint edition, 2004), 118-19. Unwanted groping is still a problem on the subway (Anemonia Hartocollis, “Women Have Seen It All on Subway, Unwillingly,” *New York Times* (June 24, 2006), A1).

45. There is no evidence to suggest that Ward was lying about his innocence, though certainly class bias could have played a role in the judge’s dismissal since he described Ward as “seem[ing] to be an upstanding and fine type of man.” For another occasion in which a woman claimed rape in an alleged attempt to extort money, see Smith, 159.

46 There were a number of stories about false ads for stenographers, and in 1910, a fifteen-year-old girl fresh out of business school was brutally murdered when she responded to one. See for example, “Lost Girl Strangled, Burned Body Hidden,” *New York Times* (March 27, 1910), 1 and “Girl Murder Leads Aldermen to Act,” *New York Times* (March 30, 1910), 32. In the 1920s, one man was charged at least six times for placing a false ad for a stenographer and “insulting” and making “improper advances” to the applicants. See “Jail for Beauty Writer,” *New York Times* (June 11, 1921), 24, and “He Hugged a Policewoman,” *New York Times* (May 1, 1925), 11. In 1921 he was charged with disorderly conduct and sentenced to thirty days in the workhouse, and in 1925 he was sentenced to six months.
48. Fraternity men in the late nineteenth century (many of who would become the businessmen of the early twentieth century) were used to “having their way” with women of the lower classes (Nicholas Syrett, *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 176-178. For more on the ethnic and class composition of female clerical workers, see Strom, 252-54.

52. Corporations published stories of men who had risen through the ranks in their in-house magazines to convince workers that advancement was possible and to suggest that manly individualism was not at odds with one’s status as a company man. In January 1922, the cover of an electric company’s magazine urged their male employees to make a “New Year’s pledge” “to be a Man, filling a Man’s Place in a man’s game, and prove ours the best manned industry in southern California” (Quote from *Pacific Electric Magazine* in Davis, p. 154). But even as more and more men chose to try to rise up the corporate ladder, some expressed intense dissatisfaction with their prospects.

In 1916, a fifteen-dollar a week clerk wrote to a friend that he found himself “in the darkness of gloom and despondency.” He believed his job offered “no real chance to do anything but push-a-pen,” and the men he worked with were lazy and capable only of “lewd conversation and light thinking.” He worried that he sounded “overambitious” and “egotistical,” but, as he told his friend, he was. He wanted more out of life, but despaired that he would never be able to advance. For him, the office was a prison, and he wondered what was the use of “keeping up a meagre existence.” This clerk embraced the dominant masculine ideal of professional success, but that route to a manly identity seemed out of reach. He also refused to participate in the vulgar jokes that his co-workers told, possibly as part of a performance of sexual masculinity, but that he felt were shallow and artificial. Meanwhile, pushing a pen certainly did not require the strength or involve the danger that gave industrial workers their sense of virile fraternity. And the fact that women worked in the office made it impossible to create a parallel to the “densely masculine space” of the shop floor, with its dirt, noise, and crude behavior. For this man, none of the masculine ideologies fit; there was no existence as a man he could claim (Arthur Anderson to Thomas Mott Osborne, February 1, 1916. Thomas Mott Osborne Papers, Syracuse University Archives). For more on the experience of male clerks in the nineteenth century, see Thomas Augst, *The Clerk’s Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

We do not know if this masculine shaming was an effective prod pushing white-collar workers towards unions. We do know, however, that one of the difficulties of organizing the clerical and white-collar sector had to do with masculine concerns. In the late 1930s, for example, insurance sales agents, who were overwhelmingly male, refused to include the largely female clerical staff in the their labor contracts because they viewed these women as temporary and inconsequential workers. Even efforts by the leaders of the United Office and Professional Workers of America failed to get the men to change their minds, though even these leaders preferred to focus on organizing men. In this climate, one wonders how the white-collar man felt when he saw the illustration in which two blue-collar workers watched two white-collar strikers, one male, the other female, and approvingly commented, “Those office punks finally got some sense—and guts!!” or read the lyrics to a song that linked him with the “trembling stenographer” and the “abused office-boy” (“Well,--take a look at this, Joe!” Ledger 1 (October 24, 1935), 7, and Gregory J. Bardacke, “They have a right,” Ledger 2 (March 1936), 7. The UOPWA was chartered by the CIO in 1937. The BSAU ultimately joined UOPWA. On the BSAU and women in the 1930s, see Strom, “We’re no Kitty Foyle,” 212-220.

It appears that the jokes set in an office were derived from earlier mining jokes (164). Industrial labor organizers often used “sneaking-home tales.” In some, the cuckold worked in a factory, not an office, and these were presented as a relic of the bad old days before unions ended gross exploitation. In one from 1935, the steel mill worker does not sneak back to work, but instead beats up his boss and then starts a union. What we see, here, is that “fool” jokes can be used in a variety of ways to achieve political ends. Their function is not limited to assuaging men’s fears, humorously coming to terms with their sense of powerlessness, expressing their anger at their employer, or rationalizing their low place in the hierarchy (166, 162, 167). Green also notes that virtually all of the women in these stories are silent objects (167-68).
CHAPTER 3: Betwixt and Between: New Freedoms and New Risks in the Sexually and Psychologically Modern Office

Woodward’s autobiography was widely and positively reviewed (Book Review Digest 22 (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1927), 767).


Advocates of public high school education, struggling to keep students enrolled and eager to provide business with the skilled workers it wanted, emphasized that high school training would allow students to enter the clerical job market. The proportion of teens attending high school increased from 10% in 1904 to 53% in 1920, and women graduates outnumbered men. (See Strom, Chapter Six and 251-53; Fine, 171).

A woman’s race, ethnicity, religion, and age affected her place in the pecking order of clerical jobs. Businesses preferred middle class women (or those from prosperous working class families) for secretarial positions; young, unmarried Protestant women generally found themselves first in line for the better jobs. Meanwhile, Jewish women frequently encountered want-ads that advised them not to apply, and African American women found employment only
in businesses owned by African Americans. Yet at the same time that job categories hardened, clerical employment actually blurred class boundaries. After 1910, middle class daughters whose parents could not afford to send them to college increasingly turned to clerical employment. Though class-based tensions could arise, the office became a site of class as well as gender mixing, with economic differences muted by the middle class manners and clothing expected of employees regardless of their background middle class manners and clothing expected of employees regardless of their background (Fine 171, 173-4; Strom, 285, 294, 315-317; Grace L. Coyle, “Women in the Clerical Occupations,” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 143 (May, 1929), 185.

The rigid hierarchy of male executives and lowly bookkeepers and secretaries and mere copyists was already well-established by 1917, when Sinclair Lewis immortalized it in The Job (New York: Grosset & Dunlap), 229-235).

7 For more on the popularization of psychology in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, see John C. Burnham, How Superstition Won and Science Lost: Popularizing Science and Health in the United States (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), Chapter 3, and Nathan G. Hale, Jr., The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), Chapter 5. By 1940, Glamour was urging readers to use “psychology” in their fashion choices at work, which would lead to a raise (“Dress to Please the Boss” (May 1940) 36-37).

Three of Maule’s employment books are especially relevant to office women. She Strives to Conquer: Business Behavior, Opportunities and Job Requirements for Women (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1937), The Road to Anywhere: Opportunities in Secretarial Work (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1938), and Girl With a Pay Check. Parts of She Strives appeared in McCall’s Magazine and Independent Woman. “Love Among the Typewriters,” the chapter on office romance from Pay Check, appeared in Independent Woman (November, 1934), 351. Mary Frances McBride and Lena M. Phillips both worked on employment issues for the YWCA; Phillips was later President of the Federation of Business and Professional Women. Loire Brophy was a nationally known employment counselor.

The psychological perspective is quite evident in some books. In She Strives, for example, Maule quotes a New York University professor of business psychology (90). In a paragraph addressing personality adjustment issues, MacGibbon mentions how to respond to a boss’s overtures and how a woman should deal with her inferiority complex (ix). In “Office Girl as a Mother Substitute,” Edith Johnson discusses the “emotional” reasons men prefer female clerical help, which includes sexual tension (Daily Oklahoman (August 18, 1935), 54).

On the use of psychology in advertising in the 1920s, see Napoli 17-18, 43.

12. For a discussion of employment advice literature and an analysis of Isabel Bishop’s paintings of office women in the 1930s, see Ellen Wiley Todd, The ‘New Woman’ Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Chapter Seven.

Discussions of office etiquette and gender roles in the black press mirror those described in this chapter; see Lula Jones Garrett, “Lipstick,” Afro-American (August 19, 1934), 4; Helen
Woodward, "The Woman Who Makes Good," Chicago Defender (April 7, 1934), 12 [this was a syndicated piece written by a white author]

13 An excerpt of this piece appeared in The Oklahoman as "Lost Domesticity is Found in the Office" (December 28, 1935), 8, and it was discussed in the Washington Post (Malvina Lindsay, "Since Woman's Adaptability Has Conquered in Business, She'd Better Drop Crispness," (August 9, 1935), 14.

14. MacGibbon credited psychologists with establishing that women were “more excitable than men and hence more inclined to react emotionally” (52) and devoted an entire chapter, “Parcel-Checked Emotions,” to warning women to be impersonal. Lena M. Phillips, “‘Sex Appeal’ Out of the Business Life,” Washington Post (March 11, 1928), SM10, was copyrighted by the Public Ledger and also appeared in The Oklahoman, and possibly other newspapers.

15. For a humorous illustration of women who behave inappropriately in the office, see "Here’s How!” Mademoiselle (May 1940), 105. In 1941, the Chicago Daily Tribune published a story about secretaries which documented the disruption a beautiful woman could cause, as well as the dangers she faced. This article, too, warned women to disregard men’s overtures (Lloyd Wendt, "Meet Miss Secretary (November 16, 1941), E2).

19. The modern girl was no longer naive or passionless, but she had gained sexual knowledge and regained desire at the expense of a certain type of power and ideological protection. By the early nineteenth century, a variety of political and religious perspectives combined to transform the understanding of female sexual desire from a view of women as especially carnal to essentially spiritual and without lustful appetites. This conversion increased women’s moral authority, while diminishing (though certainly not eliminating) the mistrust of women based on the female sexual treachery represented by Eve. In exchange for their desire, women received the right to speak about moral issues and could demand that men respect their sexual purity, which at least in theory lessened women’s sexual vulnerability. However, with the return of female desire, women lost this influence and ability. They were now men’s sexual counterparts and therefore could not so easily declare themselves morally offended by an unexceptional—even if unwanted—exhibition of sexual attention and demand that these attentions stop. Women’s moral authority was diminished. But, they still lacked economic power. They were not men’s equal in the workplace, but mere subordinates who had to worry about keeping their jobs. Given society’s tendency to cite women’s sexual liberation as evidence of their equality, any woman who insisted on challenging injustices in other areas found herself labeled “unnatural” and sexually maladjusted. In this climate that embraced female sexuality and denigrated any type of feminist militancy, it was impossible to devise a solution that would stop the degrading behavior and not seem old-fashioned (On changes in female sexuality and women’s moral authority, see Nancy Cott, “Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850,” Signs 4 (Winter 1978), 221, 228; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct (New York: Oxford


24 Another guide told women to smile during their interview, but then noted that “too much smiling is almost as bad as none, for women are accused of wishing to make conquests, of flirting, of simpering, of being coy and vivacious” (Alsop, 38). Even *Time*’s review of MacGibbon’s book seemed aware of the contradiction in her call to be attractive and professional, as seen in this paragraph: “Harping on the importance of personal appearance, Mrs. MacGibbon writes: “You no longer hear an employer say of his secretary, ‘She doesn’t look like much but how she can type!’ He is more apt to say ‘I’ve got a an A-I secretary now and is she a looker!’” But: businessmen “wish their offices to have a dignified, not a sexy, atmosphere.”

In repeatedly telling women they must be attractive and feminine but not arouse desire, authors imposed an impossible and disingenuous standard. Like their counterparts from thirty or forty years before, they suggested to women that they could control men’s behavior through their clothing and manner. This view indicated that women were in some degree to blame if they received such attentions and also assumed that in the workplace men’s desire was aroused only by the most obvious display of sex appeal.

25. The summary of *Ever Since Eve* (Warner Brothers, 1937) says the film focuses on the connection between beauty and what we would now call “sexual harassment.” Marge Winton is fed up with having to quit job after job to avoid the advances of lecherous bosses. When she goes to the employment agency, she is surprised to discover that she is too beautiful for one position. So she gives herself a makeover, hiding her blond curls under a dark, severe wig, putting on glasses, and wearing a drab, unflattering dress. The disguise works. A book publisher hires her as a secretary for a lazy writer who prefers partying with his girlfriend to working on his novel. Despite his disappointment in her appearance, the writer accepts Marge, who soon falls in love with him. She tries to break-up his romance, and quits when the writer finds out. The writer shows up at her apartment to rehire her, and does not recognize her without her ‘plain jane’ disguise. Wanting to keep the deception going, she pretends to be her roommate. After many twists and turns, the writer realizes the truth and proposes.

27. In their discussions of situations in which a woman would have to quit, employment guide authors quickly shifted attention away from a critique of men’s behavior by emphasizing
women's need to protect their virtue. MacGibbon, for example, briefly mentioned a woman who described the job she left as "fighting for [her] honor eight hours a day." MacGibbon did not provide any information on the type of work this woman performed or her chances of finding another job quickly. She also did not describe the behaviors she had encountered or if she felt frightened or threatened by them. The message to readers was clear: what really mattered in these situations was that a woman left them with her reputation intact. This apparently mattered more than her wages, since no author commented on the economic difficulties of even a brief period of unemployment. The lack of details in these stories suggests that the specifics of what she underwent and her feelings were largely inconsequential. The sexual revolution gave women a limited sexual freedom as long as it was tied to romantic love, but the sexual double standard still existed and a woman's sexual past still mattered in the marriage market. This reality left the sexual dynamic between men and women in the office largely unchanged from what it had been when women first entered the white-collar workplace. Then, women were responsible for keeping the erotic out of relationships at work just as they were in the private sphere. Now, women were still charged with this task only in a more sexualized era that saw men pushing and women setting sexual limits at work just as they did in dating relationships (MacGibbon, 119; Emilio and Freedman, 256-7, 262).

28 Although the author and the purpose of the study is not known for certain, it seems likely that it was connected to Carney Landis' efforts to examine the psychosexual development of women. Landis was a psychologist at the New York State Psychiatric Institute and Hospital and a professor at Columbia University. The study included "normal" married and single women and "abnormal" (that is, women who were or had been institutionalized) married and single women. Each subject was interviewed for two and a half hours on their sexual history and had a gynecological exam. I examined the 108 case histories of "Normal Single Women" in Series III D, Box Two, focusing on those who were office workers. (Other occupations included department store clerks, social workers, and students.) Each case history contains a typed, 18 page booklet of responses to interview questions on the following issues: family relationship, childhood memories, sexual experience, sex education history, masturbation and lesbianism. The files also contain a brief statement by the interviewer that gives a general impression of the subject and highlights key issues. Finally, there is a medical report of the results of the gynecological exam. Women seem to have volunteered to participate in the study because they had questions about sexuality or they were having gynecological problems and wanted to be examined. Interviews were conducted in New York City between December 1934 and July 1937.

29. Claudia Goldin, Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 160-77. In Chicago in 1930, 62.5% of all stenographers-typists were age 24 or younger (Fine, 48).
38 In “Ledger Sheet,” the author noted that Kay had an “OK” disposition, should have been a chorus girl and lamented that no one knew her weakness.

39 Other glimpses of office life are harder to interpret. Was the comment “Jane Pitts wrote to four different soldiers in four different camps and mailed the four different letters all at the same time” an amused observation about a young woman’s eagerness to find a beau or an unflattering judgment? The meaning of some remarks, however, were quite transparent, such as one that asked “Who manages to look dainty even though she never takes a bath?” “Scoop,” Echo News (March/April 1941).
CHAPTER 4: Gold Diggers, Innocents, and Tempted Wives: The Skyscraper in Fiction and Film

In the 1920s, the dichotomous representations of the female office worker as victim or vamp in fiction and film that had dominated in the first decades of the century lessened, and the Cinderella story, first introduced in fiction around 1905, became a common theme. In these tales, loyal and devoted women used the contacts or money they made through work to help their boss, male co-worker, or sweetheart achieve business success. In return, the men rewarded them with a ring and retirement from the workforce. According to historian Lisa Fine, these fun-loving, resourceful, and virtuous characters may have provided a comforting mid-position between the outdated Victorian ideal and what many believed was the overly promiscuous flapper. Many stories, for example, told of the professionally competent but plain and old-fashioned stenographer who transformed herself into an alluring beauty and landed her boss. These narratives made clear that the new feminine ideal included sexual desirability and implied the importance of sexuality within marriage, but they also showed that the heroine was fundamentally good. She was modest as much as modern, dependable as well as independent (Lisa Fine, The Souls of the Skyscraper (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 69, 140-45; Donald Makosky, “The Portrayal of Women in Wide-Circulation Magazine Short Stories, 1905-55,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1966), 32-34; Halsey, 83. For the unattractive secretary’s transformation, see, for example, Aaron David, “The Golden Calf,” Liberty: A Weekly for Everybody (December 25, 1926), 48-52. Fine discusses the 1930 film adaptation (142). Other films with this theme include His Secretary (1925), Beautiful but Dumb (1928), A Single Man (1929), and Beauty and the Boss (1932). In the 1920s, office women were not the only working women to find a wealthy husband at work (Sumiko Higashi, Virgins, Vamps, and Flappers: The American Silent Movie Heroine (Montreal: Eden Press Women’s Publications, 1978), 103). For examples of the loyal secretary who assists her employer, see Matt Taylor, “Safari in Manhattan,” Colliers 97 (January 4, 1936), 16-17, which was made into the film, More Than a Secretary (Columbia Pictures, 1936), Faith Baldwin, “Bank Holiday,” Cosmopolitan (June, 1933): 22-27, 132-150, and the films The Little Grey Mouse (1920), For Ladies Only (1927), The Bachelor Girl (1929).

Although the film code was not enforced in the pre-Code period, a Studio Relations Committee did exist and did communicate with producers. In addition, women’s groups and organizations such as the Catholic Legion of Decency regularly spoke out against individual films, and there were also state censorship boards that could prevent a film from being shown. These groups targeted both Red-Headed Woman and Baby Face. For example, even though Red-Headed Woman begins with a scene that clearly establishes the film as a comedy—a scene MGM consciously added to pacify industry censors—state censorship boards in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio cut scenes before it could be shown. A representative from the Studio Relations Committee corresponded with the producer of Baby Face throughout its production
about problems with the film. Even so, the film was banned in Virginia, Ohio, and initially New York; when the New York board rejected the film, Warner Brothers withheld the film from general release and made further revisions. *Baby Face* also was singled out by the Legion of Decency as especially offensive; Thomas Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 1-10, 351; Cari Beauchamp and Mary Anita Loos, *Anita Loos Rediscovered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 124-25; Jacobs, 18, 68-84.

In Thomas Edgelow, “An Amateur Adventuress,” *Young’s Magazine* 36 (October 1918), 19-24, and the film version, *The Amateur Adventuress* (Metro Pictures Corp., 1919), the story has a happy ending and the gold digger does not suffer for her lies. *A Virtuous Vamp* (First National Exhibitors’ Circuit, Inc., 1919). The secretary in *Soft Living* turns out to be a good girl in the end, and she and her millionaire fall in love.

A few films contrast the loyal, virtuous secretary with a gold digger. In *Behind Office Doors* (RKO, Radio Pictures, Inc., 1931), for example, Mary Linden, the devoted secretary who is responsible for her boss’s success, must compete with a gold digging secretary for his attentions. The womanizing boss proposes to Mary in the end, though in the novel on which the film is based, Mary rejects the boss’s proposal and chooses her long-time working class suitor who she knows she can trust (Alan Brener Schultz, *Private Secretary* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1929). See also, *Fair Play* (William Steiner Productions, 1925), *A Beggar in Purple* (Pathe Exchange, Inc., 1920), *Bachelor’s Affairs* (Fox Film Corp., 1932), *Footlight Parade* (Warner Brothers, 1933), *Some Blondes are Dangerous* (Universal, 1937), and *Hired Wife* (Universal, 1940).

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6 Brush’s novel, while popular, received lukewarm reviews (“Gold digger’s Progress,” *Time* (October 19, 1931) and *Book Review Digest* 27 (Bronx, NY: H.W. Wilson Co., 1932), 140). A review of *Baby Face* in *Variety* (June, 1933) described the film as sending a message to women viewers that there was “no such thing as unemployment—even the clerk in the outer office is a man and any man...can be had” (Colin Shindler, *Hollywood in Crisis: Cinema and American Society, 1929-1939* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 167).

7 Jacobs, 18. Though not everyone who saw the film thought it was funny, for those so inclined the portrayal of successful businessmen also gave them something to laugh about. These men’s money, morals, and manners are no match for Lil, and they know it. Like a frightened schoolboy, Bill cowers behind the door as his father tries to send Lil away, and the coal magnate she sets her sights on next hides and tells his butler to say he is not home. This Depression-era jab at prosperous manhood continues in Lil’s love for a chauffeur. This character, who does not appear in the novel, seems to be the only man capable of fulfilling her sexual needs, the only man to whom she gives herself with no ulterior motive. The film’s last scene shows him driving Lil and an octogenarian back to their mansion. The rich man is again the unsuspecting fool, outwitted by his social inferiors in a film that turns standards of morality and class and gender expectations on their head.
The ending emphasizes the importance of normative gender roles and male power as much as it condemns immorality. Had the latter been the primary concern of censors, the film could have ended with Trenholm’s death, a conclusion that was initially considered. Reviews of the film also suggest the controversy over the film had a great deal to do with its presentation of gender. The film showed the “masculine gender,” one noted, as “a bit shy on both perception and horse sense,” while another observed, “evidently there is not a decent man in this bank—not one who scorns to have an affair with this tarnished Lily.” Lily, then, shares the same power and poses the same threat as Lil. Both working class women possess the ability to seduce extremely successful men, even those known for their “high ideals.” In the process, they make fools of and even destroy the men, thereby corrupting class and gender hierarchies (“Earle,” *The Washington Post* (June 24, 1933), 4; M.H. “A Woman’s Wiles,” *New York Times* (June 24, 1933), 16). It is also possible to see Lily’s rise from barmaid to secretary to wealthy wife as a proto-feminist vision of brains, ambition and vengeance against patriarchy (Thomas Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-34* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 132).

States that changed their laws include New York, Massachusetts, California, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and New Jersey. Technically, a breach of promise suit allowed a person to sue for damages when another person failed to fulfill an agreement to marry. For women, the damages sought were generally not for direct losses, such as the expense of a wedding dress, but for more intangible costs, such as the humiliation associated with being jilted. In validating such damage claims, the court acknowledged women’s economic vulnerability, the fact that women had limited means to support themselves and anything that soiled their reputation jeopardized their marital chances. A successful case rested on an offer of marriage made, accepted and then retracted. In substantiating a marital proposal, plaintiffs could enter into evidence love-letters, gifts or the testimonies of witnesses to the courtship. With regard to love-letters, some critics worried that a wily office worker could easily fabricate this proof.

For more on the topic of this paragraph, see Apstein 26-27; *Indianapolis News* (January 28, 1935), 6, as quoted in Sinclair, 90, footnote 421; Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, “Breach of Promise—Why?” *Woman Citizen* (September, 1927), quoted in Rebecca Tushnet, “Rules of Engagement,” *Yale Law Journal* 107 (June 1998), 2589. For more on feminists’ views on heart balm suits, see Coombs, 11-17.

See also Lawrence Friedman, “Name Robbers: Privacy, Blackmail, and Assorted Matters in Legal History,” Hofstra Law Review 30 (Summer 2002), 1120-23. This distrust of women appeared in other places as well. In the 1930s, the men’s magazine, Esquire, regularly attacked the modern woman and cast the decade as “the age of gold diggers” (Peter N. Stearns and Mark Knapp, “Men and Romantic Love: Pinpointing a 20th-Century Change,” Journal of Social History 26 (Summer, 1993), 778-80.

The evidence suggests that the stenographers and secretaries who appeared in newspaper accounts were a mix of vixens and victims, though in most cases it is virtually impossible to piece together all of the details of any one suit. However, in making an assessment of the plaintiff’s character or the legitimacy of the charge, today’s historian is at no greater disadvantage than the readers at the time, whose appraisal also relied on partial bits of knowledge. Accounts of breach of promise suits often originated with wire services such as the Associated Press. As a result, readers in points north, south, east and west all heard about Bessie Vandermeulen, a stenographer in Louisville, Kentucky, who in 1934 sued a wealthy man for $100,000. What readers in these places learned, though, was not necessarily the same, depending on how much of the story the local newspaper printed and whether it continued its coverage throughout the trial, a decision seemingly reached on the basis of the paper’s need for filler on any particular day. Stories about this case appeared both on front pages directly below the banner and buried deep within a paper’s covers next to short clips of other sensational events (The Fresno (California) Bee carried the story of the verdict and a photo of the couple on its front page (“Wins $15,000 Heart Balm from Clubman,” (December 9, 1934), 1).

The very brief article in the Washington Post, for example, noted only that the jury quickly cast a “decisive” ballot in Bessie’s favor. Since the paper did not clarify the relationship between the two, Washingtonians possibly assumed he was her employer, which he was not. They might also have thought that the speed of the jury’s decision meant an open and shut case. Readers in Texas would have known better. Although the defendant admitted to a long-standing sexual relationship with this “good time girl,” he denied any promise of marriage. But Texans did not know, as did the citizens of Burlington, North Carolina, that the thirty-seven year old plaintiff was not a life long office worker, but had worked as a hostess in a sandwich shop. This working class background might have led some readers to decide that financial concerns, not a broken heart, motivated her claim. It might also have sent a message about what type of women now worked in offices. Meanwhile, readers like those in Fresno, California, could assess guilt or innocence by performing a physiognomic analysis of a photograph of the pair (“$15,000 Award Girl in Heart Balm Suit,” Washington Post (November 29, 1934), 26; “Defense Assails Balm Plaintiff,” San Antonio Express (November 28, 1934), 2; “News of the Day Told in Pictures,” Burlington (NC) Daily Times News (December 4, 1934), 6; “Wins $15,000 Heart Balm from Clubman,” The Fresno Bee (December 9, 1934), 1. Articles about this case also appeared in newspapers in Jefferson City, Missouri; Woodland, California; Kokomo, Indiana; Brainerd, Minnesota; Reno, Nevada; Waterloo, Iowa; La Crosse, Wisconsin).

These details likely affected what readers thought about an individual case, though stories were often so brief that no clear message emerged. A reader might, then, have used these articles to reconfirm their own point of view, to keep alive their vision of the scheming gold digger or the innocent victim. Other meanings were possible, too. The news services’ decision to send out these stories clearly said they were of national significance, a point emphasized to a greater or
lesser degree by the newspaper’s choice of where to place the article. Placement itself could suggest certain meanings. One wonders, for example, what employees in the composing room of a Virginia newspaper meant by placing a short piece on the small award won by a stenographer who sued her boss of nine years in the “For Sale” section next to an advertisement for used cars (“Her Time With Boss Valued at Dollar Per Day,” The (Danville, VA) Bee (March 5, 1925), n.p. My discussion of newspapers is informed by Lisa Duggan, Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 32-40).

The message of the few stories involving an especially wealthy or prominent man and a stenographer or secretary was much clearer and the coverage more extensive. Defense attorneys characterized these women as motivated by money, and the amount of damages sought—$100,000, $250,000, $500,000—seemed to validate this claim. These trials, however, aired the man’s dirty laundry for all to see, and the actions of wealthy and powerful men seemed inspired by other kinds of greed. In 1922, a stenographer accused Mississippi’s then governor of seducing her in his office in the State House a few years before and subsequently helping her procure an abortion. He had allegedly told her he was no longer happy with his wife and wanted a divorce, though he vehemently denied this accusation. In 1929, a public stenographer accused a millionaire carpet manufacturer and former president of the Gideons, which placed Bibles in hotels throughout North America, of breaking his promise to pay her $500 a month for ten years if she did not file a breach of promise suit. She recounted the details of their lengthy affair, which began with his plea that he “felt alone in the world” and desired to know her “more immediately.” This married man countered that the relationship was purely platonic and all correspondence between them was “entirely of a business nature.” In 1930, a secretary sued her former employer, a retired real-estate millionaire in his 60s, when he called off the wedding after she refused to sign a pre-nuptial agreement. His ardent love-letters suggested an attraction grounded more in passion than affection. A secretary from Oklahoma came close to marrying a widowed Chicago millionaire, but this relationship, too, faltered over a pre-nuptial contract. The ensuing breach of promise trial included the scandalous allegation that he had been living with his housekeeper “as man and wife” for many years (“Woman Accuses Governor Russell,” New York Times (February 7, 1922), 15; “Russell Acquitted of Woman’s Charge,” New York Times (December 22, 1922), 9; “Chicago Woman Sues Ex-Head of Gideons,” New York Times (July 27, 1929), 8; “Former Head of Gideons Sued by ‘Jilted’ Woman,” Washington Post (July 27, 1929), 2; “Girl’s Suit Against Boggs Dismissed,” Washington Post (August 6, 1929), 5; “Secretary Shows Love Missives in Suit for $500,000,” Fresno (CA) Bee (July 7, 1931), 4; “Jewels and Jealousy Feature Damage Suit,” Atlanta Constitution (June 27, 1929), 26).

These were the sorts of sensational trials that fueled anti-heart balm efforts, even though in these specific cases plaintiffs never received more than a tiny fraction of what they sought, if anything. Avarice might explain these women’s march to the courthouse, but with the possible exception of the governor’s situation in Mississippi, their charges do not seem manufactured out of thin air. Nevertheless, the adversarial nature of a trial meant a reliance on the most exaggerated stereotypes: was he an “old playboy with a long record of philandering behind him” or was she the “cold blooded siren, who took advantage of old men because they knew little of the wiles of women?” A verdict demanded jurors choose, even though the truth might lie somewhere in the middle. The awards in these four cases suggest that juries might have thought as much, unwilling to reward a designing woman, but just as reluctant to let a wealthy man maraud at will. These cases suggest a certain equivalence, the sexually knowing acquisitive
woman pitting her wits against those of the sexually desiring rich man; if she was forced to resort
to a breach of promise case in which she received only a small sum for her troubles, she had at
least exacted payment for his pleasure. In more prosaic cases, those involving less prominent
people and in some cases asking for much smaller damages, overstated characterizations did not
seem to apply. In many of these cases, no parity of experience, knowledge, or power existed
between the office girl and the businessman. The breach of promise suit offered a legitimate
legal remedy for those women who sincerely believed themselves to be romantically and/or
sexually betrayed by their employer (“Heart Balm Suit Ends in Victory for Spurned Girl,”
Atlanta Constitution (July 7, 1929), 1.

The $100,000 case against Mississippi’s governor was decided in his favor. The judge
dismissed the case against the Bible supplier because it viewed the contract to ensure that the
woman did not bring a breach of promise charge to be against public policy. The jury awarded
the retired millionaire’s secretary $10,000, hardly the $500,000 she had requested, and she
ultimately received $5,000 (“$5,000 Settles Balm Case,” Washington Post (August 25, 1932), 4).
The Oklahoma secretary won $25,000, significantly less than the $250,000 she sought, and she
accepted less than $20,000 to avoid an appeal.

For stories that present the female clerical heart balm plaintiff as more gold digger than
victim or that trivialize the cases through a sensational style, see “Realty Broker Wins in Girl's
$100,000 Suit,” New York Times (January 19, 1928), 48; “For It Takes a Little Rain with the
Sunshine,” Atlanta Constitution (September 10, 1916), F3; Knox notes a case in which a
stenographer was awarded $100,000 from her aged employer because she devoted her youth to
him on the promise of marriage (737), but newspaper searches did not turn up evidence of any
case with this large an award.

Recent legal scholarship has shown that women used heart balm statutes in creative ways.
For example, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries some women (especially
immigrant and working class women) who experienced what we would today label acquaintance
rape used the seduction tort or criminal seduction statutes as a means to achieve justice in a legal
climate that defined rape as a violent attack by an unknown assailant. Seduction tort statutes
applied to cases in which a man obtained a woman’s consent to sexual intercourse with a
promise of marriage. Stephen Robertson has found, however, that many women who brought
these charges accused the man of sexual assault, showing seduction to have been accomplished
as much by violence as false promises. These cases were often resolved with the man and
woman’s marriage, and suggest that a degree of sexual violence was a part of even consensual
relationships (“Seduction, Sexual Violence, and Marriage in New York City, 1886-1955,” Law
and History Review 24 (Summer, 2006): 331-371). For women’s use of the criminal seduction
law see Brian Donovan, “Gender Inequality and Criminal Seduction: Prosecuting Sexual

The outcomes of these trials, which often involved quite significant awards, suggest that
jurors did not begin these proceedings with the preconception that plaintiffs were probable gold
diggers. In some cases, jurors (many of whom were likely older and more traditional than the
young people whose sexual behaviors were changing in this period) seem determined to uphold
principles of morality as embodied in honorable men and virtuous women. In a case from 1922,
the defense attorney queried prospective jurors as to whether they would be “prejudiced against a
man who admits improper relations with a woman.” The $50,000 verdict in favor of the plaintiff
suggested they were. It also seems likely that juries appreciated working women’s economic and
emotional vulnerability and the unequal relations of power between employers and employees ("Starting Connell Jury," Lincoln (NB) State Journal (May 30, 1923), n.p.).

The evidence from a number of cases that were resolved before the movement to abolish heart balm suits began in earnest suggests that some white-collar women, especially those who worked in small offices, encountered employers who mixed business with pleasure at their employee’s expense—or at least that was the juries’ assessment. In 1911, for example, a New Jersey jury awarded stenographer Emma Milani $5,000 in her case against her former employer, William Delorenzo, an attorney and member of the board of education whom the press dubbed the “poetic lover.” Delorenzo admitted that he loved Milani, but he denied that he had proposed or even spoken to her about marriage. His evidence was that he also loved another woman whom he ultimately married. Milani maintained that everyone in the vicinity of the office knew of their engagement, and she produced a packet of poems filled with “words of warm love” to support her claim. Here, again, the historical record provides scant information about the particulars of this relationship, though the Washington Post’s placement of the story above an article entitled “Police Crusade on Mashers,” might suggest that the paper saw it as a case of male exploitation. The sizeable award suggests sympathy towards Milani and her trusting nature. It seems possible, too, that the award represented a type of class politics. This perspective was one opponents of reform in New York put forth, portraying the suits as the only recourse of poor women against the “coal-oil johnnies, the rich philanderers, the stuffed shirts” who deserved no pity (“Gives Her $5,000 Heart Balm,” Washington Post, December 19, 1911), 5; “Wooed His Typist in Blankest Verse,” New York Times (December 15, 1911); “Lawyer Says Girl Confessed Her Love,” New York Times (December 16, 1911); “’Balm’ Ban is Voted by Albany Senate,” New York Times (March 20, 1935), 1. The “poetic lover’s” story also appeared in the Lowell (Mass) Sun (December 19, 1911) on the bottom of the front page, and certainly the humor of this story contributed to its newsworthiness. It is important to note that the amount of the jury award was not necessarily the amount the plaintiff received; the threat of appeal, for example, could lead to a deal).

Other suits also seemed to be straightforward instances of a man reneging on his promise of marriage or seriously misleading a woman as to his intentions. Also in 1911, this time in a small town in Oklahoma, a jury awarded a “pretty stenographer” thirty thousand dollars, half of the worth of her former employer, a prominent attorney, and a sum significantly greater than any handed down to secretaries or stenographers in the cases which received prominent national coverage. A breach of promise suit was about marriage, but the newspaper did not focus on this aspect of the case. Instead, they noted her claim that when she was first hired, her boss “enjoyed no prestige” and that it was “through her efforts that he became successful and accumulated a fortune.” The jury was out just long enough to write the verdict in her favor. It is possible that the secretary had connections, that she actually brought legal business to her boss. It is also possible that she worked hard for her employer on the promise that she would soon become his real wife, and not just his office one. In such a small town, it seems plausible that her chances of marriage were impaired by this break-up, that she was visibly humiliated, her reputation soiled. The jury recognized this damage and acknowledged a woman’s role in a man’s professional success ("Typist Awarded Half of Fortune," Oklahoman, March 11, 1911, 9).

Some feminists decried breach of promise laws because they reconfirmed women’s economic dependence on men, however in reality many women still needed to rely on men. For these women, filing a suit was not a mark against their character, but as legal scholar Mary
Coombs notes, a sign of their character: they refused to accept their victimization without a fight. Violet Johnstone waged such a battle. Immigrating to the U.S. around 1904 when she was about twenty, she became the secretary and office assistant to Dr. Karl Connell shortly after her arrival. An affair soon began, and, according to her, he promised to marry once his practice became established. The affair continued for sixteen years. In 1922, when Connell wrote to tell her that he was marrying another woman, Johnstone brought suit for $50,000 because she was now 39 years old and “forever barred from making an advantageous marriage.” At trial, she produced “fervent love letters and affectionate telegrams” and told of how in 1919 Connell again promised marriage even as he prepared to abort their fetus. The defense admitted the two had been sexually intimate, but denied that Connell had ever proposed, charging that she pursued him. The jury was not convinced. They awarded Johnstone every penny of what she asked, a seemingly unusual occurrence. Johnstone declared herself vindicated, telling the press that she did not care if she had “ruined” him since “he ruined me and showed no mercy.” Her experience had not soured her on men completely, but she did offer girls the advice to “go to the altar first.” From what we are able to reconstruct about the breach cases involving white-collar women from press coverage, the evidence suggests a culture in flux: for every stenographer with dollar signs in her eyes, one finds a faithful office wife taken for a ride (Coombs, 3; “Says She was Jilted After Sixteen Years,” New York Times (October 1, 1922), 23; “N.Y. Woman Asks $50,000 Balm of Gas Mask Expert,” Syracuse (N.Y.) Herald (October 1, 1922), x; “Starting Connell Jury”; “Miss Johnstone on Stand,” Lincoln State Journal (June 2, 1923), 9; “N.Y. Woman Wins $50,000 Damages of Omaha Doctor,” Waterloo Evening Courier (June 6, 1923), 1.

The details of the Johnstone-Connell affair are hard to piece together. Johnstone worked for Connell in New York City, but at some point he moved to Nebraska, where he purchased a hospital and became a prominent physician. It seems that he kept his New York office, and that Johnstone handled this business. His relationship with Johnstone continued during his trips to the East Coast and her occasional trips to Omaha, though it is unclear how often these visits occurred.

Plot formulas, production policies, and the exigencies of filling seats in hard times also affected the treatment of sexual coercion and exploitation in Hollywood films. In the early 1930s, the film industry did address the issue of the woman who, in the words of one scholar, was “forced to make a desperate choice when buffeted by hard times and bad men.” These productions complicated the traditional narrative of the “woman’s film” by showing how economic pressures impacted a woman’s personal and romantic relationships. Studies of these movies have shown that the Production Code sought not only to protect dominant moral values, but also to ensure that films did not include too overt a challenge to capitalism. To that end, films that showed how financial hardship endangered a woman’s virtue always muted any economic critique. The films were also meant to entertain; what gender or social analysis there was had to fit the requirements of formula or genre. Thus, truly good women resisted their boss’s coercive demands and tempting offers, or a boss exploited his female employees because he was ruthless and such callousness was to be expected—was even needed—in an economic crisis. Other times the moral danger appeared in a comedy, thereby distancing it from reality.
Though the majority of these films involved salesgirls, a few were set in the office, but regardless of the locale, these were films specifically aimed at women who worked. For example, the advertising campaign for *Employees' Entrance* (1933), in which a department store manager gives a destitute, beautiful woman a job in exchange for sex, asserted that the film addressed “the most pressing moral problem of our times” and told working girls that the picture was about “your lives and your problems.” Mary Beth Haralovich, “The Proletarian Woman’s Film of the 1930s: Contending with Censorship and Entertainment,” in Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey, eds., *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 82-95, 89-90. Haralovich argues that films which feature sexual harassment or women turning to prostitution because of the economic crisis undercut this critique of capitalism by portraying lush settings and fashions which encourage consumption and materialistic desires. Ads were one way by which Hollywood got around the restrictions of the Production Code and were especially salacious, oftentimes quite misleading as to the actual content of the film (Doherty, 107-113).

Newspaper reviews of the film commented that the character of the brutal manager was exaggerated for effect, though acknowledged that there was “doubtless an element of truth about many of the incidents” (Mordaunt Hall, “Mr. Arliss’s Uneasy Head,” *New York Times* (January 29, 1933), X5; N.B.B. “The New Cinema Offerings,” *Washington Post* (January 21, 1933), 12; M.H., “In a Department Store,” *New York Times* (January 21, 1933), 10.) See also, Doherty, 71-73; Mick LaSalle, *Dangerous Men: Pre-Code Hollywood and the Birth of the Modern Man* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2002), 152-58.

18 In *She Had to Say Yes* (1933), Hollywood even more directly addressed the connections between a failing economy and sexual pressures on working women, but again played it for laughs. Florence, the prettieststenographer in the office of a struggling clothing manufacturer, reluctantly agrees to become a “customer’s girl” since out-of-town buyers have tired of the “hard-boiled gold diggers” the company usually provided to help close a deal. Florence does so only to help out the sales manager who she loves, but her new role puts her in peril. As the trailer for the film teased, buyers were “too important to be SLIGHTED and too dangerous to be VAMPED.” How “could a good girl STAY good” when she had been hired to be “nice” to such men? The belief (true or not) that the clothing model’s job included entertaining clients had contributed to the low estimation of the industry. And, as we saw in Sherwood Anderson’s recollections, salesmen did use women as part of their sales’ pitches, often white-collar girls who needed extra income. Similarly, historian Steve Meyer has shown that female automotive factory workers during the depression were fired if they refused to entertain outside salesmen after work. This film, then, tackled a topic that had at least some basis in reality (Steve Meyer, “Workplace Predators: Sexuality and Harassment on the U.S. Automotive Shop Floor, 1930-1960,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 1 (Spring 2004), 82-83).

It did so, however, in a way that downplayed the potential for exploitation and played-up the romantic possibilities of encounters with successful men. The trailer included an ominous scene in which a rich client grabs Florence in his hotel room and tells her she can stop pretending to be “little Miss Virtue.” But as reviews of the film noted, the audience is “never in doubt” about Florence’s virtue; in other words, the formula and feel of the film precluded any real sense of danger, and it is no surprise when she marries the rich client who realizes that she is a “good girl” after all. The film’s presentation of sexual coercion was so unreal that the *Christian Science Monitor* wondered whether it represented “a slice of life—or of a scenarist’s morbid
imagination.” This film purported to examine sexual exploitation, but in its ultimate effort to reassert marital values, it actually exploited and trivialized a problem some women really encountered (She Had to Say Yes (First National Pictures, 1933). This film is not readily available. I have based my summary and analysis on summaries available on movie websites, Doherty, 131, and newspaper reviews (“The Theatre,” Wall Street Journal (July 31, 1933), 3; M.L., “Motion Pictures,” Christian Science Monitor (July 28, 1933), 10). Trailer available at www.tcm.com.

Female (First National Pictures, 1933). Trailer available at www.tcm.com

In the 1930s, the theme of “sex as a factor on the job” ran “strongly” through popular novels, literary fiction, and especially magazine stories. “By 1935...business life and love life seemed inextricably tangled” (Van Rensselaer Halsey, Jr., “The Portrait of the Businessman in 20th Century American Fiction” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1956), 82-83).

Baldwin is largely forgotten today, but she was one of the most prolific and successful writers of light fiction in the twentieth century with a career that spanned almost fifty years. Born in 1893 into a wealthy New York family, Baldwin published her first novel in 1921; at the time of her death in 1978, she had published more than sixty novels, countless short stories and magazine articles, and a number of books of nonfiction. In 1951, she hosted a romance television program, and in the 1960s she penned a column in Woman’s Day. Baldwin reached the height of her success in the 1930s; in 1936, alone, she made more than $315,000 (over $4.8 million today; http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare. In the 1930s, for example, Cosmopolitan paid authors like Baldwin as much as $5,000 for a short story and $40,000 for a serial. Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1964), 124.

Most of the thirty novels she wrote during the depression were first serialized in magazines such as Cosmopolitan, The Saturday Evening Post and Collier’s, and about a dozen were made into films with stars such as Clark Gable and Jean Harlow. Her work also appeared in women’s magazines such as the Ladies Home Journal and Good Housekeeping. Magazine editors loved Baldwin because she was dependable and fast. She once completed a 12,000-word novella during a four-day coast-to-coast train ride and in her 60s was still writing 6,000-8,000 words a day. She explained her depression-era success by noting, “people had to have some escape hatch, some way to get out of themselves.” In her romances, readers found middle class and elite heroines who faced contemporary problems with optimism and solved them “through love and personal honesty.” Baldwin believed her stories offered the business girl on the subway or the housewife at home hope and the knowledge that if she was “true to herself” — determined and morally restrained—rewards, if not riches, would come (“Potato People,” Time (July 20, 1962); “Faith Baldwin, Author of 85 Books and Many Stories, Is Dead at 84,” New York Times (March 19, 1978), 38).

Baldwin’s readership was even larger than the circulation of the magazines in which her stories were first serialized. Almost immediately after serialization, Baldwin’s stories were published as novels, which were reprinted for many years—even decades. In some cases, pulp novel publishers like Dell reprinted the novels, with appropriately lurid covers, suggesting the possibility that working class Americans also encountered Baldwin’s novels. The Office Wife was issued by The Blakiston Group in 1930, 1942, 1944, and 1945; Dell Murray Hill printed Skyscraper in 1931, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1948 and 1990; Triangle Books published Week-End Marriage in 1931 and 1932 and Farrar & Rinehart Inc., in 1932, 1941, 1944, and 1945; Wife versus Secretary was issued by Grosset & Dunlap in 1935 and reprinted by Triangle Books in 1941; Men are Such Fools was published by Aeonian Press in 1936 and reissued in 1942, 1943, 1946. Men are Such Fools was on the best-selling list in 1936 (“The Best Selling Books,” New York Times, (October 4, 1936), BR20).

22 In 1929, Cosmopolitan, with a circulation of 1.7 million, serialized Baldwin’s novel, The Office Wife. The magazine specialized in fiction and prided itself on the quality of its audience, which was reflected in its slightly higher price. In this story, Anne Murdock, a beautiful secretary, marries Lawrence Fellowes, her older boss, in a thoroughly modern tale that accepted divorce and placed sexual desire squarely in the middle of both marriage and the boss-secretary relationship. Baldwin sidestepped the troubling implications of this office romance by having Fellowes’ wife, Linda, ask for a divorce before Anne and Lawrence have declared their love or begun an affair. Although quite fond of each other, Linda and Lawrence had grown apart and now have little in common. Married ten years and childless, theirs had been “a breezy, affectionate sort of love” that after reaching “the clean heights of a wholesome and normal passion” was now as “settled and unstimulating as if they had been forty years married.” When Linda falls in love with a man with whom she shares interests and ardor, she and Lawrence easily and amicably separate. One reviewer could not stomach the “glib shallowness” of this quick and good-natured break-up, but Baldwin was merely presenting the new marital ideal. “What fun we’ll have!” Lawrence promises Anne when he proposes, “What comrades we’ll be!... What lovers!” The snag, of course, was that Anne would now be at home, their office camaraderie threatened by that distance—and by the new secretary. Baldwin portrayed the boss-secretary relationship as a perfect model for a marriage of partners, yet the story suggested that it was understandable, even natural, that an attraction or flirtation developed between a pretty assistant and her successful employer, which meant Anne’s happily ever after ending was not guaranteed. Companionate marriage required love and passion but also “unending vigilance,” and the novel ends with Anne’s awareness of this new reality (Peterson, 213-15; Baldwin, The Office Wife, 54, 278-79; New York Times (March 23, 1930), 24, as quoted in Book Review Digest 26 (Bronx, NY: H.W. Wilson Co., 1931), 251).

Baldwin’s novel, though, is more morality tale than modern romance, offering an extended sermon against falling in love with your married employer, accepting the “half loaf” of an affair, or using sex to advance professionally. The book begins with a foreword that argues that this work of fiction is based on reality. Many ambitious women have followed the typist-stenographer-private secretary route to find themselves at the right-hand of an important man. Repeating a note long heard in the controversy over female employment, Baldwin argued that this woman knew her boss in a way that a wife never could. But the danger she focused on here was not to the wife at home, but to the secretary who judged the men she met by “the yardstick
of the man who has already arrived.” Successful men were usually married with children, and so the secretary found herself a “misfit.” Lonely, she often fell in love with her employer. The problem would not be solved until such women “cut the cloth to the coat” and decided to do what their mothers had done: “love and marry the men who are, like themselves, on the lower rungs of the ladder” (Baldwin, The Office Wife, ix-xi).

Baldwin’s warning begins in the first chapter where she describes the “hysteria” of Miss Andrews, Fellowes’ secretary who has fallen in love with him and now alternates between babying her boss and bursting into tears. Such disruptions cannot be tolerated in an efficient office, so she must go. The “efficient virgin” type who paid no attention to her appearance and had no “emotional outlet” other than her job, Andrews finds herself at forty unemployed and completely alone. She had been pretty in her twenties, but she was socially awkward and “repressed” and had devoted herself to her work, unaware of the “psychological problems” that came with such a one-dimensional life. Through Andrews, Baldwin cautions against denying sexual and maternal instinct. Through Anne, she warns women they should not be arrogant in thinking they can control passions as strong as love and desire (Baldwin, The Office Wife, 5, 10-11, 23).

When Anne takes over as secretary, she determines not to be like the “sexless monotonened” Miss Andrews or one of the multitude of women who abandon their career to marry a man on his way up, only to endure years of poverty and struggle. She has an earnest and devoted suitor of this type, but she wants to “get to the top” herself and she is willing to use her beauty and charm to do so, rationalizing that “a woman in business had need of every weapon she could employ to hold her job, and the man who controlled the job.” After a year of growing closeness, Anne realizes that she is powerfully attracted to Fellowes and that he is not immune to her charms. Telling herself that she feels desire, not love, she begins to “trouble” him with “accidental” touches because “she wanted him” and the “business protection and surety that a love affair with him would afford her.” Of course, she is kidding herself. She really loves Fellowes, not her job, and her ambition and the modern “code of living your own life” have led her towards moral danger. She realizes this before an affair begins and feels ashamed that she viewed sex with such carelessness and calculation. Knowing the danger of her desire—the harm that would come to her by accepting an “unlegalized position” and to him as others heard rumors and laughed at “another Big Business Man gone goofy over his steno!”—she knows she must be on guard. Lawrence comes to realize that he loves her, too, but before he can act on it the press gets wind of Linda’s divorce and incorrectly suspects that Anne is the cause. In response, Anne quits her job and gets engaged to another man to protect her and Lawrence’s reputations. This selfless act serves as penance, a sign that despite her early self-interest she will be a successful wife, and after a number of twists and turns Lawrence and Anne can finally declare their love (Baldwin, The Office Wife, 39, 15, 38, 21, 110-11, 131, 133).

The irony, of course, is that this Cinderella ending contradicts the advice given in the novel’s foreword. Anne is a third generation Irish American from a respectable working class family. With a high school diploma and a business course to her credit, she has worked her way up from the entry-level job of typist to private secretary to the boss. And, just as the foreword predicted, proximity to “so big a man” leads Anne to consciously judge all men by this “high and difficult” standard. Anne’s family urges her to pick friends and a husband from their own class, but Baldwin rewards Anne’s rejection of this advice with the prize of a wealthy husband. In examining how employment colored women’s views of younger men, Baldwin was merely
inserting her voice into a long-standing cultural anxiety about gender roles, sexuality, social class and work. But as palpable as this worry was in 1929, Baldwin could still choose the fantasy rich man-poor girl ending over the innocent joy of young, first-time love. As stock prices fell and unemployment rates rose, such a choice became unthinkable, and Baldwin’s stories took a less romantic view of the older, successful businessman and the beautiful young office worker (Baldwin, *The Office Wife*, 91-92, 130, 211).

Regarding clerical wages, in Chicago in 1931, the annual median salary for a secretary was $1908, for a stenographer $1344, for a typist $1092, and for a file clerk $960 (Fine, 172).

26. Anyone, not just a lover, who convinced a wife to leave her husband could be sued for Alienation of Affection (Jeffrey Brian Greenstein, “Sex, Lies and American Tort Law,” *Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law* 5 (Spring 2004), 732-33.) In 1933, a New York case made national news when a judge ruled that a husband could sue a corporation for alienating his wife’s affections. This man had demanded that his wife resign from her position, but her employers “lured” her back and “ruined his life.” These cases showed how a wife’s employment could challenge a husband’s authority and introduce a rival for her affections in the shape of a desire for autonomy or another man. Importantly, too, the latter suits exposed the fallacy of the public-private divide and raised the question of employers’ legal responsibilities when employees’ personal and professional relationships became intertwined (“Bosky Suit,” *Time* (January 1, 1934), n.p.; “Husband Sues Company,” *New York Times* (December 22, 1933),7; Theodore E. Apstein, *The Parting of the Ways* (New York: Dodge Publishing Company, 1935), 90).

Initially only husbands could bring suit, since married women did not have any legal standing as individuals until states began to pass Married Women’s Property Acts beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. Even then, though, at least one state’s jurists wondered if it was wise to give women this right. Men led such public lives that they were bound to encounter a designing woman at some point, and wives just needed to accept this, especially since allowing them to sue the seductress would clog the courts (Robert C. Brown, “The Action for Alienation of Affections,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review and American Law Register* 82 (March 1934), 476-77, 479).

28 Even some films which suggested that secretaries represented a threat to a man’s marriage showed the wife as partly to blame. See for example, *Why Men Leave Home* (1924), *Hairpins* (1920), *What’s Your Reputation Worth* (1921).

For more advice columns on wives’ fears, see Also see, Britt Craig, “Unrestrained Jealousy Caused the Downfall of this Happy Home,” *Atlanta Constitution* (February 9, 1917), 6; Edith Johnson, “Jealous Wives Versus Pretty Stenographers,” *Oklahoman* (May 12, 1922), 8; “Mary Haworth’s Mail,” *Washington Post*, (May 21, 1938), X9; Doris Blake, “Office Wife Refuses Offer of an Outsider,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (February 21, 1933), 16.

The wife vs. secretary theme also appeared in the black press. Lula Jones Garrett’s column, “Lipstick” noted that a wife needed to be glamorous and charming enough to compete
with her husband’s “office wife” (Afro-American (April 29, 1939), 16). Papers also commented on divorce cases in which a wife blamed her husband’s secretary; see “Ran Around With Secretary, Wife of ‘Y’ Head Says,” Pittsburgh Courier (October 22, 1932), 3, and “Office Wife Stole Her Hubby’s Love,” Pittsburgh Courier (July 15, 1939), 3. In 1938, the Pittsburgh Courier contained a story that sounds like a case of sexual harassment in which a secretary accused her boss of trying to “create an office romance with her.” He fired the secretary, but she maintained that she had eye witnesses who could testify that he had tried to “force himself upon her” at least twice; see “Indignation Greets Attempts to ‘Cover up’ Philly Secretary’s Office Romance,” Pittsburgh Courier (November 26, 1938), 1. A fictional piece in the Afro-American told the story of an unfaithful wife who, on her death bed, urges her husband to marry his “office wife” (Joseph Baker, “Cloistered Ways,” March 1, 1930).

31 For other films in the 1920s that portrayed the female office worker as a marital threat, see Why Men Leave Home (1924), Unchastened Woman (1925), Lonesome Ladies (1927).

32 Generally written in the first person, the “true” confession formula centered on a woman who had sinned, suffered, and repented or who had suffered as she was sinned against. In either case, a heroine relied on herself, bearing up under unfair circumstances or accepting responsibility for her misdeeds and never blaming society or even bad luck for her fate, thereby providing a lesson in individual responsibility and moral restraint. Bernarr Macfadden founded True Story, and it quickly became a success, remaining the leader in a field that quickly spawned numerous competitors. By 1926, True Story had a circulation 2,000,000 (Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1964), 124, 294). True Confessions started in 1922 and was second in popularity; by the late 1930s it appeared periodically on lists of magazines with over 1,000,000 circulation (Peterson, 258, 300). Scholarship on the readers of confessions is thin. We do know that in the late 1940s some typists read True Confessions because they responded to an article that offered help for unwed mothers-to-be (Kunzel, 1467). A study from the 1950s noted that lower level office workers such as file clerks, bookkeepers, and stenographers were sometimes the heroines in confession stories (Gerbner, 33, 36).

33. Confession stories hinted at sexual danger, but the courtship frame meant that the sexual exploitation of economically vulnerable women—what today would be called quid pro quo sexual harassment—was never directly addressed; popular literature set in the white-collar office neglected this aspect of women’s lives. Rob Eden’s $20 a Week, published in 1931, was an exception, with sexual extortion a prominent theme. This novel directly links high unemployment rates in the clerical sector with a boss’s exploitation of his employees. Sally, a beautiful typist in the sales department of a large New York insurance company, works for John Warner, a pompous, stubby, middle-aged man who only hires pretty young, single women. His secretary keeps her job only by going out with him and is desperately seeking a new position. A co-worker warns Sally to avoid him since he is known for making passes at the girls and firing them if they do not submit, but Sally wants to advance and believes she can “handle him.” She can’t. She keeps her virtue, but comes close to losing her job. When she again spurns him, he wants revenge, which he gets by pursuing her best friend, Ann, who also works for him. Ann is
newly married to a man who has just lost his job, and she is desperate to keep hers. She goes out with Warner and submits to his kisses, but when her husband finds out, he leaves. Ann ends up killing herself, and the reader is left to assume that Warner will continue his sexual extortion. This novel explicitly describes women’s economic vulnerability, but even here the romance formula works to deflect the reader’s focus. Ann is a secondary character who must pay for the heroine’s sins. Sally sought Warner’s attention because she hoped to use his favor to secure a promotion, the first step in her plan to become secretary to—and ultimately wife of—the widowed company president. Sally is a gold digger of sorts. Desperately poor, she decides to use her “exceptional” stenographic skills and her beauty to rise to the top. She will not trade on her good looks for gifts, but will use her attractiveness in conjunction with hard work to gain employment opportunities, honestly earning the chance to snag a rich husband. Along the way, Sally falls in love, in the end choosing a young man on his way up over the president’s marriage proposal. Nevertheless, she must suffer for her early scheming ways. A lifetime of guilt over her role in Ann’s death will be her punishment. Sexual coercion is reduced to an ugly plot twist in a courtship narrative, a smudge on the heroine’s happy ending (Rob Eden, $20 a Week (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1931). Rob Eden is the pen name of Robert F. Burkhardt and his wife, Eve. Burkhardt worked in Hollywood; “Rob Eden” wrote over thirty romance novels).

36 Although fiction and film focused on the boss-secretary relationship, most female clerical workers labored in less glamorous surroundings and earned far less than the celebrated assistant to an executive. By 1930, about half of all office workers were employed in offices of more than fifty people, where new business machines were turning the office into a white-collar assembly line. Job security was also an issue. Already before the depression, clerical work in some cities was hard to come by, but beginning in 1932 clerical unemployment began to rise sharply and workers experienced reductions in their pay; at the same time, more job seekers flooded the market as manufacturing jobs declined and professional opportunities dried up for women with college degrees (Sharon Hartman Strom, “‘We’re No Kitty Foyles’: Organizing office workers for the Congress of Industrial Organizations, 1937-50,” in Ruth Milkman, ed., Women, Work & Protest: A Century of U.S. Women’s Labor History (New York: Routledge, 1985), 209-11).

37 In 1937, the New York local of the BSAU reported 2,500 members (Jurgen Kocka, White Collar Workers in America, 1890-1940 (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980) 354 n. 123). Kocka does not provide a breakdown by gender for the Local. The BSAU was affiliated with the AFL. In 1937, 13 BSAU locals, including New York, left the AFL and joined with other organizations to form the “United Office and Professional Workers of America International” of the CIO. At this point they had 8,600 members; by 1939 they had 13,800 (Kocka, 229, 354, n.126.). I have not been able to locate a breakdown of these numbers by gender. As Strom notes, the CIO did not devote its attention to organizing women clericals and in some industries, such as insurance, there was great resistance among male white-collar workers to include women clericals in the union (Strom, 212-220).
CHAPTER 5: Morals and Morale: Managing Sex in Business, World War II to the Early 1960s

8. Of the female clerical workers in major war production areas in 1944-45, 46 percent identified themselves as having been in school the week before Pearl Harbor as compared to 31 percent of those employed in operative work (Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1984) 239, n. 7.

In her contribution to the war effort, the government girl also signaled a new model of female citizenship, and one that was imbued with sexual power. In this way, the continual emphasis on providing supervised masculine companionship to boost girls’ flagging spirits (such as U.S.O. and Y.W.C.A. parties) can be read as a way of diminishing these women’s independence and self assertion; they really just wanted a husband. It also can be seen as a way of containing their efforts to strike out, perhaps sexually, on their own (Page Dougherty Delano, “Making Up For War: Sexuality and Citizenship in Wartime Culture,” *Feminist Studies* 26 (Spring 2000)33).

10. See also, Hubbard Hoover, “Pursuit of Happiness” *Los Angeles Times* (December 26, 1948), C11.

12 In 1944, Haworth warned a secretary against an affair with her married boss, *Washington Post*, March 24, 1944, 9, and April 4, 1944, 7. She warns a secretary not to fall for her boss (March 25, 1940), 11, and counsels another stenographer against getting more involved with her wolfish boss on October 2, 1945), 14. Doris Blake urges a secretary to find a new job after her married boss pursues her in “Adviser Calls a Forum About Office Romance,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (June 1, 1941), G6.

Haworth blamed a “trollop” co-worker and a “scheming” secretary, respectively, for a husband’s infidelity on March 29, 1945, 10, and January 15, 1948, B7. Articles in the black press also urged women not to get involved with their employers and to dress modestly; see Helen Jameson, “It is Not Enough To Be Efficient, One Must Look Efficient,” *Atlanta Daily World* (April 4, 1942), 3, and Katrina, “Romance Incorporated,” *Pittsburgh Courier* (October 16, 1943), 10.
14. For more of Haworth's critique of government office parties, see "Mary Haworth's Mail," *Washington Post* (April 16, 1944), S3; April 20, 1944, 14; April 26, 1944, 14; April 30, 1944, S3; May 3, 1944, 12.

17 According to Steve Meyer, during WWII women workers in the automotive industry were often unsympathetic towards women who were sexually harassed, stating that they had "asked for it." In addition, plant management seems to have taken a very hard line (much harder than the union's) towards the men who harassed their female co-workers. Though Meyer does not offer an explanation for management's crackdown, the situations he describes suggest that these cases, too, reflected concern about morale, recruitment and retention, and productivity.


21 The file contains no information regarding Mrs. P's age or husband. In one case that did not take place in an office setting, a woman was charged with insubordination for not obeying her superior, but she maintained it was because she "would not permit promiscuously to their fondling and dirty talk among the men." Her supervisor wanted her to transfer, but she would not take just any job. This seems to be a case in which the woman worked almost exclusively with men in a job usually filled by men (RG 233, Box 22, Folder 9-18-19, G.S., January 5, 1945).

22 According to historian Margaret Rung's study of personnel management in the federal government during World War II, gendered beliefs did influence counselors' assessment of employees' problems and their solutions. For example, managers believed men and women had inherently different dispositions; since women were natural conciliators, they were especially faulted when their actions destroyed a sense of common purpose or if they adopted an attitude of superiority, both of which were seen as destructive to office morale. And personnel directors in at least some government agencies encouraged supervisors to learn about their employees' personal lives and pay attention to their feelings, which would help management successfully distinguish between "fancied" and "real" grievances. In other words, supervisors needed to understand that an employee's outlook about their job might be "only tenuously related to the real situation." The psychological, case-by-case approach management favored tended to downplay institutional forms of discrimination, and in the cases of Mrs. P supervisors might have been inclined to view her workplace troubles as signs of her personal distress. Since virtually every popular representation of office women portrayed them as looking for romantic intrigue, it would have been easy to see her complaint as resulting from a misunderstanding or imagining whose real origins could be found in disappointments in her intimate relationships. And in the very act of raising a fuss, she had shown herself unable to adjust, in effect showing that she was the problem.


30 Edmund Bergler’s *The Revolt of the Middle-Aged Man* was widely reviewed in newspapers and professional journals; parts of chapters were even reprinted in national papers (2nd Ed., New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1957, vi-vii). Also Frank S. Caprio, M.D, *The Sexually Adequate Female* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1953), 34; John Kord Lagemann, “Wives and the ‘Middle-Age Crush,’” *Coronet* (July, 1958), 60.


34 It is important to note that these Freudian concepts did not just exist in the realm of theory. Social workers, for example, applied them in their assessment of unwed mothers. In a case involving an unmarried girl who worked for a government agency during the war and who had become pregnant in an affair with an older, married co-worker, the case worker described the girl as “very neurotic.” She believed the affair represented the girl’s attempt to work out a “love relationship with a man her father’s age who represented her father to her but of all this she was totally unaware.” Dorothy Hutchinson Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. Available at http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~ adoption/archive/CaseofMissM.htm (accessed March 17, 2008).

36. Caprio’s view was still current in 1968 in an article on nymphomania. The section on the “promiscuous female” began with the “career girl: The unmarried career girl is a woman competing in a man’s world. Often she finds that promotion to a better job is contingent upon her willingness to go to bed with superiors. Success in the business world and successful competition with men are driving forces in her life. Whether she does or does not enjoy the
sexual act is not particularly important to her; getting ahead is... Often such women have never accepted their femininity, and they may have a large degree of unconscious homosexual coloring in their personality" (Alfred Auerack, MD, "Sayriasis and Nymphomania," Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality (September, 1968), 41-42.

38. Also see "Radio: Call Girls on Tape," Time (January 26, 1959) and "Radio: Murrow & the Girls," Time (February 2, 1959).

41 For more on concerns about male impotence during this period, see Lynne Luciano, Male Body Image in Modern America (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 30-35, 69-74.

For other articles that did not deny the basic facts of the program, see Max Lerner, "The Oldest Persuaders," New York Post (January 21, 1959), 38; Jack O'Grady and Leonard Katz, "C-Raiders Led by High Police Brass," New York Post (February 23, 1959), 4.

A few years later, Helen Gurley Brown would include a chapter on office-related prostitution in Sex and the Office. Her editor, Bernard Geis, urged her to begin the chapter "by discussing the fact that, in some offices, the boss expects girls to be 'nice' to clients to a degree that could very easily lead to bed. This pressure is not always easy to resist. You might call it an 'immoral obligation.' Office girls should be alerted to the fact that there is a whole institution organized for this purpose. There is no need for them to pitch in if they don't want to. Either their boss doesn't know the Facts of Call Girl Life (in which case he should be asked to read this chapter) or he is too much of a cheapskate to avail himself of this service. This chapter has been written to help gals resist unfair pressures, and because any book called Sex and the Office can hardly ignore the fact that sex and business meet at their most basic point in Operation Call Girl (Geis to Mrs. David Brown, February 19, 1964, Box 19, folder 9, Helen Gurley Brown Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton Mass; Helen Gurley Brown, Sex and the Office (New York: Bernard Geis, 1964), Chapter 16.


49 After Murrow's broadcast, a number of books (of varying quality) appeared. See, for example, Monroe Fry, Sex, Vice and Business (New York: Ballantine Books, 1959), 6, and Gary Gordon, Sex in Business (Derby, CT: Monarch Books, Inc., 1964).
50. Forrest Teel was not the only executive to be murdered by a spurned office lover. In January, 1955, in Waukegan, Illinois, Alice Miller, 28, shot and killed, Charles G. Marks, Jr., a young executive from a prominent family, who she she met at the electric company where she worked. Their office romance led to her pregnancy, but he denied paternity and refused to marry her, and instead offered her money for an abortion, which, it seems, she was unable to procure. This case was not publicized to the same degree as Teel-Nichols, but it did briefly make national newspapers. Miller ultimately pleaded guilty to manslaughter and was sentenced to 2 to 14 years in prison. “Office Lover Shot Dead by Spurned Girl,” Washington Post (January 10, 1955), 3; “Red-Head, 28, Spurned, Kills Her Lover,” Chicago Tribune (January 9, 1955), 1; “Gets 2 to 14 Sentence in Marks Case,” Waukegan News-Sun (April 4, 1955), 1.

56 Also see, “Shots on the Back Street,” Newsweek 52 (August 11, 1958), 18.

58 In the case involving the female supervisor who told vulgar stories and showed dirty pictures, a few other employees had complained in the past about her “coarse” behavior. The personnel director “severely criticized” her and warned that she would be demoted if there were more complaints. The employee was asked to stay and transferred to another department. Another case examined a female factory worker who quit after being verbally harassed (though not in a sexual nature) by her male co-workers. Although the personnel director believed the woman was probably “hypersensitive and an easy mark for teasing,” he did believe the men needed to be punished, and students were asked to discuss if men resent women “taking over their jobs?” (Florence Peterson, Personnel Case Studies (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), 113-17, 309-16.)

For a summary of views on women in three management books which take differing views on male-female difference, see “Women in Business,” Office Executive (February, 1961), 5. For an article that emphasizes male-female difference, especially in terms of psychological outlook, see Cleo Dawson, The Women Who Work for You,” The Rotarian (September 1957), 12-14. Readers letters which agreed and disagreed appear in “Discussion,” The Rotarian (March, 1958), 14-16. For one company’s views on dating co-workers, appropriate workplace dress and make-up, and job security upon marriage and pregnancy, see “What the Girls Ask Management,” Modern Office Procedures (September 1959), 17-18.

61. According to Jean C. Vermes, Secretary’s Guide to Dealing with People (West Nyack, NY: Parker Publishing Co., Inc., 1964), firms which encouraged mixed social activities and dating believed it built morale and increased productivity, while those who were opposed to dating believed it hurt productivity (104-5).
CHAPTER 6: The White-Collar Revolution: Helen Gurley Brown, Sex, and a New Model of Working Womanhood


Already during World War II, marriage scholars noted that if women earned money like men and worked in the same jobs as men that they would want to have the same sexual experiences as men (Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 69).
4. The continued emphasis on the importance of a woman’s reputation can be seen in Juliet Tree’s “When a Girl Lives Alone,” *Good Housekeeping* (March 1953), 57.


Articles still placed the responsibility on women to set “the rules in the game of love,” inside and outside the office. These articles assumed that unmarried women would receive plenty of attentions but urged women to be chaste (Patty De Roule, “Must Bachelor Girls Be Immoral?” *Coronet* (February 1952), 56-60). An article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* about single women workers noted that “among her duties at the office, she has to learn how to handle herself in any number of situations. Not infrequently, she has to learn how to brush off the world-be-wolf she works for...and still keep her job.” These women also had learn how to say a forceful no to men who had “the boudoir” but not marriage on their minds. Linda Lane, “A Girl Can Live Alone and Like It!” (May 4, 1952) C5. A newspaper column from 1953 warned a woman against taking a job because her prospective employer “made personal, tho complimentary, comments about her appearance during the interview (Ruth MacKay, “White Collar Girl,” *Chicago Tribune* (March 13, 1953), A8.

For even later guides that echo the dominant advice of the 1930s see Jean C. Vermes, *Secretaries Guide to Dealing with People* (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Co., Inc., 1964), 100-104; Irene Silverman, *Nine to Five and After: The Feminine Art of Living and Working in the Big City* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 62-66; Stanlee Miller Coy, *The Single Girls Book: Making it in the Big City* (New York: Avon, 1971 [1969]), 167-69. Vermes' guide describes a variety of “wolf” types, such as “the crude one, usually the boss in a small office where there is no one to chide him for his activities. He is the pincher, the fanny slapper, the squeezer, the nudger, the brusher-againster. The only thing to do about him is either to develop quick reflexes for dodging and ducking, or slap his face and quit (101-02). The *Mademoiselle Handbook* described a situation of “sexual harassment” when describing what to say in a job interview regarding why you left your previous position or are looking to leave your current job: “The honest answer may be that Mr. Dingle pinches you and tries to kiss you every time you go to the files in the back office, but it wouldn’t be diplomatic to tell this to an outsider...Try to give positive, rather than negative reasons for wanting to change.” Despite this statement,
Mademoiselle downplayed harassment. “The real truth is that with many men the wolfing is merely a tired routine; often a simple and firm NO arouses not a bitter or vindictive feeling, but one of relief,” though a woman had to be careful not to insult the man in the process. Predatory men preferred generally waited till after office hours to begin their hunt. Some men were on the make, but the wise office worker did not let this knowledge turn her “into an overly suspicious or overly prudent prig” (Mary Hamman (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1946), 52-56.

Nina Farewell’s *The Unfair Sex: An Expose of the Human Male for Young Women of Most Ages* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953), a slightly tongue-in-cheek advice guide from 1953, warns ambitious women not to believe men who promise advancement in exchange for a sexual favor and against affairs with their boss (13, 78, 201-04). Frances Benton’s *Etiquette* (New York: Random House, 1956) warned female office workers to stay sober at office parties and also declared that the “office wolf is not as common a character as fiction would lead us to believe” (376, 378). Elizabeth Carpenter’s article, “She Studied Her Pothooks, Typing *(Washington Post, July 22, 1951)*” S1, described the work of a number of successful secretaries and, like guides in the 1930s, emphasize the need for a feminine appearance while also warning readers against using their womanliness at work.

In 1962, an advice columnist published a letter from an office worker who chastised wives who assumed that it was their husband’s secretary who encouraged late nights at the office. It was often “the boss who sets up this kind of thing—with an eye to acquiring an ‘office wife.’” The letter writer had “left one good job because of one boss’s unwelcome attentions” so wives should be “edgy” about their husbands, not secretaries (Lynn Hurley, “Watch Husbands, Wives Are Told by Secretary,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (February 2), B10.


Laura, a main in character in one of the most famous lesbian pulps, Ann Bannon’s *I am a Woman* (originally published 1959), works as a clerk in a doctor’s office. Also see Sheldon Lord, *The Third Way* (New York: Signal, 1964) which the cover describes as the “blunt revelations of what happens when deviate women seek advancement in the business world.” Kate Bellosa and Liz Bellows had designs on their boss—and also on each other. Because they were more than ambitious. They were driven by lesbian desires!” In 2007, Monica Nolan did a send-up of 1950s lesbian pulp, *Lois Lenz, Lesbian Secretary* (Kensington).


In 1943, the U.S. Postal Service determined that *Esquire* magazine contained “lewd” material and was therefore ineligible for discount, second-class postal rates. Soon after this decision, hearings were held in which *Esquire* argued that they should still be eligible for discount rates. What is interesting about these hearings for the purpose of this study is how female witnesses disagreed. *Esquire*’s two witnesses, a child advocate and social worker, saw the magazine’s drawings of partially undressed “Varga” girls as symbols of female beauty which
were in no way illicit, but the post office’s female witness, a feminist, disagreed. She believed the illustrations degraded women by suggesting they “gained their point by chicanery and the lure of sex.” The images suggested that women in public would use sex to their advantage, which would compromise the movement towards gender equality. Here again, we see the question of whether women can be in any way sexual without bringing suspicion on themselves, a question that will continue into the twenty-first century. In 1946, the Supreme Court issued a decision that prohibited the U.S. Postal Service from serving as a de facto censor by charging higher rates of postage for “girlie” magazines like Esquire, which made it easier for publishers to distribute such magazines in the 1950s (Joanne Meyerowitz, “Women, Cheesecake and Borderline Material: Responses to Girlie Pictures in the Mid-Twentieth-Century United States” in Kathleen Kennedy and Sharon Ullman, eds., Sexual Borderlands: Constructing an American Sexual Past (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003), 326-29).

In Very Private Secretary pits Dee, the supportive “office wife,” against her boss David’s duplicitous real wife, Leta, in a story that presented a young woman’s sexual transgressions as necessary for the lead characters’ ultimate realization of the domestic ideal. Leta is sleeping and scheming with Chisek, a Communist who is trying to destroy her husband’s business and who repeatedly makes sexually inappropriate remarks to Dee as she waits to see David. Dee is a virgin, but has feelings for her employer, the depths of which become apparent only when she finally gives in to her fiancé’s sexual pressuring and finds his love-making to be only “a glimpse of Nirvana...a hint of how...wholly thrilling love could be.” David knows that Leta is “grasping and mercenary” and completely lacks Dee’s “kindness” and “loyalty,” but his treacherous wife’s “lush, full bosomed curves” had always evoked in him a “frenzy of desire.” It is only by giving her boss her young, “sweet” body that Dee can “exorcise his demon,” his addiction to Leta. Soon after, Dee uncovers Chisek’s plot, and she and David work to expose the conspiracy. In the process, Leta is killed in a plane crash and Chisek rapes Dee in front of David, though she has mercifully fainted before the actual violation. In the end, Chisek is in police custody, and David proposes. The novel has both upheld traditional morality (Dee’s rape serves as penance for her and David’s sexual transgressions) and shown the dangerous side of desire (lust makes David blind to Leta’s evil). Yet it also presents sexual desire as a positive good; it is revelatory, a way to distinguish the gold from the dross, not to mention a necessary component of marital bliss.

A number of the office themed pulps to some degree share the narrative of Very Private Secretary in which a flawed but basically good man who has been abused by an unfaithful wife or unfair boss struggles to regain control of his life. At novel’s end, he has found a devoted and supportive woman—often his “office wife”—and recouped his honor if not always his career, while also restoring traditional gender roles (see for example, Young Secretary, Office Affair, Nicholas Gorman, Company Girl (Derby, CT: Monarch Books, 1963), Lend Me Your Wife, and Group Sex).

Moreover, pulps often presented the most successful men as so despicable that it overshadowed their accomplishments. These characters abused their power, using their position to take advantage of the young women in their office or to gain access to their employees’ pretty wives (even Playboy cartoons featured the theme of the employer’s seduction of his employee’s wife, reflecting cultural concerns that white-collar work was unmanly (Elizabeth Frattergo, Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 53). In addition to the users, other men achieved success through unsavory bargains or family connections, not talent (see for example, Merry Woods, Never the Same
Again (New York: Midwood, 1966), Sidney Porcelain, Office Tramp (New York: Midwood, 1962), Group Sex, Simms Albert, Pound of Flesh (New York: Beacon Books, 1960), Office Wife). Such storylines might have at least momentarily alleviated a man’s sense of personal failure by confirming that many men were undeserving of their success and inspired hope for the future. Narratives that followed a young woman’s sexual awakening in her first office job also offered readers an opportunity for self-affirmation as the girl came to realize that her hard-working boyfriend was really a better man than the prosperous men for whom she worked (Office Tramp, Office Favorite, Office Wife).

Moreover, if theorists are right that readers often identify with characters that do not share their gender, then it is possible that during the course of the novel male readers might have related to figures such as the abused secretary or ambitious career woman. In Pound of Flesh, for example, Kitty, an immensely talented advertising copywriter, can only get ahead by sleeping with powerful men. It is not too hard to imagine that a man who felt that his abilities were overlooked in favor of men who were better at kissing up to the boss might relate to Kitty, especially since she ultimately renounces her promiscuous ways and devotes her energies to resurrecting a good man who is in need of rescue. Pulps were certainly read for erotic release and momentary escape, but, as this brief summary suggests, they might also have appealed to the reader by presenting “wish images” that anticipated a better future. (For how working class women used dime novels to create an empowered identity and a discussion of Walter Benjamin’s concept of “wish images,” see Enstad, 57-60, 68-69. For an analysis of secretaries in hard-boiled pulp detective fiction, including an analysis of how male readers could relate to these characters, see Smith, Chapter 6, esp. 165-66).

A number of pulps from the late 1950s and early 1960s picked up on the themes discussed in the last chapter that so occupied the minds of Americans. After Murrow’s broadcast, a few pulps, some purporting to be “comprehensive” studies of the sexual mores of the business world, appeared. Many more focused on adultery in the white-collar world, and overly materialistic wives often came out looking the worst. Infidelity was discussed in pseudo-scientific works allegedly penned by doctors and drawn from “true” case files. These books built on the popularity of Kinsey’s studies and, of course, Kinsey’s real studies gave them an air of legitimacy. Dr. W.D. Sprague’s Patterns of Adultery, for example, contained the story of Karin, a typical “money-mad, furiously status-seeking” wife who used sex with her husband “almost as though she were training a puppy,” offering her body eagerly when his career was going well and withholding intimacy when it wasn’t. “It was an almost automatic and predictable reaction that he turned to his secretary,” Sprague noted, and for her part, the secretary was not a “whore,” but just a woman who “like so many other secretaries had long before fallen secretly in love with her boss” (The studies repeated what had been said in the coverage of the G.E. scandal and in Murrow’s report. See for example, Monroe Fry, Sex, Vice and Business (New York: Ballantine Books, 1959) and Gary Gordon, Sex in Business (Derby, CT: Monarch Books, Inc., 1964). Novels that addressed the prostitution and business topic include Nicholas Gorman, Company Girl (Derby, CT: Monarch Books, 1963) and Merry Woods, Never the Same Again (New York: Midwood, 1966). W.D. Sprague’s Patterns of Adultery (New York: Lancer Books, 1964).  

Max Collier, *The Payoff* (New York: Midwood-Tower, 1963), Ludwell Hughes, *Surprise Party* (New York: Midwood, 1965), and Max Collier, *Group Sex* (New York: Midwood, 1968). The humorist Corey Ford published *The Office Party* in 1951 (New York: Doubleday), which featured the stock characters of the boss who chased his secretary around the office—"Mr Trench of Sales, having pursued his secretary around the desks with a sprig of mistle toe, has cornered her behind the filing cabinet and is assuring her in maudlin tones that his wife doesn’t understand him. (As a result of these confidences, his secretary will be transferred shortly to the Chicago branch), 16-18--and the stenographer who spent more time freshening her make-up than working.

11. At least two TV shows in the 1950s, *Private Secretary* and *Meet Millie* centered on the life of a single secretary who is, respectively, in love with her boss or looking to find a husband (Betsy Israel, *Bachelor Girl* (William Morrow, 2002, 197). For other presentations of office women as searching for husbands, see William Weinstein, “Beauty Culture, 9 to 5,” *New York Times* (December 11, 1955), 286, and For another humorous portrayal of women who work only to find a husband, see Harford Powel, *Good Jobs for Good Girls* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1949). Powel celebrated the position of receptionist since the men “come to you” and also had a chapter that dealt with how to handle “wolves” at work (17-28, 1121-28). Leone Willett’s *Bosses are Funny! or This is Business?* (New York: Vantage, 1955) also presented the office as sexual space from the view of a young worker. Behaviors that we would now see as sexual harassment appear, though the woman is sometimes cast as a “watercooler vamp” (31, 44-47, 59-61, 67-71).

12. Other films of the period, such as *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1956) *Executive Suite* (1954), and *Patterns* (1956) also examined the issue of executives’ integrity; see Bert Spector, “The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit in the Executive Suite: American Corporate Movies in the 1950s,” *Journal of Management History* 14 (2008), 87-104 for a discussion of corporate films in the post-war era.

The post-war fascination with the executive and the question of integrity can also be seen in the rash of novels, at least 23, set in advertising agencies and written by advertising insiders (see Chapter 6, “Advertising novels as cultural crique: dry martinis, rate steaks, and willing women” in Susan Smulyan, *Popular Ideologies: Mass Culture at Mid-Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

14 *Office Tramp* concludes with Amy marrying a young, hard-working, attractive man who is employed in her company’s maintenance division. Over the course of the novel, two other supervisors harass the young women in the typing pool, an older unattractive man and a mannish lesbian, and they ultimately force themselves on Amy. Her willingness to be intimate with Mr. Akon, however, has transformed Amy from an innocent into a knowing, sexual agent, minimizing any sympathy the reader might feel for her (Sidney Porcelain, *Office Tramp* (New York: Midwood, 1962), 10, 25, 36). In *The Best of Everything*, Shalimar’s shenanigans are known to everyone in the office, secretary and professional alike, but no one takes them seriously. Yet it is not clear that he is harmless. Shalimar quite easily takes no for an answer from the young, single women in his office, but he is much more aggressive with a divorced
woman whom he knows is having an affair. She screams when he assaults her, but no one takes this incident seriously either.

15 Also see, Brown, Sex and the Single Girl, 1, 3, 31, 80-81, 93, 113.


17 Also see Brown, Sex and the Office, 183, 61, 10; Brown, Sex and the Single Girl, 93; Outline, Sex and the Office. #28, Canadian Radio Scripts, Box 16, Folder 9, HGB Papers. None of the fan letters Brown received in the 1960s have survived. Her papers do include letters written in the 1980s in response to the publication of her autobiography, Having it All (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982). Some of these letters note the impact Sex and the Single Girl had on the writer’s life.

22 For more on Brown’s views on sex in the workplace, see Helen Parmalee, “Married Girl,” n.d., Box 21, Folder 6, HGB Papers; Brown, Sex and the Office, 183, 187-88. For Brown’s view on extramarital affairs see Sex and the Office, 184-86, 192-3, 195-6 and Scanlon, 28-29, 36, 72-73. For responses to Brown’s views see Berebitsky, 112-13.

27 Brown, it is important to note, never had children and has consistently maintained that she never wanted them. Instead, she wanted (and ultimately acquired) personal success, wealth, and men (and not, in her 20s and 30s at least, a man). Brown’s desires, then, bore no resemblance to traditional understandings of “womanhood” (On not wanting children see Helen Gurley Brown to Gloria Steinem, December 8, ca. 1989, Gloria Steinem Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, Box 84, Folder 35).

In an interview with Cosmopolitan magazine in May, 1966, Hefner was asked what he thought about “career women who are as successful as men? Do you think it’s impossible or at least difficult for men to find them attractive? Hefner responded, “No, I certainly don’t think it’s impossible. I have no objection to women competing in the business world—as long as the business of being a woman is not eclipsed in the process. Whatever else she is doing, a woman’s first role should be that of a female, just as a man’s first role is being male (Theodore Irwin, “Cosmopolitan Interviews Hugh M. Hefner,” 79-80). An article in that same issue offered a woman’s perspective on Playboy: “The Playboy pretense is that the illusion is identical with some kind of desirable reality—in which the male is a perennially young Don Juan and all women are passionate playmates...Fantasy has enormous value in releasing people’s tensions divertingly...But no one pretends it’s for real...But I do think many [men] try to live the Playboy
role with the girls in the office (Joanna Pettet, “Hugh Hefner: That Dear, Dangerous Old-Fashioned Boy” 84).

31. Scanlon argues that although Brown wholeheartedly advocated women’s equality, she never could relinquish her fear that most women would need some support from a better-off man, a perspective Scanlon attributes to Brown’s financially troubled childhood (76, 172, 183).

32 For more on Brown’s experiences as a young office worker, see Sex and the Office, 285-9. Brown also encouraged women to trust their instinct as to whether a man was a real danger; with this sixth sense, women’s world expanded. “A wolfish interviewer” was no longer “a reason to bolt if you’re old enough to take care of yourself.” One friend of Brown’s, Nancy, encountered an amorous tire tycoon on a job interview. Before she knew it, he had “caught her in a hammerlock and pressed his mouth to hers.” Nancy didn’t like the boss or the kiss, but “she was broke and decided to take the job anyway” because her “instincts said this lunatic acted that way with all girls and probably never followed through.” As one might expect given Brown’s rose-colored representation of the world, Nancy “was right.” Brown, Sex and the Office, 219-21. For different perspectives on a similar situation from other advice givers see Ruth MacKay, “White Collar Girl,” Chicago Daily Tribune (March 13, 1953), A8.

36. Brown’s approach was in line with what Playboy’s “The Playboy Advisor” column told women readers in 1963: the best way to say “no” to a man was simply to say “no” (Fraterrigo, 109). A recent study of teen sexuality emphasizes the importance for young women of getting to know their bodies and desires so they are able to say an affirmative “yes” in sexual situations as opposed to the good girl’s “no.” Girls who do not acknowledge or know their desires are vulnerable and sex often “just happens” to them; Deborah Tolman, Dilemmas of Desire: Teenage Girls Talk about Sexuality (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

39 Also see, Brown, Having It All, 49.
CHAPTER 7: Desire or Discrimination? Old Narratives Meet A New Interpretation

3 Pogrebin first heard of feminism when the publicist for How to Make It warned her that “women’s libbers” would criticize the book for making it seem as though hard work was enough to overcome institutionalized sex discrimination (Mary Thom, Inside Ms.: 25 Years of the Magazine and the Feminist Movement (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997), 5-9). Pogrebin’s new feminist perspective was apparent in 1972 when she offered readers of the New York Times a feminist interpretation of Jack Olsen’s The Girls in the Office, an exposé of an unnamed corporation in which the “sex break” was as “integral to office routine as the coffee break.” Although the book was not much more than an extended Cosmopolitan report on the secret life of the office, Pogrebin argued that it proved feminism’s point. Story after story chronicled an eager young career girl who had been worn down by her dead-end job and the ever-present pressure to meet the sexual and emotional needs of the men for whom she worked. As each of these women came to realize that she would be “excluded from fulfillment,” Pogrebin stated, she was “transformed into a defeated, self-abnegating masochist—professionally, sexually and personally” (Letty Cottin Pogrebin, “The Girls in the Office,” New York Times (July 2, 1972), BR4). Also see Letty Cottin Pogrebin, “The Intimate Politics of Working With Men,” Ms. (October, 1975), 48-51, 105-06.

6 For more on office worker organizations, see Adriana Nasch Stadecker, “9to5: Women Office Workers Interpret a Social Movement” (Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1976).

7 Bread and Roses and the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union were both socialist groups.

8 For other examples of radical feminist critiques of the mind-numbing and demeaning qualities of clerical work, see “Don’t Think,” Womankind (1972) available at
9 A newspaper article in in 1946 urged secretaries and bosses to keep things strictly professional: bosses shouldn’t make “passes” and secretaries shouldn’t fall in love. Bosses also shouldn’t ask their secretaries to do their personal gift shopping: “He ought to love his family enough to select their gifts himself” (Lloyd Wendt, “The ‘Office Wife’ is Out!” Chicago Daily Tribune (September 1, 1946), P3.

11 For one of the first statements about this new movement, see Margie Albert, “What Can Be Done to Change Things...” Ms. (May, 1973), 82.

12 The Federal “Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967” prohibited discrimination against workers over the age of 40. Also see Nadine Brozan, “Job Discrimination Charged by Women Workers,” New York Times (March 5, 1976) and Lindsay Van Gelder, “Sex and Job Agencies,” New York Post (March 5, 1976). A newspaper in Washington, DC heard about WOW’s efforts and conducted a similar poll of 20 employment agencies; 75% accepted a “white only” ad and 95% accepted a request for a “young, attractive female.” Women Office Workers Newsletter (June-July, 1976), 5.

13 One Valentine’s day, WOW presented Chemical Bank with a huge hollow heart, symbolizing their uncaring attitude toward its low paid female employees, some of whom found themselves eligible for food stamps even though they were working full time. As one member of the press noted, “If ‘Let them eat cake’ was a battle cry of the French Revolution, then ‘Let ‘em get their own coffee’ is a slogan of this revolution” (Kathryn Treat, “Hearts and Powers,” in Baxandall Papers, Box 4, Folder 39; Michael Pousner, “Secretaries,” New York Daily News (May 1, 1978), in Gloria Steinem Papers, Smith College [hereafter Steinem Papers], Box 211, Folder 6.)

For another example of a clerical work protest, see Ann Popkin, “The Personal is Political,” in Dick Cluster, ed., They Should Have Served that Cup of Coffee: Seven Radicals Remember the 60s (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 205-6, 210.

14 Berle’s “One guy” joke, concluded thus: “But this guy’s really got trouble. His wife walked in on him one day and saw his secretary sitting on his lap. She said, ‘What does this mean?’ And
he said, "Dear, business has been so lousy I'm studying to be a ventriloquist."" WOW members complained and received a written apology and a promise that jokes "that disparage women office workers" would be avoided in the future. The newsletter also voiced opposition to a TV showing of the 1952 film *Monkey Business*, in which Marilyn Monroe played a well-endowed, but incompetent secretary (*Women Office Workers Newsletter* (August-September, 1976), 5).

WOW's goals for 1977 included striving "for full participation of lower-paid clerical workers, including Blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities... and to address their special problems," but as historian Dorothy Sue Cobble notes, the impact of office-worker groups such as WOW benefited secretaries and skilled workers most, despite their commitment to helping women in the least skilled positions. Office-worker organizations were successful in Improving wages, in pressuring companies to create affirmative-action plans, and most especially, in ridding the secretarial position of its demeaning domestic chores. However, helping women who worked on office machines in factory-like workspaces would take more than consciousness-raising or publicly shaming a company. To tackle these problems, a network of office-worker organizations led by Karen Nussbaum, a founder of one of the first office-workers groups, Boston's 9 to 5, turned to unionization, and in 1981 SIEU District 925 was created for office workers (*Women Office Workers Newsletter* (September-October, 1977), 7; Cobble 213-15.)

15 The six organizations were Dayton Working Women (DWW), 9 to 5, WOW, San Francisco's Women Organized for Employment, Cleveland Women Working, and Chicago's Women Employed). NWEP also argued that sexual harassment was "more narrow than most people's experience and so is not a good organizing tool, and is issue-oriented not member oriented." When a reporter contacted DWW for a comment on the issue, its representative "expressed alarm that 'the overwhelming play given sexual harassment' diverts attention from matters of 'real' concern to female breadwinners." She went on to say that sexual harassment was "encountered so infrequently and [is] so borderline hard to define" that recent emphasis on the issue is a sort of a detriment to our organization. Since it's difficult to show the woman wasn't an accomplice, it's the most impossible kind of discrimination to deal with." The spokeswoman regretted these comments, since DWW had received complaints about harassment and she had experienced it herself when she worked as a waitress (Judith Ezekiel, *Feminism in the Heartland* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002), 199, 211-212). NWEP ceased to exist in 1979, and its members became Working Women, National Association of Office Workers, which looked to traditional labor unions to improve women's work conditions (Judith Sealertender, "Moving Painfully and Uncertainly: Policy Formation and 'Women's Issues': 1940-1080" in Donald T. Critchlow and Ellis W. Hawley, eds., *Federal Social Policy: The Historical Dimension* (Harrisburg: Penn State Press, 1988), 89-91.

Other women office worker groups seem to have disregarded NWEP's advice. WOW's involvement with sexual harassment had started in 1975, when their speakout addressed the topic. That same year they polled 15,000 women on workplace issues, including sexual harassment, and they also offered training on the issue (Baker 46, 88-89). By 1979, Women Employed (which at some point withdrew from NWEP) had folded it into their existing goals: "For women, the issue is part and parcel of a larger question—that of their own respect and opportunity" (Elizabeth Brenner, "Sexual harassment: Hard to define, harder to fight," *Chicago Tribune* (May 30, 1979), B1, 6). 9 to 5 gave money to the Alliance Against Sexual Coercion, one of the first organizations to combat the problem (Baker, 42).
In 1979, the National Commission on Working Women said, “It’s not nearly as significant as some other issues affecting women...But it is the kind of thing the media likes to zero in on, and that’s a shame” (Brenner). Scholar Carrie Baker argues that in the mid-1970s “the responses of women’s organizations were mixed. Many activists believed that sexual harassment was not an important issue—they did not realize how widespread the problem was or how devastating it could be” (Introduction to “How Did Diverse Activists in the Second Wave of the Women’s Movement Shape Emerging Public Policy on Sexual Harassment?” in Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000, available through subscription at AlexanderStreet.com)

16 Also see “L.A.’s Women Liberationists,” Los Angeles Times (June 7, 1970), N54.


Evidence of what would soon be labeled “sexual harassment” sometimes popped up in newstories about the secretaries’ movement. In 1972, for example, the New York Times published “A Tempest in a Typewriter,” a piece chronicling secretaries’ efforts to challenge the stereotypes of “gum-chewing sex kitten, Husband hunter, mini-skirted dingaling” that plagued their profession. The title suggests the story’s tone, but in spite of its approach, it exposed complaints about the sexual culture of the office that should have raised the reporter’s eyebrows. One woman told her that she was transferred to a lower position “after she refused to go drinking with out-of-town executives.” Another secretary, 27 and a member of NOW who resented being called “Sweetheart” and “Baby” by her male colleagues, “angrily” recalled the time when her company decided to hold a hot pants office party and secretaries were invited to “come and display your wares.” She said, “Before I had a raised conscience, it wouldn’t have bothered me.” She went to the party in regular clothes and presented her boss with a pair of men’s hot pants. “I don’t even think he got the point,” she said sadly” (Judy Klemsrud, “Secretary Image: A ‘Tempest in a Typewriter’?” New York Times (March 7, 1972), 34 (a condensed version appeared as “Secretaries File Away the Stereotypes...They Also File away Stares,” Chicago Tribune (March 9, 1972), B1). For similar critiques of the secretary as a sex object, not a worker, see Mary Kathleen Benét, The Secretarial Ghetto (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973 [c1972], 2-3; “A Straight Job”; Tepperman, 3; Nikki Green, “Don’t think, Just type” in Baxandall Papers, Box 4, Folder 36.

The Kelly Girl ads mirrored National Airlines’ famous spots in which a sexy stewardess promised customers she would “FLY you like you’ve never been flown before” (Cobble, 207-210). For more on flight attendants and how they used and challenged gender stereotypes, see Kathleen M. Barry, “Too Glamorous to Be Considered Workers”: Flight Attendants and Pink-Collar Activism in Mid-Twentieth-Century America,” Labor Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas 3 (Issue 3, 2006), 119-138.

Another Kelly Girl ad featured an attractive brunette and carried the headline “Available at no extra cost” (New York Times (August 26, 1971), 63). Under the head shot of a pretty young blonde, another ad’s message read, “You pay for her work. Not for her name,” and the text promised, “You will be satisfied...because the girl we send you will be specifically selected to suit your needs” (New York Times (August 12, 1971), 54).

There were other similar protests. In 1972, NOW protested at the Olivetti Corporation’s
headquarters over their "very unflattering" portrayals of secretaries in their ads (Klemesrud). Other feminists also lamented the way secretaries were used to sell a variety of office products, see Marilyn Salzman-Webb, "Woman as Secretary, Sexpot, Spender, Sow, Civic Actor, Sickie," in Michelle Hoffnung Garsof, ed., Roles Women Play: Readings Toward Women's Liberation (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1971), 15.

Karen Nussbaum, one of the leaders of the clerical movement, once commented, "the women's movement didn't appeal to a lot of office workers. A lot of women who saw the women's movement as anti-male said, 'We're not women's libbers, but I think we should be treated with respect'" (Philip Shabecoff, "March of the Nine-to-Five Woman," New York Times (March 29, 1981), S3, 8).

A number of the women Goldberg interviewed spoke of their experiences with sexual harassment and considered it an important issue, though, surprisingly, one woman who had stood up to her boss actually had an unfavorable view of feminism (Goldberg, Organizing Women Office Workers, 97, 100, 106, 74-75).


31 Redbook was one of the most successful women's magazines, and around this time its editor described its readership as "above average in income, awareness, sophistication and education"

37 In 1979, a similar scandal erupted in the California State Assembly, though by this time the concept of “sexual harassment” was established enough that this was the primary frame used in discussing the situation (Claudia Luther and Larry Stammer, “Case Shatters Sexual ‘Code of Silence,’” *Los Angeles Times* (October 28, 1979), A3).

38 Gender and class politics entered the picture from the minute Ray first told the press that Hays, 65, recently remarried and the powerful chairman of the House Administration Committee, had never asked her to do any Congress-related work, but had been visiting her once or twice a week for the last two years for sex. The press described her as a “comely if shopworn blonde” who liked to pose for photos with famous men always with “lots of suggestion of mouth action,” and who lived in an apartment “furnished totally in mass-produced Mediterranean.” Portraying Ray in such a way made it difficult if not impossible for any one to see her as a victim. In the press’s presentation, she was clearly a woman who had capitalized on her physical attractions and was now trying to capitalize on her relationship with a famous man to become famous herself, as evidenced by the timing of her confession, which coincided with the publication of her tell-all novel. Hays had behaved badly, but as a typical assessment of the situation noted, “gregarious politicians attract a stable of admiring groupies. Often away from their families, they have unusual opportunities to chase—or be caught by—willing women.” The real issue, then, was if Hays had used taxpayers’ money to feed his sexual hunger, which could lead to criminal charges of fraud. After denying the affair for two days, Hays confessed on the floor of the House that it was true, though he insisted Ray was not “hired to be my mistress” (“Sex Scandal Shakes Up Washington,” *Time* (June 14, 1976), 10; Clark and Maxa; “Indecent Exposure on Capitol Hill,” *Time* (June 7, 1976), 12, 15; “Ray Waited Publisher’s Nod,” *Washington Post* (June 13, 1976), 10. Ray’s novel, *The Washington Fringe Benefit* was published by Dell in 1976). For more on Ray’s accusations against other politicians, see Rudy Maxa, “Gravel, Gray Deny Houseboat Date Story,” *Washington Post* (June 13, 1976), 10; John M. Crewdson, “U.S. Studies Charge of Sex-for-Vote Bid,” *New York Times* (June 12, 1976), 1.

40 A handful of legal cases charging that an employer’s sexual conduct towards his employee violated Title VII had been filed even before “sexual harassment” was named. The first ruling in favor of a plaintiff had been handed down just a month before Ray told her story. Even though the case was in Washington, D.C. and received extensive press coverage throughout the country, none of the commentary on Ray mentioned this case or used the term “sexual harassment.”

41 For more examples of reporters who emphasized politicians’ right to privacy or downplayed the seriousness of sexual harassment, see David M. Alpern, “An Overdose of Scandal,”
An author who took gender equality seriously still found it difficult to care about sexual abuses. An article discussing sex discrimination on the Hill dismissed sexual advances by the boss as “generally the least of [a woman’s] problems.” The real issues were unequal wages and lack of opportunity, especially since many women were “looking for husbands, [and] some are excited by the power and celebrity of the men around them” (Angus Deming, “Women of Washington,” Newsweek (June 14, 1976), 28).

For more on holding women responsible, see “Letters to the Editor,” The Washington Post (August 8, 1976), 36, and Farley, 258-59.

Not everyone was persuaded by Farley’s analysis. One reviewer could “follow the logic in describing the woman who ‘sleeps her way to the top’ as … merely attempt[ing] to influence what she perceives to be the inevitable,” but she found excusing Ray’s employment by Hays in these terms “hard to accept.” She did not believe Ray was reacting to the status quo, but rather actively seeking opportunities to use sex to her advantage, which meant she was not an object of sympathy (Jane Freundel, “The Male Harasser,” The Washington Post (October 6, 1978), D7). Other activists and scholars made similar arguments to Farley’s and noted that it was a way to deny the talents of the few women who had succeeded, a theme emphasized in the discussion of Mary Cunningham discussed in the next chapter; see for example, Backhouse, 149-56; Evans, 219; Caryl Rivers, “Sexual Harassment: The Executive’s Alternative to Rape,” Mother Jones (June 1978), 21-29.

Around this time, Good Housekeeping’s editor described his audience as young homemakers from twenty to forty years old, married and living in the suburbs (Tebbel and Zuckerman, 269).

With regard to the issue of whether a woman should be able to handle the problem on her own, a survey from 1981 showed that more men than women thought that a woman should be able to handle the problem herself. In addition, 78% of women said that dressing conservatively did not protect a woman against harassment (Eliza G.C. Collins and Timothy B. Blodgett, “Sexual Harassment: Some see it...some won’t,” Harvard Business Review (March-April, 1981), 76-94). Feminist authors often focused on exposing the “myth” that it was easy for women to control men, see Evans, 208-09 and Backhouse, 41, 66-67.

For another article that takes “quid pro quo” seriously but dismisses a hostile environment and also implicates women, see ry Bralove, “Career Women Decry Sexual Harassment by Bosses and Clients,” Wall Street Journal (January 29, 1976), 1, 15.

Secretaries weren’t the only ones to experience a hostile environment. In 1971, a female attorney described how a judge repeatedly flirted with her and one day said “I see today is not one of your ‘no bra’ days. He proudly informed me that he had seen me a while back in my neighborhood on one of my ‘no bra’ days. That kind of thing goes on a lot—from judges, state’s attorneys, clients and, for sure, from one’s so called colleagues. One time, I owed another defense lawyer money. He told me to bring it to his office—and, by the way, to come naked. Later he said, he didn’t understand why a woman with a nice body wouldn’t just take that as a compliment” (Susan, “Lemme tell ya about being a woman lawyer,” Womankind (1971) available at http://uic.edu/orgs/cwluherstory/CWLUArchive/womlawyer.html

For similar perspectives that suggest women bring on men’s attention through their dress or demeanor or that the Sexual Revolution is responsible for the problem, see Rhoda Koenig, “The Persons in the Office,” Harper’s (February, 1976), 87-88, 90; Mike LaVelle, “Advances that should be fought,” Chicago Tribune (April 9, 1977), S8; Richard Cohen, “Sexual Harassment: Is It a 2-Player Game?” Washington Post (August 16, 1979) B1; Joan Beck, “How women are coping with sex at the office,” Chicago Tribune (April 21, 1980), C2; Art Buchwald, “Who’s Harassing Whom?” Los Angeles Times (June 19, 1980), G2; Baker, Women’s Movement, 144. An article in the New Pittsburgh Courier, an African American newspaper, stated that “It is still the woman who determines the nature and sets the tone of business relationships with male colleagues. This is done right at the start since men tend to make a sex appraisal of a woman based on the first meeting” (March 19, 1983), 3. Also in the black press arguing that a smart woman can take care of herself, see William Raspberry, “The Right Remedy for Sexual Harassment,” New York Amsterdam News (May 2, 1981), 17.

In 1983, Abby was less sympathetic to a boss who didn’t know how to handle a valuable employee who was “aggressively” pursuing him and told him to tell her “No.” (“Boss Should Dispense with Hesitance,” Chicago Tribune (September 7, 1983), D5.

The authors of the study that Time reported on spent much time analyzing the “unexpected” finding that men were reporting harassment in roughly the same percentage as women. They suggested that it reflected changes in women’s sexual behavior brought on by the women’s movement and sexual revolution. Women were increasingly taking the initiative in asking men out or in propositioning them for sex; that is, women were taking on the traditionally male role. The majority of women were the men’s co-workers, not supervisors, and personal attraction seemed to be the women’s motivation given that they did not approach other men, approached men relatively soon after they met, and were approximately the same age as the men. Women, by contrast, described being approached by older men, who were more often their supervisors, and who made similar overtures to other women. The authors’ surprise at their findings was magnified by the fact that there were marked differences between men and women in terms of their views on what constituted sexual harassment, with men defining something as harassment at lower rates than women. This led the authors to speculate that, given different cultural beliefs about male and female sexuality and different gender roles in sexual interactions, men found the interactions “ego enhancing,” while for women they were demeaning and frightening

For other examples that portray women's harassment of men as identical or similar to men's harassment of women, see Backhouse, 67-69; Collins and Blodgett, 81-2; Mary Coeli Miller, Inge M. Berchtold, Jeannenne L. Oestreiche, and Frederick J. Collins, Sexual Harassment (New York: Petrocelli Books, Inc., 1981), 5, 37-39.

56 It appears that some early cases did not make it to trial, see Linda Charlton, “Suit Contends Sex Was a Condition for Keeping Job,” New York Times (March 30, 1972), 22.


67 Raspberry's article was originally published in the Washington Post as “Just What is Sexual Harassment?” (September 22, 1980), A15; Baker, 118-19. Columnist Mike Royko was similarly skeptical of government involvement, stating, “if government is going to step in and outlaw leering, it must also take a stand on swiveling, slinking, wriggling and wagging” (“Nice Smirk If You Can Get It,” Los Angeles Times (September 10, 1979), OC_B1). The Times printed two letters commenting on this column. One man argued that it led to a “blame the victim” mentality, while a woman maintained that women who complained about harassment were “criers” not “doers” who hurt the movement for gender equality (“Royko’s Look at Leers” (September 23, 1979), 121). Also see Walter Pincus, “Sexual ‘Nonharassment’: Yet Another Form of Discrimination,” Washington Post (November 17, 1980), A3. For more on this topic including a discussion of Phyllis Schlafly's 1981 testimony before Congress against the EEOC's regulations on sexual harassment in which she argued that it wasn't a problem for “virtuous” women, see Baker, 134-37, 144-45.
Similarly, the feminist analysis meant an end to articles that discussed *quid pro quo* situations solely in terms of a courtship paradigm of a man’s prerogative to ask and a woman’s choice to accept or refuse. Such a piece appeared in *Harper's Bazaar* in 1975, in which the author described her experience at age twenty-two when she realized that a job offer depended on her willingness to sleep with her prospective boss. Her financial need and naiveté made the decision for her, and she never judged her employer. Instead, she accepted this as part of business as usual and made no distinction between coercion and desire. “Every single day women who work or want to work are faced with similar decisions,” she stated, before going on to list the four basic reasons women slept with their boss: “a) to get the job; b) to keep the job; c) to get a raise/promotion; d) because you’re attracted to him and maybe a tiny bit in love.” The rest of the article focused on women who were erotically or emotionally interested in their employers and described the pros and cons of intimate relationships with these men; the only reference to power appeared in the context of describing women who liked to be sexually linked to powerful men. Although updated to reflect a post-sexual revolution acceptance of non-marital sex, the story concluded with the traditional office romance focus on marriage; “getting in the sack with the boss might just get you sacked. On the other hand, sleeping with him now might lead to sleeping with him forever.”
CHAPTER 8: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: Wanted and Unwelcome Advances After “Sexual Harassment”

2 For other complaints about the EEOC regulations, see Bruce Jacobs, “Fixing the blame for sexual harassment,” *Industry Week* (October 27, 1980), 29-30.


11 A number of magazines and newspapers covered Quinn’s study, emphasizing the negative effects of an office romance. *Playboy* was an exception; in an issue that also included a nude pictorial, “The Girls in the Office,” a columnist expressed “surprise” at Quinn’s finding that only a small percentage of men had been flattered by the attentions of women “who hoped to use sexual involvement to advance their careers” (“Man & Work,” *Playboy* (August, 1978), 171).

For an example of a case in which the affair between a married man and his divorced secretary resulted in her transfer and his promotion, see Robert E. Quinn and Noreen A. Judge, "The Office Romance: No Bliss for the Boss," *Management Review* 67 (July, 1978), 45.

As late as 1971, a guide for male managers warned that "some women use their feminine wiles to make the going a little easier for themselves" (Ray Killian, *The Working Woman: A Male Manager's View* (New York: American Management Association, 1971), 23).


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17. The development of new technology also drew attention to the changing status of clerical workers, see Georgia Dullea, "Is It a Boon for Secretaries-Or Just an Automated Ghetto?" *New York Times* (February 5, 1974), 32.


20 For more on businesses' approaches, see Joan Beck, "On romance, the company rule is 'let her go first,'" *Chicago Tribune* (October 13, 1980), D2; Mortimer R. Feinberg and Aaron Levenstein, "Sex and Romance in the Office and Plant," *Wall Street Journal* (November 29, 1982), 26. For readers' response, including one that urged companies to abandon "office parties" since they could lead to charges of "accessory" to sexual harassment, see "Letters to the Editor,"


31 The use of psychology can be quite controversial, as in the “abuse defense,” which argues that a woman who has experienced sexual abuse in her past would be hypersensitive towards even a vaguely sexual comment and overreact to ordinary workplace interactions (Margaret Stockdale, et al., “The Relationship between Prior Sexual Abuse and Reactions to Sexual Harassment,” Psychology, Public Policy, and Law 8 (March 2002), 64-95).

In the late 1970s a few psychoanalytically-oriented professionals offered reporters an at times skeptical assessment of sexual harassment, and beginning around 1980 social science researchers began to investigate the phenomenon. In 1978, for example, a doctor at the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis told a reporter that “You can’t make every flirtatious look or exchange an occasion for a federal case... Are women really being abused?... Are women indeed such helpless creatures?” In 1979, the director of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Institute wondered what was really behind the sudden attention to the issue and suggested that the concern possibly reflected “a social climate that elicits minority complaints.” And, although power was a factor, he suggested that sexual harassment was ultimately about sexual desire. Bosses might be making more sexual demands “because a number of men equate a woman’s freedom with her approachability” and for others “the exercise of power” was an “eroticizing and exciting prospect,” while some women found pleasure in “subjugation.” Meanwhile, behavioral and industrial psychologists began to study the issue, focusing not only on its prevalence and social perceptions, but also on how victims practically and emotionally coped with and responded to the harassment (Elaine Markoutsas, “Sexual Harassment,” Chicago Tribune (January 22, 1978), D1, 4; Lois Timnick, “Sexual Coercion: Often Real, Often Imagined,” Los Angeles Times (October 28, 1979), A3).

37 For more reactions, including many that reflect an individual’s social class, see Felicity Barringer, “Hill’s Case is Divisive to Women,” New York Times (October 18, 1991), A12, and Michel McQueen and Dorothy Gaiter, “Politics & Policy,” Wall Street Journal (October 14, 1991), A14; “Reactions Varied Over Thomas, Hill,” Seattle Times (October 16, 1991).


38 For more on the black press’s and black commentator’s response to the hearings, see Crenshaw, 420-29. For more on Thomas, Hill and racial stereotypes, see Richard L. Berke, “The Thomas Nomination; Thomas Backers Attack Hill; Judge, Vowing He Won’t Quit, says He is Victim of Race Stigma,” New York Times (October 13, 1991), 1; Jack E. White, “The Stereotypes of Race,” Time (October 21, 1991), A25.

42 Also see Margaret Carlson, “The Ultimate Men’s Club,” Time (October 21, 1991).


In 1994, Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina was said to have engaged in excessive touching of his then-freshman colleague Patty Murray of Washington in the Senators’ elevator. Murray later asked for and received an apology from Thurmond (Mark Leibovice, “Washington Traffic Jam? Senators-Only Elevator,” New York Times
46 A little more than a week before the Packwood story broke, nine women anonymously accused Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HA) of sexual harassment, though the story seems to have died almost as soon as it was published. Given the lack of attention to Inouye, two readers of the *Seattle Times* believed the press’s liberal bias explained the focus on Packwood (Desda Moss, “New Sex Allegations against Inouye,” *USA Today* (November 12, 1992), 2A; “Getting It,” *Seattle Times* (December 20, 1992).

47 Also see “Sexual Harassment,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution Poll* (June 1993).


56 A 1991 survey showed the belief that women sometimes enter into affairs for “organizational rewards,” however, no one thought that about men (Claire J. Anderson and Caroline Fisher, “Male-Female Relationships in the Workplace: Perceived Motivations in Office Romance,” *Sex Roles* 25 (1991), 165).

57 A 2009 first-person story in *Elle* chronicled an attractive young bond trader’s flirtation with her boss that ended badly when she refused to have an affair. Although some readers were sympathetic, most were critical of her attempt to trade on her attractiveness; Melanie Berliet, “Sexual Politics: Doll Street,” *Elle*, posted on-line November 16, 2009, available at http://www.elle.com/Life-Love/Society-Career-Power/Sexual-Politics-Doll-Street (accessed 1/6/2010).

In a 1992 survey, 66% of readers believed being passed over for a promotion because a boss favored his lover was a form of sexual harassment (Ronni Sandroff, “Sexual Harassment: The Inside Story,” Working Woman (June 1992), 51).

In Miller v. Department of Corrections (2005), the California Supreme Court held that an employee can make a claim for sexual harassment based on widespread sexual favoritism. The case was brought under the California Fair Employment and Housing Act, not Title VII, but it nevertheless led to headlines predicating a flurry of similar suits under Title VII and to a number of law journal articles advising employers on how to respond to the challenge of office romances and their potential negative fallout. See Glenn M. Gomes, James M. Owens and James F. Morgan, “The Paramour’s Advantage: Sexual Favoritism and Permissibly Unfair Discrimination,” Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal 18 (2006), 73-88.

In a 2006 office romance survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, 72% of polled organizations did not have a formal policy addressing dating in the workplace and of those that did only 9% prohibited it (Jocelyn Voo).


Regarding office affairs, one relationship expert has an annual “Christmas Infidelity Awareness Campaign” which encourages spouses to attend their mate’s office Christmas party to spot any on-going affair or to stop one from starting. Such vigilance is justified by studies showing these annual festivities to be breeding grounds for intrigue. One private investigation firm found that most affairs began at such events, and in a Trojan Condoms survey, 49% of participants said they would be willing to “go all the way” with a co-worker at the party if the opportunity presented itself; Ruth Houston, “Infidelity: How the office Christmas party can expose a husband’s workplace affair,” The (McAllen, TX) Monitor (December 11, 2008); “Office Christmas Parties Breed Workplace Affairs, Warns Infidelity Expert (December 16, 2009), available at http://www.examiner.com/x-17416-Infidelity-Examiner--y2009m12d15-Infidelity-and-office-Christmas-parties--the-shocking-truth (accessed 1/7/2010).

Lisa Miller and Lorraine Ali note in their article from Newsweek, “The New Infidelity” that “nearly 60 percent of American women work outside the home, up from about 40 percent in 1964. Quite simply, women intersect with more people during the day than they used to. They go to more meetings, take more business trips and, presumably, participate more in flirtatious water-cooler chatter” (Aug 8, 2004).


In 2009, the film Up in the Air explored the female travelling businesswoman’s infidelity, presenting her as every bit men’s equal. As she tells her lover, “I am the woman you
don’t have to worry about. Just think of me as yourself, only with a vagina.” As it turns out, he is the one whose emotions are crushed when he learns that she is married (Paramount Pictures, 2009).

67 One woman who emphasized her attractiveness proudly stated, “Sex and office politics go hand-in-hand, and I play the game pretty well. I have no regrets that my relationships with co-workers have opened doors for me — the modern workplace is very competitive.” In sum, 1/4 of women felt they had benefited because a supervisor found them attractive, while 13% felt they had been unfairly passed over because a supervisor or manager found them sexual threatening. Women who exploited their sexuality, however, generated resentment from male and female colleagues alike. One man in sales complained, "Female salespeople have told me that they have no problems being flirty to close a deal. Women can't have it both ways, but in my experience that is reality.” Meanwhile, four in ten respondents said that women who were promoted quickly were invariably subject to gossip that they had slept their way to the top, while four in ten of those respondents believed these rumors to be true. Despite all the concern about women using their sexuality for personal gain, 78% of both men and women felt they had been treated fairly in the workplace and had not lost out on promotions or other benefits to people who had a close personal relationship with the boss. And, in fact, the “old boys clubs” were still a bigger problem than romantic unions when it came to promotions. Respondents of both sexes named friends (which were as likely to be female as male) three times as often as lovers as the beneficiaries of favoritism. (Janet Lever, “Office Romance: Are the rules changing?” available at http://www.conference-board.org/articles/atb_article.cfm?id=344 Accessed 1/5/2010).
CONCLUSION


3 When polls gave respondents the opportunity to choose that both were equally responsible, many chose this option. However, in only one poll was this choice the majority’s response (U.S. News and World Report, September 18, 1998, at the time the Starr Report was released). In two other polls, the number who believed both were responsible was well below the number who believed Lewinsky had gone after Clinton. (Newsweek Poll, February 14, 1998; Newsweek Poll, March 6, 1999). When polls asked if Lewinsky was a victim or opportunist, the response was overwhelmingly the latter (Time/CNN Poll, September 18, 1998 and March 5, 1999). One poll showed that the majority had little or no sympathy for Lewinsky (CBS News Poll, February 8, 1999), and another showed that of all the primary figures in the impeachment trial (Clinton, Lewinsky, Starr, and Linda Tripp), Americans harbored the most animosity towards Lewinsky (Time/CNN, September 18, 1998).

8 Feminists generally supported Clinton, which allowed critics the opportunity to cast them as hypocrites. Not surprisingly, efforts to discredit feminists used class and gender stereotypes to make their case. One conservative argued that feminists “disdained” Jones because of her evangelical, Southern background—“Who you gonna believe? The Oxford-Yale man or trailer trash?” Columnist Maureen Dowd mocked feminists’ lack of support for Jones and Lewinsky by explaining they were “the wrong kind of girl.” Apparently it wasn’t sexual harassment, Dowd chided, “if the women are N.O.C.D. (not our class, darling),” which also explained why feminists had said nothing when one of Clinton’s supporters compared Jones to a dog. These comments built on the oft-cited criticism of feminism as exclusively a white, middle-class movement by referencing long-standing stereotypes that correlated working class status with sexual promiscuity. Although used for completely different purposes, these statements resembled comments made by supporters of female office workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who argued that these women’s middle-class status afforded them a degree of protection. Their upbringing had given them the fortitude to resist temptation and the
moral knowledge to cherish their virtue; knowing and respecting these women’s Christian principles and lady-like conduct, men would likely test them less (Charles Krauthammer, “Defining Feminism Down,” The Weekly Standard (March 15, 1999), 9; Maureen Dowd, “Dear Clarence,” New York Times (February 1, 1998), 4).

This was not the first time feminists had found themselves labeled as hypocrites for not immediately condemning a man who had been accused of sexual harassment. Both Brock Adams and Bob Packwood were known as dedicated supporters of women’s issues, and, though he was a Republican, Packwood was a stalwart supporter of abortion rights. Conservatives argued that this explained why feminists were slow to criticize these men while they had quickly condemned Thomas (see Mindy Cameron, “Denial, Deceit Doomed Brock Adams,” Seattle Times (March 8, 1992); Paulette Thomas, “Packwood, Friend of Women’s Groups, Gets an Easier Ride than Thomas,” Wall Street Journal (December 21, 1992), A10; Florence Graves, “Feminists See Packwood Case As Pivotal Test of Strength,” Washington Post (January 30, 1993), A4).

In the case of Clinton, the charge that feminists had again put politics over women surfaced. In addition, by this time the backlash against sexual harassment included a critique of feminism as anti-sex and anti-men, which allowed conservatives to charge feminists with changing their tune when they emphasized that Lewinsky’s involvement with Clinton was consensual (see, for example, Ellen Goodman, “Why are feminists taking heat over the Lewinsky matter?” Boston Globe (February 5, 1998), A19; David G. Save and Alan C. Miller, “Clinton Allegations Dividing Feminists,” Los Angeles Times (March 23, 1998), 13; Kathleen Parker, “Why P.C. feminists won’t back up Bill’s floozies,” Cosmopolitan (April 1998), 70; Jennifer Harper, “Clinton gets protection behind feminist skirts,” Washington Times (September 25, 1998), A1.

11 The term “third wave” was coined by Rebecca Walker in an article written in response to the Thomas hearings (“Becoming the Third Wave,” Ms. (January/February, 1992), 39–41).

After the Starr report was released “post-feminist” Katie Roiphe described Lewinsky as engaging in the “time-honored female tradition” of using “sexual power as a way to try to improve one’s position in the world” (“Monica Lewinsky, Career Woman,” New York Times (September 15, 1998), 27).

The issue of women’s victimization by a powerful man vs. such a man’s erotic charge resurfaced during the Letterman scandal on feministing.com, an on-line community for young feminists. Although the majority of comments warned against taking a paternalistic view towards subordinate women who got involved with their employer, a number of also believed such relationships carried a great risk of exploitation, suggesting that this issue is far from resolved. Available at http://www.feministing.com/archives/018156.html (accessed 1/14/2010).

12 Alison Hart’s (aka Jennifer Greene), perception is that the boss-secretary romance disappeared in the 1980s and was replaced by stories that involved a professionally successful woman’s romance with a successful man or a career woman’s relationship with a man who supported her ambition. The boss-secretary theme seems to have returned in the late 1990s, reflecting the reality of workplace romances. Hart’s assessment of the boss-secretary romance can be seen in
Susan Meier’s *Husband From 9 to 5*, in which a secretary’s amnesia forces her boss to pretend he’s her husband. When she kisses him, he is both mortified and turned-on: “He never would have thought any kind of sexual idea about Molly. . . . She was Molly for Pete’s sake. A decent man didn’t have sexual thoughts about a co-worker. It was even more disgraceful to have sexual thoughts about an underling, a woman he supervised. . . . it was inappropriate” (New York: Silhouette Books, 1999, 46). In romances like this, authors get around the issue of harassment by having the woman pursue her boss, who is too professional and decent to have previously thought of a female subordinate in a romantic or sexual way. Such a narrative, of course, breathes life into the old notion that it is women, not men, who bring the personal and emotional into the office and it perpetuates the stereotype that women are women first, workers second. Some romances deal with the issue of sexual harassment head-on, avoiding any accusation of being “anti-male” by contrasting the honorable man who saves or truly loves the heroine with the dishonorable office lech (see for example, Arlene James, *Mr. Right Next Door* (New York: Silhouette Romance, 1999) and Nancy Warren, *Fringe Benefits* (Toronto: Harlequin. 2003). In the novel’s front matter, Warren describes her heroine as a “feminist.”). For more on Hart’s views, see “TRR Forum: Romance Fiction as a Feminist Issue,” available at http://www.theromancereader.com/forum24.html (accessed 1/24/2004).

A few commentators have expressed concern about the boss-secretary romances and their tendency to glide over the issue of sexual harassment and an imbalance of power, but the fantasy shows no signs of abating. Harlequin’s 2009 titles on this theme included Carole Mortimer, *The Virgin Secretary’s Impossible Boss*, Nicola Marsh, *The Boss’s Bedroom Agenda*, and Kathryn Ross, *Mediterranean Boss, Convenient Mistress*. For more on this topic, see (Cynthia Penn, “Is It Sexual Harassment or Is It Romance?” available at http://wordweaving.com/articlenov07_01.html (accessed January 25, 2004).

14 On the backlash against sexual harassment, see Cochran, 182-84.

15. For a case of same-sex sexual harassment in the railroad industry, see Edwin B. Martin, Jr. and Richard N. Cote, *Stopping the Train: The Landmark Victory Over Same-Sex Sexual Harassment in the Workplace* (Corinthian Books, 1999)
DO HIS LEERING EYES OR OFFENSIVE REMARKS MAKE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE?
DOES HE TOUCH YOU UNNECESSARILY?
DO YOU AVOID MEETING ALONE WITH HIM?
ARE YOU AFRAID YOU’LL HAVE TO QUIT YOUR JOB BECAUSE OF HIM?
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Postcards from the author’s collection.
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See here, you old sinner! I send this to show
That your sly wicked doings I perfectly know.
Your wife suspects nothing, poor innocent soul,
But if you keep on, I will tell her the whole;
So you'd better stop short and not be so gay,
Or you'll find it expensive the fiddler to pay.

WE KNOW YOU!
Although you are extremely sly,
And prim enough when folks are by,
Don't think we don't know what you do
When you suppose you're out of view.
This picture shows we've got down fine,
The way you fun with "biz" combine.

THE TYPEWRITER
We're on to you, you're very bum;
You cannot strike a key straight.
You sit there just to play goo-goo
With poor old Mister Staylate.

POSTCARDS FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.
Should Stenographers Work in Cages?

Here is Dr. L. B. Couch of Nyack, N. Y., Dictating to Miss Olga Sippach. The Artist Has Drawn About the Stenographer Such a Cage as Charlotte Smith of Boston Suggests.

Mrs. Charlotte Smith of Boston, "women" employers inclined to agile. "Some men are good and mean, an

Miss Sippach while taking dictation. about, are not so kind. Cages are non-

C. 1915