Such wise teachers understood that women's decisions had consequences. They advised students who expected to marry differently from those who would remain single. Marriage, they made clear, changed women's options. Mary Lyon emphasized that, once married, "males should go forward in all public duties, the female should go forward in private duties with courage, patience, and submission. Men are to earn a support, and the women to save." Zilpah Grant insisted that a woman "yield cheerfully more than half to one who has an equal claim to herself," for, she explained, "where there are only two there can be no majority, and the supremacy must rest on one." But, as Grant herself observed, finding a man worthy of the deference of an educated woman might be difficult, for, she warned, a woman "must see that she do[es] not marry a man whom she cannot reverence."[11]

These educators would not have declared themselves feminists, although they defended women's rights to education, even as they avoided the thorny political issue of slavery, and often opposed women's suffrage. Nonetheless, they showed women students that they had both a right and an obligation to take themselves seriously. Emma Willlard had declared that in educating the female sex, the first object should not be "to prepare to please the other" (shades of Mary Wollstonecraft earlier and Simone de Beauvoir later). Moreover, she invoked Enlightenment principles to show that "reason and religion teach that we too are primary existencies." Students who listened learned that education was a life-long process that would not end when they left school. The great female educators of the first generation were optimistic. They saw themselves and their students as at the beginning of a long struggle and counted on committed graduates to carry on the work of leading women out of their inherited backwardness.[35]

Barbara Miller Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women

T·H·R·E·E

The Utility of Their Educations, 1800–1860

He [Horace Mann] will not help the cause of woman greatly, but his efforts to educate her will do a greater work than he anticipates. Prepare woman for duty and usefulness, and she will laugh at any boundaries man may set for her.

Sarah Grimké, 1853
Quoted in Catherine H. Birney,
The Grimké Sisters (1885), 275

Between the 1790s and the 1850s the minority of females who acquired a portion of the liberal education at academies, seminaries, and "colleges" became the vanguard of a new American type: the educated woman. In this chapter we consider briefly the views of academy students and the impact of education on their lives. Available evidence shows that these precollegiate groups dealt essentially with the problem that later confronted college women: how to relate the purposes of liberal academic study to their duties as women.

These pathbreakers, set apart from the mass of their sex who were in no position to acquire an education, shared the beliefs of other women in their communities. They accepted the code of true womanhood, the popular term invoking the ideal of the republican and Christian wife and mother. Indeed, they intended to be the truest. But how students utilized their education was determined by both this tradition and an amalgam of personal needs, quests, and obligations discovered either at school or afterward. In maturity their responses to the social and economic conditions modernizing America greatly broadened the definition of female usefulness. Despite their ambiguous social status in an increasingly democratic (male) society, the expectations of these women rose. As a result of working in a range of activities, women began to trust their own judgment. More and more they found themselves involved in

public controversy over the boundaries of woman's sphere.[1]

Academy students encountered the woman question in different forms throughout their schooling. From the outset their instruction depended on decisions about what women should study. Another central issue was the extent to which women should adopt the social traditions of male liberal education. The study of rhetoric, for example, had become part of the training of young men in colleges and academies. The introduction of this course in women's schools, however, produced an educational dilemma not easily resolved. While men were expected to declaim as preparation for public life, religious precepts held that women should remain silent in church and in mixed company. For most women in this period, the restriction was so ingrained that they were uncomfortable speaking in the presence of their male classmates. Thus, at Oberlin an experiment with a coeducational course in rhetoric ended when the women requested a return to separate classes.

The basic contradiction between women's education and their probable futures became obvious at their school commencements. Borrowing from college ceremonies for young men, women's academies held appropriate exercises. If ever a girl forgot her place, at graduation she was reminded, for usually young women were not allowed to read their parts at this public event; rather, their speeches were read by adult substitutes or were delivered personally at a private session.

Sometimes student speeches referred to the conflicts they felt in being female and students. A few expressed their resentment plainly, but most gave praise to woman's separate sphere. One speaker in 1793 mirrored the open mood of the early republic. Priscilla Mason, in her salutatorian oration at the Philadelphia Academy's commencement, declared bluntly: "They have denied women a liberal education and now if we should prove capable of speaking, where could we speak? The Church, the Bar, the Senate are closed against us. Who shut them? Man, Despotic Man." Miss Mason, in the vein of Mary Wollstonecraft, proposed that there be a place for women in the American Senate. Yet such tantalizing hints of rebellion were usually followed, as in this case, by the graduate's retreat to approval of the separate duties of men and women. In the 1800s, in keeping with the evangelical spirit, a graduate of Susanna Rowson's Academy upheld the moral suasion of women in the private sphere: "We are called upon to use our influence to the honour of God and the well-being of society, we are responsible for the use we make of our acknowledged power, wide is its extent, indefinite its effects, inestimable its importance. It involves not only the happiness of the present but the principles of a future generation." The obligations of educated, evangelical motherhood received awesome acceptance in this speech.[2]

Few women protested their exclusion from public speaking, for being

an orator was an important expression of masculinity, associated with ministers, lawyers, and statesmen. The image of a female lecturer recalled the specters of Mary Wollstonecraft, Frances Wright, or Ernestine Rose—all foreigners, religious radicals, and champions of women's rights. The first American-born female to make public speeches was Maria Stewart, a free black woman who, in the early 1830s, advocated abolition and called on black people to educate themselves. Her speaking brought some disapproval, but she too could be dismissed as an outsider.

It was not until 1837 that two cultivated white women from a leading southern family, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, forced the issue of whether an intelligent, educated woman could address controversial social and political issues publicly. The sisters, who earlier had taught slave children and befriended black Quakers, now asserted that God had shown them that it was their duty to speak out against slavery. These evangelical rebels brought down the wrath of the Massachusetts Congregationalist clergy, whose Pastoral Letter reminded all females that "the power of woman is in her dependence." The Grimkés disagreed with prevailing scriptural interpretations and emphasized in their feminist tracts the evangelical belief of the equality of men and women in God's eyes. Sarah's *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman* (1838) presented to thinking women in the northern and western states an extended, passionate discourse on the woman question.[3]

After the Grimkés' challenges the association of a "female public lecturer" with both abolition and woman's rights made most educators all the more adamant in opposing female public speaking in their schools. It was a rare school like Oread Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts, where students became abolitionists after the examples of their teachers. Yet at coeducational Oberlin, which admitted black students from the beginning and identified publicly with abolition, the faculty remained divided on whether to permit women to speak in public. Some women tried to persuade professors to let female students make speeches at commencement. Elizabeth Prall in 1841 pointed out that Queen Elizabeth could address audiences at Oxford, "while in liberty-loving America [woman] is not allowed to speak in her own tongue, among the populace, to defend her own rights." Afterward the ridicule of other students reduced Miss Prall to tears. Six years later Lucy Stone, an activist both for women's rights and abolition, took a more radical stand. Determined to be a public lecturer, she refused to write a commencement speech or to participate in the public exercises since she would not be allowed to read it. Not until 1858 would an Oberlin woman be permitted to read her part at the public commencement.[4]

Serious students were for the most part concerned with benefiting personally from the experiment of advanced female education.

Euphorsine Schmidt from New Orleans, while at Nazareth Academy in Kentucky, wrote home in 1850 about a classmate's attention to "painting and polish" but added: "As for myself, I do not learn polish, and am not much advanced in painting, as this year I apply myself a great deal to my studies, in order to graduate soon." Anna Gale, studying at the Greene Street School in Providence, Rhode Island, wrote in her journal in 1838 that teacher Margaret Fuller had assigned Dr. Wayland's text in moral philosophy in the hope that his thoughts would "take root sufficiently deep to produce one little thought of our own, something entirely original." The student then added: "We shall derive an advantage from this study." At Oberlin, student Mary Ann Adams extolled the opportunity for intellectual inquiry: "We are taught not only to fully appreciate the worth of an author but to think for ourselves upon the various subjects brought before us, and we do feel that this knowledge after which we are searching is of more value than the diamond which sparkles in the sands of India and the pearl in its ocean bed." She concluded that "the works we investigate are such as are calculated to furnish discipline of mind and a supply of rich thought."[5]

The thirst for learning among young female scholars was promoted in many cultural forums. Religious academies fostered academic excellence in addition to conversion and piety. Outside of these, students also heard and might absorb the more radical ideas aired by liberal ministers and lyceum speakers. The preaching of Unitarian William Ellery Channing, as well as of Congregationalist Lyman Beecher, emphasized personal will and human capacity to grow. Further, Ralph Waldo Emerson's lectures precipitated a new consciousness of human possibilities for young women as well as young men. In one talk on heroism (addressed mainly to young men), he observed incidentally the problem of young women's aspirations: "[Let] the maiden, with erect soul, walk serenely on her way, accept the hint of each new experience . . . the fair girl who repels interference by a decided and proud choice of influences, so careless of pleasing, so wilful and lofty, inspires every beholder with somewhat of her own nobleness." More than he intended, Emerson stimulated not only Harvard students but women still outside the college gates, with his disturbing message to trust thyself, "go alone."[6]

Individualism in old and new forms pressed the educated woman to be independent in seeking her own moral course. Independence was a double-edged ideal: while a young man was applauded, a young woman at best received ambivalent approval from family and society in her struggles to strike out on her own. How could she do this as a female and meet the requirements of the True Woman? To some extent answers lay in finding appropriate duties at different stages of her life cycle.

The introduction of education into a woman's life, combined with the

needs of the changing society, altered her life pattern in a fundamental way. The period between girlhood and marriage began to represent a time in which female youth could pursue a variety of interests and employments. During this interval the academy-educated woman tested ideas first encountered in the course of her schooling. Some less-educated women also found a new period of semiautonomy: for the Yankee mill girl, a stint of factory work provided a time of economic and personal experimentation before marriage. Indeed, some mill workers saved money to attend Oberlin or Mount Holyoke. Thus a new period entered young women's lives, its form depending on social class. Regardless, being a student or working at some paid employment away from the parental home and familiar community enabled a woman to be on her own within recognized limits.[7]

Although marriage remained the ultimate goal for most women, these varied courses of action prolonged the period of youth. The heroine of a popular novel expressed an attitude of young women common to the time: "Let me follow my own volitions, for at least three or four years to come. . . . Let my mind soar unfettered to the heights where I wish to stand" before being "tempted to wear those bonds which, though covered with roses and seemingly light as air, must be stronger than steel, and heavier than iron." Female students, enamored of their new independence and influenced by their educators, deliberated more carefully before marrying. Their education and the opportunities it offered reinforced their sense of the seriousness of the marriage commitment.[8]

The effects of academy education that have been measured statistically do point to significant shifts in marriage patterns among the educated. Academy women of Mount Holyoke (1837–50) married later than others, and some not at all; the average age of marriage for graduates was twenty-seven, and the median age twenty-six, as compared to the median age of twenty-one for women in the general population. The education and employment intervals interrupted a woman's life cycle and delayed marriage (see table 4).[9]

Another striking difference emerged in the number of single educated women. Again during the first period at Mount Holyoke, 19 percent of the graduates never married; at Troy 16 percent of those graduating between 1821 and 1842 never married. Corresponding figures for the general population range from 6 to 13 percent, well below any of the above figures. The case of the female alumnae of coeducational Oberlin, however, provides a contrast. A small sample of forty Oberlin women showed that, of those attending in 1840, all but one were married by 1860. Yet, after 1860, marriage patterns at Oberlin slowly began to resemble those at other colleges in the latter part of the century.[10]

For those who deferred marriage, or indeed never married, educa-

tion did make it possible to be self-supporting, to have, in Catharine Beecher's phrase, an "honorable independence," however meager. In encouraging all students to use wisely the time before marriage, educators knew that their counsel had special meaning for women who preferred not to marry.

Social class influenced the employment of educated young single women. In opposition to Catharine Beecher's advice that the daughters of the well-to-do should express their benevolence by "taking a school," affluent families often believed that a lady should not take a paid job. We do not know how many daughters followed the path of the heroine in *Ida Norman* who determined to teach even while she thought her family had "unbounded wealth." The author of this novel, educator Almira Phelps, conveyed the same sense of mission to her own students, much like the fictional Ida's teacher. In real life the wealthy girl might spend the time between school and marriage in benevolent activities. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for one, relished the "first taste of liberty" after graduating from Troy. She used this time to visit and learn about the social reforms that would occupy her adult years. Angelina Grimké, however, in rebellion against her southern plantation family and culture, considered training to be a teacher under Catharine Beecher at Hartford Seminary, and her sister Sarah sought to train for the Quaker ministry.[11]

The many academy students who could not afford to be "ladies" usually embarked on schoolteaching. Both novices and those with some training gained advantages from the increasing demand for teachers and the lack of set structures in a field regarded as a vocation and not yet developed as a profession. Schoolteaching had little status at the time women began to enter it: men who lacked alternatives taught school, and some college youth might teach intermittently before turning to business or a profession. Yet only slowly were women accepted as teachers. Although they were seen as suitable instructors of small children, public prejudice kept them out of more advanced teaching in many places. In the early nineteenth century people doubted both women's ability to teach and the desirability of their leaving home to work. Families and school boards resisted boarding females out in the community, fearful that they required greater supervision than male teachers. Moreover, it was claimed that young women would not be able to control older boys in the classroom. But by the 1830s, a significant shift in rhetoric accompanied approval of female schoolteaching. Horace Mann cited woman's tenderness, gentility, and patience as qualities contributing to her success as a teacher—qualities usually associated with a good mother.[12]

Young women in the Northeast started making teaching a women's field. They were available to take the jobs that men increasingly left for better-paying jobs. Women then had the opportunity to meet both communal and personal needs. The numbers of female teachers at the elementary school level grew substantially until, by the late nineteenth century, they predominated. Only rarely did females receive even half of what their male counterparts earned: usually women's salaries approximated one-third of men's. Educators, school boards, and teachers alike discovered that the schoolmarm was, in Beecher's words, "the cheapest guardian and teacher of childhood."[13]

Under the influence of revivals at academies, many students made teaching their mission. Although there was often evangelical incentive, however, more fundamental was the financial return. Though the wages were low, they made a difference, whether used to supplement family income, for personal expenses, or saved for future education. For some, the thought of improving matrimonial chances by living in a new community was undoubtedly attractive, as many employers complained.

Yet teaching as a vocation proved more demanding and discouraging than many anticipated. Romantic notions of adventure and service evaporated in the face of reality. Young Almira Hart recorded in her journal in 1816: "But where is my fortitude? My removal to this place is the result of my own choice." Nonetheless, she stuck by her decision to teach, and in mid-life was a respected educator. One young Vermont woman, Arozina Perkins, trained at Johnson Academy, wrote in her diary in 1850 of the trials of teaching in a girls' academy in Iowa: "Many long, dreary weeks have passed, which I would forever forget. . . . Now I feel that I can go on calmly and hopefully again, yet with deep humility." Another pious young woman, Antoinette Brown, concluded: "God never made me for a schoolteacher." She sometimes wished her students were "mesmerized." Recalcitrant pupils, uncooperative parents, indifferent school boards, inhospitable communities, and general isolation made the job seem hopeless. In the face of such difficulties, it is not surprising that many left after a short tenure. Whereas only a small percentage of white women aged fifteen to sixty taught at any one time (2 percent in the 1840s), the turnover was so swift that, as Richard M. Bernard and Maris Vinovskis have noted insightfully: "For every woman standing at a chalkboard at a given time, there were a number of women who . . . had left the profession."[14]

Those who taught, including those who lasted only one or two years, found that achieving control over a classroom matured them. While away from home and family, the schoolteacher had to rely on her own judgment. As she became more independent, she gained self-respect.

The second generation of female educators included some who had impressive careers. Betsey Mix Cowles, for example, became superintendent in several schools in Ohio and administered the entire school system in one town. Anna Peck Sill, who founded Rockford Female

Seminary in Illinois on the Mount Holyoke model, expanded it to a four-year institution. A number of married women continued the pattern of operating schools with their husbands: an excellent seminary, Barhamville in Columbia, South Carolina, was directed by Troy graduate Julia Pierpont Marks and her husband Elias Marks.[15]

An ordinary teaching post did not always satisfy the consuming missionary purpose, and some sought alternative ways. These were women who went to teach Indians on the frontier or wanted to participate in a foreign mission.[16]

The single woman had special problems that restricted her choice of missionary activities. In spite of her desire for independence, the woman with religious zeal was usually enjoined to marry a minister. At first it was unacceptable for an unmarried woman to serve in dangerous places like Africa, India, or the Far East. Anne Hasseltine Judson, a recently married schoolteacher, had to get special permission from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to allow her to accompany her husband Adoniram Judson to India. She was the first woman to leave America for duty in a foreign mission. Customarily the overburdened minister's wife did the teaching. Not until 1827, when Cynthia Farrar, already a mature educator, left to start schools in India, did the American Board grant a single woman permission to serve. It was still an exception when Mount Holyoke's Fidelia Fiske (with a strong recommendation from Mary Lyon) became a missionary overseas in 1844.[17]

The importance of schoolteaching as a base from which to move on to other employment or activity is well demonstrated by the figures in *Notable American Women*. Of these highest achievers, nearly half (46 percent) of those born between 1790 and 1830 taught school for some duration. Some left schoolteaching for radical endeavors at home. Susan B. Anthony and Abby Kelley (Foster), after the example of the Grimké sisters, became lecturers for abolition and temperance. Some women at Oberlin imitated Lucy Stone. Ironically, lecturing would become a viable means of support for educated women by the end of the nineteenth century. Antoinette Brown used schoolteaching to pay for her education at Oberlin and, despite the disapproval of the Oberlin faculty, was ordained as a Congregationalist minister in 1853.[18]

While teaching opened up to women before it became a profession, the field of medicine, in a new phase of its professionalism, continued to resist their overtures. A few hardy females nonetheless recognized the need for women physicians to concentrate on the health of women and children. Medical research in Europe in the early nineteenth century, notably the discovery of anesthesia, overturned traditional therapeutics and made medicine a more appealing occupation for women. But, even at a time when both medical study and licensing lacked uniform standards, no medical school was willing to admit women. It therefore became the moral mission of a few individuals to break this barrier. Two former schoolteachers, Harriot Hunt and Elizabeth Blackwell, managed, with difficulty, to acquire their first training through apprenticeships with sympathetic doctors. Despite a successful practice in Boston, Harriot Hunt's attempts to enter Harvard Medical School were repeatedly rejected. It is well known that Elizabeth Blackwell, after many refusals, was finally admitted to Geneva College Medical School. Later, she instituted separate medical training for women at her New York Infirmary for Women and Children. This school became the model for several similar institutions later in the century.[19]

Still, at mid-century, the medical profession remained a male preserve where few women ventured. Similarly, scholarly and literary work belonged in the male domain. At a time when men of letters could not count on public support, the idea of a woman of letters was a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, several New England women aspired to think and write like the college-educated men they knew. Among those who shared the ideal of the "woman of genius," Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Palmer Peabody edged into high literary company. What these academy- and family-educated women achieved while carrying heavy economic and domestic responsibilities was impressive. They developed their talents amid great insecurities but did not reach the level of creativity they aimed for. Neither received the constructive criticism that she needed for professional development, because male mentors and colleagues tended to regard them as assistants, translators, and conversationalists to great thinkers like Channing and Emerson. At the same time Fuller and Peabody were undoubtedly sustained by other women who looked to them for inspiration and gave them steadfast support. Educator Peabody, an early abolitionist, was the first woman publisher in America, and eventually the founder of the kindergarten movement in the United States. Literary and social critic Fuller was first an innovative teacher of girls and adult women and later a journalist for the *New York Herald Tribune* and its first foreign correspondent. Fuller's feminist essay "Woman in the Nineteenth Century" (1845) called for full choices in occupations for women: even let them "be sea captains if they will."[20]

Outside the rarefied sphere of high culture, the field of popular writing opened unexpectedly to women. Several economic and social factors produced a "damn mob of scribbling women," in Hawthorne's unpleasant phrase. Technological improvements in printing made books less expensive to produce; developments in transportation improved circulation and distribution; above all, the growth of literacy among women created both female authors and a readership for their works. By the 1850s, as academies increasingly emphasized composition writing, many

a female student could imagine herself as an author. Soon popular writing followed teaching as woman's second "profession."[21]

Women gained paid and unpaid employment as essayists, editors, journalists, and fiction writers. But there was criticism of women writers. One who should have known better, Sarah J. Hale, editor of *The Ladies Magazine*, declared in 1828 that for a woman "to make a happy home for her husband and children" was "far more praiseworthy than to make a book." Individuals in fact wrote for a number of reasons: some desired to fill leisure time, while others hoped to earn some money to support failing parents or husbands and children. Some who left schoolteaching made writing a didactic mission[22]

As writers, women entered the business world by negotiating contracts, and the male-dominated publishing sphere by editing magazines. Evangelical publications had "editresses," and the Transcendentalists employed Margaret Fuller as editor of *The Dial*. Women's magazines multiplied, and in the 1840s and 1850s women worked on numerous publications like *Godey's*, *Graham's*, *Peterson's*, and *The Moral Advocate*. Remarkably, with some rapidity, women established themselves as participants in the writing profession.

Women writers of domestic fiction created an American version of the British didactic novel. Their stress on lofty moral purpose made the novels palatable to evangelical publics, and the role of author partially acceptable for women. Educator Susanna Rowson's best-seller *Charlotte Temple* (1794) foreshadowed the voluminous outpouring of domestic literature from the 1820s to the 1850s. These novels had tremendous appeal for middle-class women and for authors and readers trying to live up to the demands of True Womanhood while exploring new options. This body of work provides documentation of a spectrum of viewpoints about female roles and the limits of separate spheres.

Novels written by educators often dealt with the advances in and anxieties about female education. The woman teacher had "the power of awakening the ambition of her pupils" through "heroic and striking examples"; however, she also had the obligation to affirm the value of domesticity. Significantly, the outstanding teacher in Maria Cummins's *Mabel Vaughan* had not only "sound judgment and a highly cultivated intellect" but was accomplished "in every branch of housekeeping" as well. The authors gave qualified support to increasing opportunities for women. Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune, an opponent of women's rights, justified female education and training only in relation to domesticity, as preparation for homemaking or in case of family need for professional paid work.[23]

These authors, like their characters, had to reconcile their belief in domestic values with decisions to step beyond the conventional boundaries and become professionals. Grace Greenwood (a pseudonym for Sarah Jane Clark Lippincott) admired the woman who risked the "vulgar cry of unfemininity" and "dares to live up to her own capacity—to be an *individual*, and not a *thing*," but advised an aspiring poet: "Never unsex yourself for greatness." Historian Mary Kelley has perceived correctly that these writers never came to terms with their new professional status. Although they often suggested that single life could be "fulfilling," like other women, they still regarded marriage as woman's real profession. Yet ambiguity about the rewards of marriage filtered into their writing.[24]

In real life educated women were redefining the marital relationship. Graduates of early nineteenth-century academies lived in a dynamic, changing world. As professional white men competed for material gains in the expanding but unstable economy, women accepted as their female duty the obligation of providing husbands with a needed refuge from the wider world. A wife at home was one measure of success and social status. But since she was also the keeper of spiritual values in the family, she was expected to temper her husband's drive for moneymaking. Indeed, an educated wife, it was presumed, would be able to manage these sometimes contradictory roles. Increasingly, the professionally educated man insisted that a bright, educated female would make the best of wives, for she could use her learning and intelligence as a partner and homemaker.

Nonetheless, although patriarchal assumptions predominated, a new ideal of choice coexisted with the deeply ingrained traditional view of marriage. Love and affection were not new expectations in marriage, but a few bold voices now promoted the principle of equality within marriage. Margaret Fuller criticized "the present relation between the sexes" in which "the woman does belong to the man, instead of forming a whole with him." And Oberlin alumna Lucy Stone wrote to her friend Antoinette Brown, still at Oberlin in 1850, deploring the "mere *thing* the law makes of a married woman." Stone's later marriage to Henry Blackwell was a union that upheld in practice the ideal of equality: together, from 1870 to 1893, they edited the *Woman's Journal* in Boston. Brown's marriage to Blackwell also achieved an impressive degree of mutuality. The Reverend Antoinette Brown Blackwell, as wife and mother, continued studying and writing and preached part-time.[25]

Both Stone and Blackwell found inspiration in the marriage of James and Lucretia Mott. They were particularly impressed that Lucretia Mott "preached while bringing up the family, being in perfect amity with her husband who aided her in the care of the children." The Motts were also a model for Mary Frame Myers and Owen Thomas, who embarked on medical study together after the birth of their third child. Mary Thomas,

who intended that her husband and children should not "suffer for any comforts a wife and mother owed them," sewed clothes enough for eight or nine months before going alone to Western Reserve College in Ohio and then to the Pennsylvania Medical University in Philadelphia. During the Civil War both Mary and Owen Thomas served as doctors. Hannah E. Myers Longshore, Mary Thomas's half sister, repeated this pattern; at thirty-one this mother of two children enrolled in the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania and received her M.D. in 1851. She had a successful career as a private practitioner in Philadelphia and a congenial marriage with her teacher-husband Thomas Longshore.[26]

The role of minister's wife had traditionally been that of his helpmeet: entertaining visitors, keeping the household accounts, copying sermons, and serving the needs of the congregation when the minister was away. This role could extend even further in some evangelical partnerships. Under the influence of the Reverend Charles Finney, many wives of ministers conducted prayer meetings for women. Finney's first wife, Lydia Andrews, the first "editress" of *The Moral Advocate*, assumed the role of moral educator to the young and advisor to adult women quite separately from her husband. Moreover, the second Mrs. Finney, Elizabeth Atkinson, led prayer meetings in England jointly with her husband, and it was hard, some said, to distinguish who was the minister.[27]

Alumnae reports from Troy, Oberlin, and Mount Holyoke suggest the large extent to which wives of other professionals participated in their husbands' activities. In some cases women helped prepare briefs for lawyer-husbands or prepared translations of foreign literature. Clearly, some women enjoyed these cooperative ventures.[28]

In certain marriages, however, tensions increased as a result of the higher expectations women had for self, husband, and children. Personal relations could be hurt in marriages in which women as well as men earned money. More and more, women contributed to the economic support of their families when husbands failed in business or simply never could earn enough as ministers or farmers. Usually, however, the fact that the wife showed her competence by earning money did not in itself make for conflict; it was not the breadwinning, but the demands and expectations of the two individuals in the marriage that created the strains. If, as Jane Gray Swisshelm related, a wife had more education than her husband, conflicts emerged; she in fact gave up reading in order to lessen the contrast between herself and her "uncultivated husband."[29]

Many marriages failed to live up to either the new ideal of mutuality or the traditional form. Even in partnerships based on common interests, such as those between pairs of reformers, there was no guarantee of a happy marriage. As Julia Ward Howe and Elizabeth Cady Stanton dis-

covered, after marriage their reform-minded husbands preferred old-fashioned, submissive wives. Harriet Beecher Stowe observed that "a large proportion of marriages have been contracted without any advised or rational effort."[30]

An advocate of liberal divorce, Elizabeth Cady Stanton went further in arguing before the 1861 New York state legislature that when marriage becomes "a mere outward tie . . . with every possible inequality of condition," it should be dissolved. But many women put up with unhappy marriages not only to avoid a public spectacle, but because they believed that they derived their primary identity and self-worth as wives and mothers. Few, even among women's rights advocates, favored as much liberalization of the divorce laws as Stanton proposed.[31]

Whatever their concepts of marriage or self, all women experienced the threat of frequent pregnancy resulting from the religious decree that a wife must always submit to her husband's will. Nonetheless, educated women tended to challenge this edict, and, although some husbands cooperated with their wives, this situation presented a major area of marital conflict. As always women dealt with the problem in a variety of ways, but denial of the "marital right" became one of the more common ways for women to assert some autonomy. Lucy Stone asked her three brothers bluntly whether one should have sexual relations unless one intended to have a baby. Angelina Grimké thought that one should have babies only once every three years. Harriet Beecher Stowe, after seven children, arranged frequent separations, under one pretext or another, from her husband Calvin. The national birthrate declined in these decades, as women and men either denied themselves regular sexual intercourse, or men practiced coitus interruptus. The problems caused by lack of access to birth control were universal.[32]

It was not that such women did not want children; in fact, as tensions increased over how to achieve mutuality in marriage, educated women, like their uneducated sisters, still found fulfillment in motherhood. The raising of children became the critical focus of family life, thereby escalating the importance of motherhood. The religious shift away from belief in original sin precipitated particular interest in the mother's part in shaping the character of the innocent young. Preparing children for conversion became a prominent activity of maternal associations in the 1820s and 1830s. Although the Reverend Horace Bushnell's popular text *Christian Nurture* (1847) opposed revivals as a means to conversion, it too stressed the importance of the mother's daily influence on the young child.[33]

The intense concern with the moral training of children soon expanded to a concern with the moral well-being of the whole society. Women who identified themselves as moral instructors in classrooms

and homes extended their obligations beyond charities and Sunday schools to address problems of social deviance of their time, including prostitution and drinking. While still operating within the domestic female sphere, women entered the realm of public policy. In addition to prayer meetings in prisons, they proposed laws to close brothels. When men wanted to abandon the cause, women made moral reform a national movement. With their faith in human perfectibility, they promoted chastity for male college youth and, in sympathy with their "fallen sisters," worked to reclaim them. Under the direction of Lydia Andrews Finney, then wife of the president of Oberlin, male and female undergraduate moral reform societies were started. Moreover, three reformed prostitutes were brought to Oberlin for education and rehabilitation. Female educators took the lead in their communities as well as in academies and colleges. Significantly, the ambitious plans of the educated female leaders in the movement depended on networks of women who shared their values and gave them support. By mid-century the focus on moral reformation in temperance and prison work, as well as in the anti-prostitution effort, entered the concerns of wives, mothers, and daughters. These were aspects of social questions that women could not only understand but agree on.[34]

While female reformers often engaged in several of these activities, there were individuals in every organization who embraced more controversial problems. Some schoolteachers became staunch abolitionists. The proper Maria Weston Chapman, a former principal, headed the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Association, backed by a coterie of Unitarian schoolteachers and writers. Outspoken academy graduates also ignored the neutral stands of the first generation of female educators and participated in anti-slavery societies. Two of Charles Finney's wives, Lydia Finney and Elizabeth Finney, worked in the Ohio organization.[35]

Black women had long worked for the elevation of their race in the option most available to them, that of schoolteaching. Over half the black women listed in *Notable American Women* between 1790 and 1870 taught school at some point in their lives. Their commitment to education necessarily drew many of them into the abolitionist societies, as a starting point to enlighten both white and black people. These strong individuals confronted prejudice, not only from the white community, but from blacks who felt that they were "stepping out" of place.

Maria Stewart pointed out that money used in African colonization efforts would be better spent on educating black Americans: "True friends of the Negro would build a college," she declared, and insisted that: "Before I go [back to Africa], the bayonet shall pierce me through." Sarah Douglass, a tireless anti-slavery leader, had opened her own school for blacks in Philadelphia in the 1820s. Later she taught at a school that

would become Cheney State College. In her work in the abolitionist societies in Philadelphia (one of which her mother had helped found), Douglass associated with the Grimkés and became a lifelong friend of Sarah. Her work and that of other black women was the beginning of a long struggle for the elevation of their race.[36]

Some white women supported the educational goals of black women. In 1831 in Canterbury, Connecticut, Quaker Prudence Crandall admitted a black girl to her school in order to prepare her to become a teacher. When the community forced Crandall to close the school, she attempted to open a black teacher-training school. Her work brought support from abolitionists but violence in the town, and she was forced to move.[37]

Female anti-slavery advocates ignored the boundaries of woman's domestic sphere. As in the moral reform cause, women carried on most of their work independently of men. But even separate societies could not forestall confrontation between tradition and transition in women's pursuits. In every reform activity women encountered disrespect for their opinions and limits to their executive leadership. But experiences in the anti-slavery cause finally sparked a small group of activists into furious awareness of their unfair and unequal treatment. When in 1840 female-elected representatives from American anti-slavery societies were refused seats at the International Anti-Slavery Convention in London, two witnesses of this humiliation, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, resolved to form a society at home on women's behalf. The convention they organized at Seneca Falls, New York, eight years later launched the first women's movement in the United States.

Their Declaration of Sentiments in 1848, like its model, the Declaration of Independence, combined the moral fervor of reformers with the Enlightenment commitment to human rights. The Seneca Falls Declaration summed up the accumulated legal, economic, social, and political deprivations American women had suffered during sixty years of the republic. The convention demanded both an end to the deprivations of the past and the enlargement of women's opportunities in the future. Certain demands—recognition of married women in the law, a single standard of morality for men and women, fair wages for gainfully employed women, and consideration of mothers as guardians of children in cases of divorce and separation—addressed the needs of the widest range of American women. More controversial claims included not only female admission to men's colleges and professional schools, but suffrage as a right of female citizenship. Suffrage became a new symbol, the political instrument through which the more farsighted of these women believed that they could improve women's lives and make a better world.[38]

Feminism and higher education were thus linked, but for most women liberal education took precedence over suffrage. Those who opposed making suffrage a symbol agreed on the necessity of full liberal and professional education for women equal to that offered white men. These mature wives and mothers valued what education they had had. In their own lifetime, education had already offered women possibilities for personal choice through earning a living as teachers and writers. Enlightened women had new perspectives about the limitations on their sex. Because of advances in female education from 1790 to 1850, the courageous saw beyond the existing boundaries of their sphere. The rising expectations of this small group signaled new directions for a future in which women, benefiting from education, would be as free as men to participate in the work of the world.

F·O·U·R

The Push into Higher Education

> Our demand that Harvard and Yale Colleges should admit women, though not yielded, only waits for a little more time. And while they wait, numerous petty 'female colleges' have sprung into being, indicative of the justice of our claim that a college education should be granted to women. Not one of these female colleges . . . meets the demand of the age, and so will eventually perish. Oberlin and Antioch Colleges in Ohio . . . admit women on terms nearly equal with men.
>
> Lucy Stone (address to the Seventh National Women's Rights Convention, New York City, November 25–26, 1856)

Lucy Stone, the first woman in Massachusetts to receive the A.B. degree (Oberlin, 1847) expressed the rising expectations of feminists and others who had longed to "go off with the boys to college." In the next fifty years, female higher education did become a "demand of the age." By 1900 women had access to widely varied institutions, though the oldest men's colleges remained off bounds. Coeducation ultimately became the dominant mode, as early feminists had hoped (see table 1) but women's colleges did not perish. In addition, coordinate female institutions founded next door to resistant male ones offered a compromise between single-sex and coeducational instruction. The varied options underscored the different perceptions of appropriate collegiate education for women in American society.[1]

Women's efforts alone did not end the old academic restrictions on their sex. From the onset of the Civil War to World War I, three critical forces contributed to women's advance into higher education. First, and of lasting importance, was the popularizing trend in public education, evident in the growth of common schools, high schools, and finally, colleges. Second was the more immediate impact of the Civil War and its