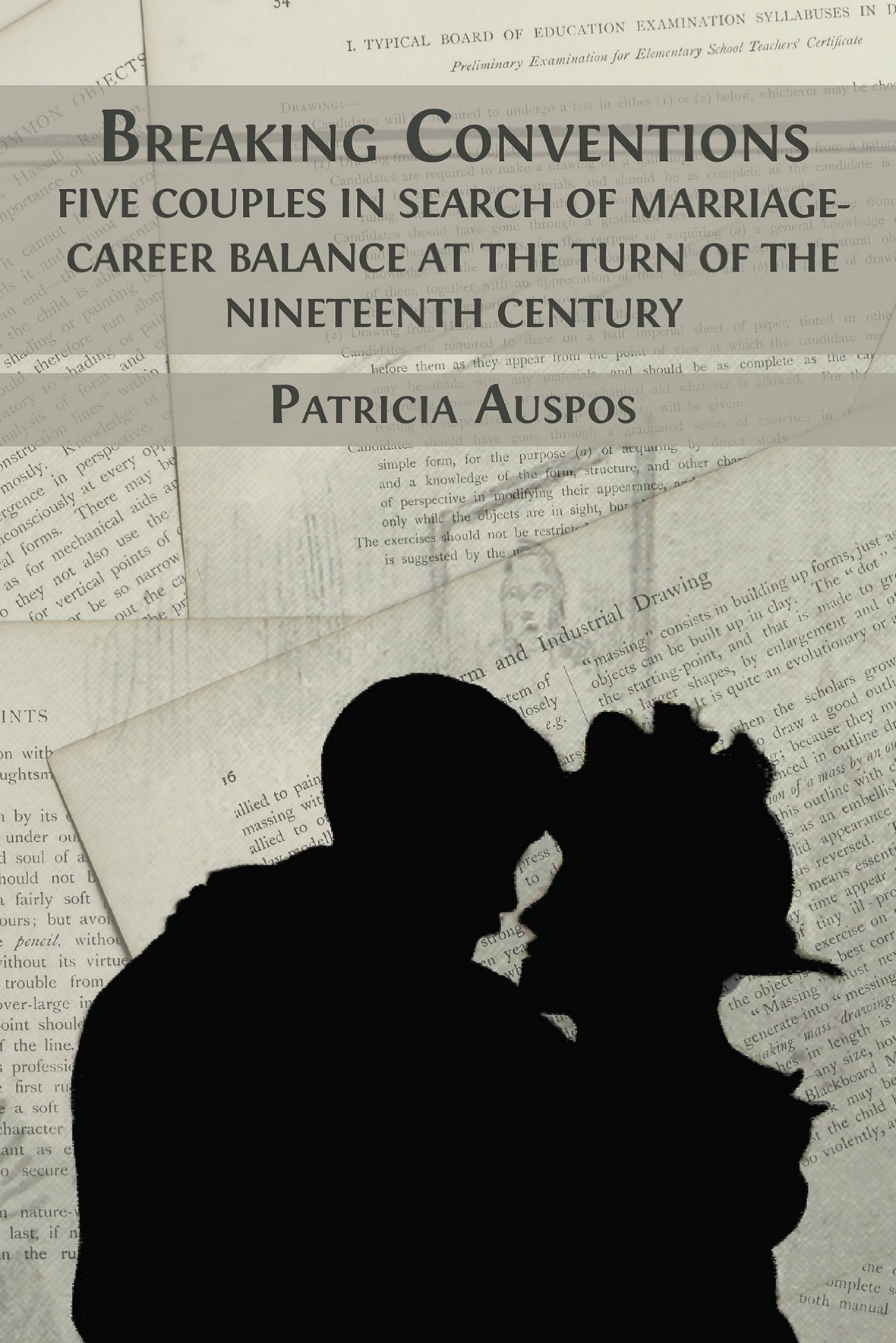
Breaking Conventions

Five Couples in Search of Marriage-Career Balance at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

Patricia Auspos



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Introduction: Love, Power, and Profession in Early Dual Career Marriages

In September 1900, Elsie Clews, a twenty-four-year-old lecturer at Barnard College with a PhD in sociology, married Herbert Parsons, a lawyer and politician, despite serious doubts about how marriage would alter her professional life. The pioneering British social investigator Beatrice Webb was having equally unsettling thoughts about her own marriage of eight years, and could not stop daydreaming about the prominent politician she had hoped to spend her life with. Grace Chisholm Young, a British woman with a PhD in mathematics and two young children, was struggling to fit medical studies into her already overcrowded schedule assisting her husband, an ambitious but unknown mathematician, with his work in pure mathematics. Any of the three women might have benefited from a talk with the longer-married, more prominent Alice Freeman Palmer, a doyen of women's higher education in America, who had made major concessions in her career to accommodate her marriage. In the summer of 1900, she was watching her protégé, Lucy Sprague, a newly minted graduate of Radcliffe College, confront the same questions of family versus career that Alice had wrestled with for years.

These five accomplished women, all of whom married between 1887 and 1912, constructed marriages that are commonplace today, but were deeply shocking in their own time, when well-to-do white women in America and Britain were not supposed to have careers, and career women were not supposed to marry. They defied conventions to overcome what one contemporary described as the "marriage-career dilemma" — the agonizing choice between marrying for love or

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remaining single to pursue a career. Discussions about the marriage-career dilemma reverberated in professional journals, popular fiction, and the courts from the 1840s on, as more women became doctors, lawyers, and college professors.[1] The emotional cost of making this choice could be devastating, and many accomplished women spent years of frustrated courtship deciding whether to marry the men they loved and give up their work, or give up the men and continue the work they loved. Few questioned that the choice had to be made. Medical expertise, professional and institutional practice, legal fiat, and social custom all conspired to keep married women out of the workplace and in the home. Only a small minority of highly educated, highly trained middle-class white women took the bold step of marrying and working outside the home.[2]

Breaking Conventions tells the stories of five prominent women who did and the equally prominent men they married—the power couples

1 For examples, see Lorna Duffin, "The Conspicuous Consumptive: Woman as an Invalid" in *The Nineteenth-century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World*, ed. by Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), pp. 26–56 (p. 50); Regina M. Morantz-Sanchez, "The Many Faces of Intimacy" in *Uneasy Careers and Intimate Lives, Women in Science, 1789–1979*, ed. by Pnina G. Abir-am and Dorinda Outram (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), pp. 47–51; and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, *Doctor Zay* and the "Afterward" by Michael Sartisky (New York: The Feminist Press, 1993; originally published in 1882).

2 About 12 percent of female professionals in the US who worked were married with a husband present in 1910, when fewer than 4 percent of married white women were combining marriage and career. See Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 182–83, and Lois Scharf, *To Work and to Wed: Female Employment and the Great Depression* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 16. Marriage rates among actively working women professionals varied by occupation: in 1900, 32 percent of female physicians in the United States were married, compared to just 5 percent of female teachers, including college professors. See Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), Table 5–1, p. 137. In 1901, 13 percent of all women who worked full-time in Britain were married or widowed, while 21 percent of the more than 200 actively practicing female doctors were married or widowed. About 12 percent of female teachers in England before 1914 were married. See Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 5–6; David Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890s* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), p. 81; Mary Ann C. Elston, "Women Doctors in the British Health Services: A Sociological Study of their Careers and Opportunities" (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 1986), pp. 199–205, https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/247/1/uk_bl_ethos_375527.pdf; and Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 178.

of their day. Despite the wives' talents and determination, and the husbands' desire to support their careers, the couples faced daunting obstacles in their efforts to create more egalitarian and fulfilling marriages. Some succeeded; some failed; all struggled.

Alice Freeman Palmer was one of the most influential forces in women's education in late nineteenth-century America. She reluctantly gave up the Presidency of Wellesley College in 1887 when she married George Herbert Palmer, a member of Harvard University's Philosophy Department, and a translator of the Greek classics. After launching a new career as a paid public speaker on women's education, Alice became the first Dean of Women at the University of Chicago in 1892. She spent at least three months a year on the Chicago campus, leaving George in charge of running their Cambridge household.

The first woman to defend a thesis and earn a PhD in mathematics in Germany,[3] Grace Chisholm Young solidified her status as a mathematician and helped launch her husband's career as a mathematical researcher and professor by becoming his research partner in 1902. While working her way through a rigorous medical school curriculum, she helped him with his research and writing and raised their six children. Their partnership — which never fully acknowledged her contribution — established William Henry Young's reputation as "one of the most profound and original of the English mathematicians" during the early decades of the 1900s.[4] Though Grace completed all the course work required to become a doctor, she did not undertake a hospital residency and never practiced.

Elsie Clews was already an atheist, a feminist, and a social rebel when she married the more staid Herbert Parsons. He made his living as a lawyer, but his passion was progressive politics and municipal reform. The controversial views Elsie espoused in her first book set off a public furor just days after Herbert was elected to a second term in the US House of Representatives in 1906. After he left Congress in 1911, Elsie moved from sociology and college teaching to writing

3 The Russian Sonia Kovalevsky was awarded a PhD in mathematics from Göttingen University in 1874 but without making the thesis defense or taking the oral examinations required in Grace's day.

4 G. H. Hardy, "William Henry Young, 1863–1942", Royal Society of London, *Obituary Notices of Fellows*, 4:12 (November 1943), 307–23, https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsbm.1943.0005.

what she described as "social propaganda" for the *New Republic*, *The Masses*, and other journals. Leaving Herbert and their four children for several months a year in order to conduct anthropological field work — sometimes in the company of a lover — Elsie won professional acclaim as a serious anthropologist studying the indigenous peoples of the American Southwest and Central and South America.

The extraordinary partnership that Beatrice Potter and Sidney Webb embarked on when they married in 1892 spanned almost fifty years and left a lasting mark on British sociology, social welfare policy, and public administration. Instead of having children, they wrote books together. They investigated social and economic issues, campaigned for sweeping changes in education and social policy, sat on government commissions, and founded the London School of Economics. Sidney was elected to Parliament and held two Cabinet posts. They are buried together in Westminster Abbey, the only non-royal couple to be so honored. But their seemingly perfect union was marred for many years by Beatrice's sublimated yearning for a more passionate relationship with a more compelling romantic partner.

A generation younger, Lucy Sprague lived with Alice and George Palmer while she attended Radcliffe College and was with them in Paris when Alice died in 1902. A brilliant teacher and gifted administrator, Lucy became a pioneering force in progressive education for young children after serving as Dean of Women at the University of California at Berkeley. After she and Wesley Clair Mitchell married in 1912 and moved to New York City, she developed an innovative approach to writing children's literature, and founded and led the organization that became the celebrated Bank Street College of Education. Wesley, one of the foremost economists of his generation, helped to develop the science of national statistics and launched and directed the National Bureau of Economic Research. They had four children, two of whom were adopted.

These five marriages inevitably undermined the system of male power, privilege, and prestige that was the cornerstone of nineteenth-century marriage and domestic life among the white middle classes in America and Britain.[5] Flaunting these conventions was both daunting and thrilling. Beatrice Potter felt "grave and anxious" about embarking

5 For how these themes played out in more traditional marriages, see Phyllis Rose, *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (New York: Vintage, 1984).

on "a true marriage of fellowworkers," but Sidney Webb was exuberant about the challenge. "Be it ours to prove to ourselves at any rate, that we are human beings of equivalent freedom and joint lives. What a chance we have!" he exulted.[6] Elsie Clews was even more apprehensive than Beatrice. "I have not changed my aversion to matrimony; indeed, it is stronger than ever, or rather I am more convinced than ever I shall never marry. For, although I love you better than I love or can conceive of loving anybody else, — moreover, if I had to choose between you on one side and all my family and friends on the other I would choose you — yet I should let you go entirely out of my life rather than marry you," Elsie wrote despairingly to Herbert Parsons in 1899, after five years of courtship.[7] Seven months later she finally capitulated and agreed to marry him.

More than a century later, dual career couples still wrestle with the same challenges these couples faced: balancing the demands of home, family, and work; justifying unconventional behavior that defies traditional gender norms; combining intimacy with autonomy. These five marriages remind us how far women have come and how much still needs to change if women and men are to be more equal in the home as well as in the workplace. Their experiences help us to understand why efforts to attain gender equality in the home have been so long in coming even when spouses are motivated to change. Personal ties and loyalties as well as societal norms and institutional barriers held these women back.

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These five couples were very much the products of white middle-class culture, and their expectations and approaches to marriage were shaped by that world. Apart from the servants they and their families employed, they had limited exposure to people of other races and ethnicities, and to working-class women and men, in their upbringings and private

6 Beatrice Webb, Diary, 7 July 1891, London School of Economics Digital Library, https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:bin716wef. Sidney Webb to Beatrice Potter, 5 December l891. London School of Economics and Political Science, British Library of Political and Economic Science, Passfield Papers.

7 Elsie Clews to Herbert Parsons, April 29, 1899, American Philosophical Society Library, Elsie Clews Parsons Papers (APS).

lives. The wives had more encounters and interactions with members of other ethnic groups, races, and classes in their professional lives and volunteer activities, as researchers, settlement house workers, activists, and teachers. As highly privileged, highly educated white women, they benefitted from resources and supports that less well-off, less well-educated, less well-connected women workers lacked in their efforts to earn a living and support a family.[8]

Nevertheless, these five women were greatly constrained by the expectations and responsibilities imposed by their white middle-class world.[9] White middle-class culture in nineteenth-century America and Britain gave the sexes different functions and expected them to live in largely separate worlds. A woman's "destiny and fate" was to marry and have children; men were supposed to attend to business and public affairs. Women exercised moral influence in the home, but men set the rules and did not expect to have their judgments questioned. While girls were socialized from an early age for a life of domestic subordination and service, boys were brought up to be leaders and masters. Girls were instructed not to be self-willed or ambitious, taught to defer to men's opinions and whims, and trained to regard their fathers and brothers as superior intellects.[10] "Scientific" evidence, assembled by male scientists, showed that women were inferior to men in intelligence, reasoning ability, and judgment, and confirmed that it was their nature to be emotional, impulsive, and weak-willed.[11] Such beliefs made it clear why women required male protection and

8 For the history of working-class women's struggles to combine marriage and work in Britain, see Helen McCarthy, *Double Lives, A History of Working Motherhood* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

9 In contrast, Bart Landry, *Black Working Lives: Pioneers of the American Family Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) shows that black middle-class couples were much more likely than whites to form two-earner families in the nineteenth century. Committed to family, community, and careers, wives in the black middle class developed "an egalitarian ideology of family that contrasted sharply with the cult of domesticity so prominent among whites", Landry argues (pp. 5, 30–31).

10 See Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*; Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and Feminine Ideal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Pat Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics, 1860–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

11 Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Lorna Duffin, "Prisoners of Progress: Women and Evolution" in *The Nineteenth-century Woman*, ed. by Delamont and Duffin, 57–91.

guidance: it was for their own good. Women who sought professional or intellectual accomplishment were considered unnatural, even masculine in their tastes and temperament.

Throughout the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, white middle-class women in both America and Britain had three models for what it meant to be a "good" wife: they were expected to be domestic angels, helpmate wives, or companionate spouses — or some combination of the three. The English poet Coventry Patmore immortalized the sentimentalized ideal of the domestic angel in the 1850s in his book-length poem, *The Angel in the House*. The poem, which went through numerous editions and thrilled several generations of nineteenth-century readers (including Alice and George Palmer), celebrated "the gentle wife [...] whose wishes wait upon her Lord,/who finds her own in his delight [...her] will's indomitably bent/On mere submissiveness to him."[12]

A domestic angel was supposed to create a home that was a haven of tranquility and order, a source of contentment and cheer, a sanctuary of virtue and modesty. Her grace, sweetness, and innocence epitomized the virtues associated with "true womanhood." She was expected to be docile and self-effacing, and offer her husband uncritical support and devotion. Marriage manuals, sermons, and public lectures gave similar advice and inspiration. Late in the century, women were still being told, "it is a man's place to rule, and a woman's place to yield. He must be held up as the head of the house, and it is her duty to bend unmurmuringly to his wishes."[13]

A second model of wifehood was the helpmate wife who worked as part of a team with her husband and gave him more substantive assistance than a domestic angel. Well-educated wives in middle-class and upper middle-class professional households in both America and Britain served as accountants, secretaries, research assistants, editors, proofreaders, sounding boards, and critics to their hard-working

12 Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House*, Canto II, "The Course of True Love, Prelude I, The Changed Allegiance" (London: Cassell, 1891), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4099/4099-h/4099-h.htm

13 Mrs. S. A. Sewell, *Women and the Times We Live In*, 2nd edn. (Manchester: Tubbs and Brook, 1869), pp. 28–29.

husbands.[14] Wives of religious ministers, civic officials, and (by the end of the century) politicians carried out semi-official duties that helped advance the men's careers.[15] Helpmate marriages provided opportunities for wives to exercise their intellectual and managerial talents and develop companionate marriages, but they reinforced the man's dominant position and the woman's subordinate one. The wife worked for the husband, on behalf of his career, and rarely received public recognition for what she did.[16]

Late in the nineteenth century, as a new ideal of companionate marriage emerged, couples were encouraged to share more parts of their lives. Wives were expected to join husbands in leisure activities; husbands were expected to become more involved in the household and spend more time with their wives and children. In theory, companionate marriage strengthened the woman's position within the home and helped promote greater equality in marriage. However, in practice, companionate marriage could provide new opportunities and new areas for men to impose their tastes and interests on their wives. Some historians have argued that men's new interest in domestic life was an effort to reclaim male authority that was threatened by women's entry into the public sphere and professional life.[17]

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14 M. Jeanne Peterson, *Family, Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 37–39.

15 Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 305; Jalland, pp. 221–49.

16 In contrast, Peterson, pp. 86, 162–91, sees such marriages as examples of "admirable mutuality", parity, and companionate partnership.

17 For women's power within the home, see E. Anthony Rotundo, "Patriarchs and Participants: A Historical Perspective on Fatherhood" in *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Change*, ed. by Michael Kaufman (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 64–80 (p. 69); Carl Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 43; Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 232; Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (Chicago: Lyceum Books, 1989), pp. 248, 258–64; A. James Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in Nineteenth Century Married Life* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 76–79. On the persistence of male power, see David Roberts, "The Pater Familias of the Victorian Governing Class" in *The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses*, ed. by Anthony S. Wohl (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 59–81 (pp. 59–60); John Demos, *The Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and the Life Course in American History* (New

All three of these marital ideals — the domestic angel, the helpmate wife, and the companionate spouse — legitimized and supported male privilege, male authority, and male dominance in the workplace as well as in the home. A married man could invest long hours and single-minded concentration on his work because other people — his wife and the servants she employed — were attending to his needs by taking care of the house, the meals, the laundry, the shopping, and the children. Household spaces and routines were organized around men's work. If nineteenth-century husbands worked at home, they were isolated in well-appointed studies and libraries. Wives, children, and servants were trained not to interrupt them. If husbands worked in offices, their stay-at-homes wives dropped whatever they were doing to attend to their men when they returned home, and children were kept out of the way.[18]

This domestic support system was justified because the husband's work was seen as centrally important to the household. A man's potential earning power was a key consideration in a middle-class woman's choice of a marriage partner.[19] The whole family benefited from, and shared in, the reflected glory of the worker-husband-father. His work provided them with status, prestige, and social standing as well as economic security.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the position of women improved in America and Britain, both within the home and within society at large. Opportunities for single women to receive higher education and professional training expanded, although only a tiny fraction of the female population went to college or received professional

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York: Oxford, 1986), pp. 52–60; Nancy F. Cott, "On Men's History and Women's History" in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. by Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 206–08; and E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), pp. 26–27. On the transition from patriarchal father figures to companionate dads, see Robert L. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

18 Margaret Marsh, *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Carol Dyhouse, "Mothers and Daughters in the Middle-class Home, c.1870–1914" in *Love and Labour: Women's Experience of Home and Family, 1850–1940*, ed. by Jane Lewis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 27–47 (pp. 30–32); Roberts, pp. 62–63; Margaret Mead, *Blackberry Winter: My Earlier Years* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1972).

19 Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

training.[20] By the end of the nineteenth century, an increasing number of female college graduates worked before marriage, and they had a greater array of employment options to choose from. Wives won more legal rights, including the right to own property, make contracts, and have ownership over the money they earned.[21] The angel in the house ideology was giving way to a more companionate ideal, and men devoted more time to domestic life and family activities. Greater numbers of middle-class wives were better educated and more likely to be involved in charitable and volunteer activities outside the home.[22] But marriage still reflected male power, interests, and economic dominance, and wives were still expected to focus their attention and energies on their husbands and children. A woman's desire to pursue a career while married remained a bold challenge to conventional standards of white middle-class behavior.

Challenging Marital Stereotypes

Scrambling to manage their households, keep their husbands happy, care for their children, and do their own work, wives who pursued careers found it difficult to be domestic angels, helpmate wives, or companionate spouses. With packed schedules and hectic days, the women were often — by their own admission — stressed, irritable, and

20 Less than 3 percent of the American female population aged 18 and 21 years was enrolled in college in 1900 — a total of 85,000 women. (See Solomon, *Educated Women*, Table 2, p. 63 and Table 3, p. 64.) The number of female physicians in the US rose steadily, from 525 in 1870 to over 9,000 in 1910 (ibid., pp. 45, 132). In 1880, there were 75 women lawyers in the US; in 1900 there were just over 1,000; by 1920, there were 1,738. See Virginia G. Drachman, *Sisters in Law: Women Lawyers in Modern American History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), Table 2, p. 253. There were 29 active women doctors in Great Britain in 1881; by 1901, there were 277. Women lawyers were not admitted to the British Bar until 1922. See Elston, "Women Doctors", p. 57; Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism, 1850–1900* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1987), p. 96; Rubinstein, p. 81.

21 Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 102, 131. For the US, see Norma Basch, *In the Eyes of the Law: Women, Marriage and Property in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982); Albie Sachs and Joan Hoff Wilson, *Sexism and the Law: A Study of Male Beliefs and Legal Bias in Britain and the United States* (New York: Free Press, 1979).

22 Karen Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868–1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980) and F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1980).

"unamiable." Sometimes, they were even angry. Inevitably, at some point, it became impossible for them to put their husbands' needs ahead of their own.

These pioneering couples wrestled with three major challenges in their marriages. Implicitly or explicitly, they were undoing the power dynamic that made men dominant and women subordinate in conventional marriages; replacing traditional notions of love and romance with new ways for couples to show support and create connection; and redrawing the accepted boundaries between domestic life and professional life. With few models or guidelines to follow, these couples had to make up their own rules as they went along. They illustrate three emblematic approaches for forging a new balance of power, intimacy, and work in a marriage. The Palmers and the Youngs were reluctant rebels who struggled to accommodate the wife's independent career within the framework of very traditional ideas of marriage, womanhood, and masculinity. Elsie Clews Parsons and her husband became increasingly contentious companions, unhappily divided by conflicting views about marriage, work, and companionship. The Webbs and the Mitchells were proud pioneers committed to creating more egalitarian relationships in society and in the workplace as well as in the home.

Challenging Stereotypes of Gender and Romantic Love

These five women and their husbands would have given very complicated answers to Freud's question, "What do women want?" Because they wanted to work, the women looked for different things in a husband and a marriage than the typical middle-class woman of their era did. They wanted freedom, independence, and challenges, not protection and a life of ease. The key thing the wives cared about was not whether a potential husband would be a good provider, but whether he would support her work. But they also wanted passion and romance. Discovering these were often conflicting rather than complementary desires, the women spent months, and in some cases, years in an agony of indecision about whether to marry and whether a particular suitor would be sufficiently supportive of her work. (Grace was unusual in quickly opting to marry.)

As women like Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sheryl Sandberg, and Kamala Harris have discovered more recently, these wives also knew that marrying a sympathetic spouse was essential to the success of a dual career marriage. Finding a supportive mate was more problematic for these earlier women because the qualities that enabled a man to be a supportive husband clashed with nineteenth-century notions of masculinity. Their keen awareness of their own sexuality complicated the choice for many of these women. Several were deeply troubled about the prospect of marrying a man who seemed too weak or lacking in leadership and mastery. Just as they had been socialized to believe that their intellectual gifts and interests, administrative abilities, and ambition were unappealing "masculine" traits in a woman, they questioned the masculinity of a man who was too accommodating and too eager to follow a woman's lead.

Their concerns were fueled not only by the gender stereotypes of their day, but also by nineteenth-century concepts of romantic love that were predicated on the notion of female surrender to a masterful, heroic male. Women and men were taught that a loving couple fused their separate personalities into a single being. Studies of nineteenth-century courtship show how thoroughly both women and men internalized this ideal and sought "oneness" with the beloved.[23] Nevertheless, women and men experienced being in love and becoming one with the beloved quite differently. For a man, love involved feelings of power and conquest, and was equated with possessing and shaping the beloved. For a woman, it meant being possessed and shaped by, and surrendering to, a dominant male. The very language of courtship suggested a power struggle in which the man emerged victorious: he conquered and won; she surrendered and yielded. Female lovers were overcome, not just by the powerful emotions unlocked by love, but also by the force of the male personality. Women experienced romantic love as a loss of self, while men expected their women to become extensions of themselves. As a result, the "oneness" the couple experienced was more likely to reflect the man's tastes and interests rather than the woman's.

23 Lystra, pp. 9, 42–43, 54; Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), p. 247; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, pp. 110–11; Stephen Mintz, *A Prison of Expectations: The Family in Victorian Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), p. 13; Jalland, p. 34.

The expectation that a man would mold his beloved to fit his concept of womanhood and to reflect his tastes and opinions was a key component of nineteenth-century white middle-class gender identity in America and Britain.[24] Without a woman to be dependent, subordinate, and malleable, a traditional man couldn't control, guide, and protect — and therefore, couldn't feel like a man. Conversely, submission to a powerful man enabled a nineteenth-century woman to feel feminine — all the more so if she were a strong woman in her own right, as all these wives were.

Such self-abnegation could be burdensome for women, but it could also be psychologically and sexually thrilling. No matter how independent and ambitious they were, none of these five women was immune to the appeal of submission to a powerful, dominating man. At times each of them yearned for such a relationship. In poems that celebrated her engagement in 1887, Alice Freeman, then President of Wellesley College, wrote about joyfully relinquishing herself to her "lord" and "king", and marveled, "Upon his face I saw such power/ As I had never known till now."[25] After months of courtship, Lucy Sprague candidly confessed to Wesley Clair Mitchell in 1911, "Character you have and I honor you; intellect you have & I admire you; Sweetness of nature you have and I love you: but leadership, mastery, personality you have not & you do not compel me."[26]

Years before she met Sidney, Beatrice Potter had been passionately in love with the powerful, dominating politician Joseph Chamberlain. She was attracted to him because he was "a great man" who exuded mastery. And yet she knew that, if he did propose, she should not marry him because he would crush her independent spirit and make it impossible for her to have a life separate from his. Although she was painfully aware she was not making the "good" marriage for which she had been groomed, she married Sidney Webb several years later because

24 John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 1–11; Leonore Davidoff, "Class and Gender in Victorian England" in *Sex and Class in Women's History: Essays from Feminist Studies*, ed. by Judith L. Newton, Mary P. Ryan, and Judith R. Walkowitz (London: Routledge, 1983), pp. 16–71 (p. 46).

25 Alice Freeman Palmer, "The Surrender" and "The Birthday" in Alice Freeman Palmer, *A Marriage Cycle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), pp. 3, 9.

26 Lucy Sprague to Wesley Clair Mitchell, December 10, 1911. Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, MS#0884, Lucy Sprague Mitchell Papers.

she believed he would be the ideal partner for her work. "The world will wonder," she wrote after they became engaged. "On the face of it, it seems like an extraordinary end to the once brilliant Beatrice Potter [...] to marry an ugly little man with no social ambition and less means, whose only recommendation, some will say, is a certain pushing ability."[27] She was not alone: in order to find a husband who would support her work, both Lucy Sprague and Grace Chisholm also "married down", choosing men who were outside their social or economic class. This lowered the woman's status in her family and the world, but it boosted her position in the marriage.

Upending Traditional Power Dynamics

Tensions around masculine dominance and feminine subordination did not dissipate with the decision to marry; after the wedding, they only intensified. In the typical nineteenth-century household, the husband's superiority and authority were bolstered by the fact that he was older, more experienced, better educated, and more worldly than his wife. But these five working wives were not docile, sheltered women who had little experience outside the home. Accustomed to traveling and living on their own, they had overcome familial opposition, institutional barriers, and male hostility to obtain professional training and employment. Marrying in their early or mid-thirties, many were several years older than the typical brides of their day.[28] Several had been in love with another man before they married. All had distinguished themselves in a male-dominated scholarly or professional world. Some held a higher degree or a more prestigious position than their husbands did. Intellectually and professionally as well as socio-economically, several of these women married men who were less accomplished. That raised another potential stress on the marriage: professional jealousy or rivalry. Few men wanted to be eclipsed by a brilliant or talented wife.

Nor did these women want to be the dominant spouse in the relationship. Even the thought that they might be perceived to be dominant was troubling. This was especially true when the woman

27 BW, Diary, 20 June 1891, https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:wip502kaf

28 The median age of first-time brides in the US was 22 in 1890 (Solomon, *Educated Women*, p. 121).

herself feared — as Beatrice Webb, Grace Chisholm Young, and Lucy Sprague Mitchell each did at the start of her marriage — that her husband was too weak or insufficiently successful. To the nineteenth-century mind, ideas of gender equality and marital equality were problematic concepts to grasp, let alone to put into practice. Having few models of shared decision-making in the home, men and women of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth- centuries assumed that one partner had to be dominant.[29] If it were not the man, then it had to be the woman, a troubling inversion of the natural order. "If two ride a horse, one must ride ahead and one must ride behind" was an often-quoted proverb that made the point clear.[30]

While the specialized knowledge and expertise acquired by male professionals increased their superiority in the home, women who worked outside the home — and the men who married them — encountered troubling inconsistencies between their professional and private lives. As a professional, a woman was trained to exercise independent judgment, decisiveness, and authority; as a wife, she was supposed to defer to her husband. The contradictions between these two positions created many tensions for dual career couples. As a college president and a university dean, Alice Freeman Palmer was a strong and effective administrator who wielded power with assurance. But in their home, George expected her to be a domestic angel, "sweet to the core [...] unselfish and responsive."[31] He treated her as a "little girl" who needed his protection and guidance and had trouble making up her mind. Reflecting on the difficulty of being "both sweet & gentle & loving & modest & also successful with a brilliant career of your own,"

29 Some early feminist/abolitionist leaders embarked on more egalitarian, companionate marriages in America in the 1830s and 1840s. See Blanche Glassman Hersh, "A Partnership of Equals: Feminist Marriages in Nineteenth-Century America" in *The American Man*, ed. by Elizabeth Pleck and Joseph Pleck (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980), pp. 183–214. The marriages of late nineteenth and early twentieth century feminists in Britain offer other examples of husbands who supported their wives and sometimes shared in the wife's activities for the cause. See Olive Banks, *Becoming a Feminist: The Social Origins of "First Wave" Feminism* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987), pp. 39–40; and Philippa Levine, "'So Few Prizes and So Many Blanks': Marriage and Feminism in Later Nineteenth-Century England", *Journal of British Studies* 28 (April 1989), 150–74 (pp. 154–56).

30 Quoted in Shanley, p. 48.

31 George Herbert Palmer to Alice Freeman Palmer, June 1, 1890, Wellesley College Archives, Alice Freeman Palmer Papers.

Grace Chisholm Young warned her adult daughter "that is a very large order, it means *having* & *acting on* your own judgment & yet *distrusting* it & *giving way* to male opinions & desires."[32]

Forging a New Emotional Dynamic

These wives wanted more than a husband's tolerance or permission to work: they wanted his active involvement in and sympathetic understanding of what she did. Loving, supportive husbands encouraged their wives to talk about their work, discussed their triumphs and difficulties, and acted as sounding boards and cheerleaders for them. Some became helpmate husbands, serving as editors, managers, coaches, or advisors, doing for their wives what a helpmate wife traditionally did for a husband.

This shifted both the power balance and the emotional center of the typical nineteenth-century marriage. These husbands were often playing subordinate parts to their wives' leading roles. They were enabling and facilitating, not directing and commanding. It was no longer the wife's responsibility alone to ensure the happiness of the marriage: the husband had to meet her expectations and take responsibility for making her happy.

The three American husbands also showed support by taking on limited childcare and household responsibilities. In contrast, the two British husbands did not take on domestic tasks or childcare responsibilities, and their wives did not ask them to do so. The American husbands did more than most men of their time, but not nearly as much as the wives did. Much of their help was given when the wife was away, not while she was at home. There was little expectation that husbands would — or should — take over routine domestic tasks on a regular basis and no sense that there should be an equal division of household labor.

Whatever household help, emotional support, and substantive assistance a husband gave his wife was highly appreciated and greatly added to the happiness of the marriage, for husbands as well as wives,

32 Grace Chisholm Young to Cecily Young, November 9, 1937, University of Liverpool Library, Special Collections and Archives, D.140, Papers of Professor W H Young and his wife Grace Chisholm Young. Emphasis in the original.

just as it does today.[33] When Alice first set off for the University of Chicago, George happily noted, "You sometimes run a college and I a kitchen, and again I appear as the director of youth and you of servants. It makes our partnership a rich one that we each can comprehend and even perform the other's tasks."[34] Spousal support bolstered the wife's confidence, eased her guilt about not being a conventionally "good" wife, and provided couples with common concerns and shared experiences that were centered, significantly, around her interests as well as his.

Providing assistance and encouragement was not always easy for husbands, however. Both Sidney Webb and Wesley Clair Mitchell gave their wives heartfelt, ungrudging support and helped to advance their careers in multiple ways. Wesley was exceptional in forgoing a professional opportunity in order to accommodate Lucy's career. But in other marriages, enthusiasm and good intentions soon gave way to irritation and resentment, and husbands issued troubling mixed messages which undermined their expressions of support. Although George Herbert Palmer enthusiastically announced his willingness to keep house while Alice was in Chicago, he repeatedly instructed her to finish her work quickly and return home sooner than planned so she could deal with domestic crises or allay his loneliness. William Henry Young encouraged Grace to pursue a medical career, but his incessant demands for her help with his work in pure mathematics repeatedly interrupted her training.

Efforts to create intimacy and connection around the woman's work were especially difficult for couples who worked in different fields. The Mitchells found common ground by "talking all the time" about each other's work, giving Wesley a leadership position in the educational research organization that Lucy founded, and creating a shared social life with her colleagues. In contrast, Herbert Parsons's refusal to read Elsie's books and discuss the controversial themes she expounded wounded her deeply and damaged their relationship. They remained

33 Alyson Byrne and Julian Barling, "Does a Woman's High Status Career Hurt Her Marriage? Not If Her Husband Does the Laundry", *Harvard Business Review* (May 2, 2017), https://hbr.org/2017/05/does-a-womans-high-status-career-hurt-her-marriage-not-if-her-husband-does-the-laundry.

34 George Herbert Palmer to Alice Freeman Palmer, 23 September 1892. AFP Papers.

married, but she had affairs with men who took a very active interest in her work.

A woman who surrendered to the sweeping emotions associated with romance and passion and felt "one" with the man she loved found it especially hard to balance intimacy with autonomy. Alice was not alone in experiencing "oneness" as deeply fulfilling, but also suffocating and constraining. Dearly as she loved George, she lamented the marital "us" that eroded the "me," and sometimes longed to "escape" from him so she could be "alone and free!"[35] During a crisis in her marriage, Elsie agonized, "How are women to live *with* men, not *without* men like the ruthless fighters for institutional freedom, and not in the old way *through* men?"[36] Recognizing that many women had a "marked impulse to subjection", she promoted jobs for women as a safeguard against their emotional dependence on men. "It is only through work one can be quite sure one is taking life at first hand, and it is only by taking life at first hand, by being the spiritual equal of her lover that a woman may preserve a free and passionate life with him, a life of mutual joys and satisfactions, a life aglow through their imagination," she asserted.[37]

Redrawing the Balance between Work and Family Life

The volume and quality of work these women produced during their marriages is remarkable. Understanding the circumstances in which they worked and the obstacles they overcame makes their achievements all the more impressive.

Where to draw the line between work life and domestic life was a pressing issue for all five couples, and for husbands as well as wives. The wives were caught in a double bind that is all too familiar to working wives today. At a time when gender stereotyping and social taboos were much stronger than they are now, they had to live up to the exacting demands placed on professional workers as well as the exacting demands placed on wives and mothers. All five of the wives

35 AFP, "Myself," in Palmer, *Marriage Cycle*, p. 37.

36 ECP, "The Journal of a Feminist" mss., p. 53, APS. Also in ECP, *The Journal of a Feminist* with a New Introduction and Notes by Margaret C. Jones (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994), p. 46. Emphasis in the original.

37 ECP, "Journal of a Feminist" mss., p. 54, APS (ECP, *Journal*, p. 47).

became multitaskers and labored late into the night or in the early hours of the day to complete their work.

Emerging standards of both professional work and childrearing at the end of the nineteenth century and start of the twentieth century increased the difficulty of their balancing act. To be taken seriously as professionals, women needed to show they could work the same long days worked by male professionals and by unmarried female professionals who adopted the standards set by men. Throughout the nineteenth century, the ability to work long and hard at their jobs was a mark of manhood in middle-class America and Britain.[38] As new professions and academic disciplines emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and older ones developed more rigorous standards of training and practice, work demands became more intense. Male professionals and academics were expected to work increasingly long hours, devote more of their leisure time to work-related activities, and become increasingly specialized.[39] (Paradoxically, this was occurring just when men were being told to spend more time in companionate activities with their wives.) Associated with self-discipline and intellectual rigor, specialization was another mark of masculine character. Scholars and practitioners who crossed disciplines or spread themselves too thinly were looked down upon as mere dilettantes or amateurs.[40] Both trends — longer hours of work and greater specialization — disadvantaged married women who had to divide their time among many competing demands.

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38 Rotundo, *American Manhood*, pp. 175–76, 267. John Tosh, "Domesticity and Manliness in the Victorian Middle Class: The Family of Edward White Benson" in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, ed. by Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 44–73. Many women adopted a strategy of "superperformance" to achieve success in male-dominated professions. See Penina Migdal Glazer and Miriam Slater, *Unequal Colleagues: The Entrance of Women into the Professions, 1890–1940* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), pp. 211–13.

39 Edward Shils,"The Order of Learning in the US: The Ascendancy of the University" in *The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America, 1860–1920*, ed. by Alexandra Oleson and John Voss (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 19–47 (p. 32); Rotundo, *American Manhood*, pp. 175–76. In America, men reportedly were spending their leisure hours reading work-related publications rather than novels, plays, and poetry. By the turn of the century, male professionals were said to be focusing their social lives and friendships around their work. See Glazer and Slater, p. 175.

40 Shils, "Order of Learning", p. 33.

Around the same time, emerging standards of child rearing put pressure on women to spend more time with their children and be more actively engaged in their upbringing. During the nineteenth century, white middle-class family life in Britain and America was "adult-oriented," meaning that household schedules and routines were organized around the parents' activities rather than the children's.[41] Although the cult of domesticity and true womanhood glorified the woman's role as a mother, mothers in very well-to-do families and "solidly comfortable" middle-class families were not expected to spend a great deal of time with their offspring. Instead, it was understood that children would be cared for by servants and might see their parents for no more than an hour or two a day, at specifically-appointed times.[42] Such expectations made it easier for well-to-do working mothers to leave their children in the care of baby nurses, nursemaids, and governesses.

However, by the end of the nineteenth century, when colleges and universities in America began to offer courses in home economics, nutrition, and domestic science, middle-class women were told they should be more involved in caring for their children and bring scientific principles as well as maternal instinct to their efforts. Advice manuals and popular magazines spread the same message.[43] These new standards increased the challenges married women faced in managing households and families while pursuing a career.

Like other privileged women of their time, the wives in these dual career marriages employed teams of servants to help run their households and raise their children. They also enlisted help from female relatives — sisters-in-law, mothers, even daughters. Husbands sometimes pitched in, but an equitable division of household labor was not something these couples contemplated. The Palmers and the Webbs were childless (the Webbs by choice), but the Youngs had six children,

41 Marsh, pp. 36–40; Peterson, p. 104.

42 Patricia Branca, *Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University Press, 1975), pp. 74, 151; Perkin, pp. 96–97; Dyhouse, "Mothers and Daughters", pp. 29–34; James Walvin, *A Child's World: A Social History of English Childhood, 1800–1914* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 99–100.

43 Stephen Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: Free Press, 1989), pp. 121, 124; Solomon, *Educated Women*, pp. 85–87; Jane Lewis, *Women in England, 1870–1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), xi.

and the Parsonses and the Mitchells each raised four children. (Two of the Mitchell children were adopted; two of Elsie and Herbert's sons died shortly after birth.) The emerging standards of child care did not deter these women from working, but they increased their anxiety and prompted several to make extraordinary efforts to spend time with their children and supervise their education and care. Like the "supermoms" of today, they took on seemingly unnecessary domestic or parenting tasks to show that they were traditionally "womanly" women despite being working wives.

Children complicated the juggling act significantly, but the prominence that men and men's work were given in the typical nineteenth-century home meant that a husband potentially posed a greater obstacle to a working wife than children did. Women were supposed to provide services and supports to men, not draw on them for themselves. Far from being valued, women's work outside the home was likely to be seen as deeply suspect, even unnatural. Although their earnings might be useful to the household, the women were typically not supporting families and not seen to be enhancing the family's reputation or status. Lacking the compelling motivation of economic need that pushed working-class women or middle-class widows into jobs, middle-class wives needed a different justification for their work. Self-fulfillment was not an acceptable rationale. Wives might claim to be serving a higher cause, responding to a calling, or simply making use of their talents and training, but their careers were more likely to be regarded — by themselves, as well as by others — as motivated by selfishness or unseemly personal ambition.[44] They might therefore be reluctant to ask for help or feel guilty about the sacrifices that other household members made on their behalf. And yet working wives needed support and assistance every bit as much as, if not more than, their husbands.

Breaking through the barriers of gender was difficult, even for these immensely talented and determined wives. When sorely pressed, they could be protective of their own needs, but they were often more inclined to appease than to confront unsupportive or grudging husbands. Few openly asserted that their work was as important as their husbands'

44 On women's justifications for pursuing a career, see Glazer and Slater, p. 104 and Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 24–25.

work. Instead of complaining to their husbands about the extra burdens they had to shoulder, these wives — especially early in their marriages — were grateful and excited to have the opportunity to combine the roles of wife, mother, and worker. Visiting her own mother in 1905, Elsie Clews Parsons — a lecturer at Barnard College, settlement house worker, published scholar, and mother of two toddlers — wrote disparagingly to Herbert about her relatives' idle lives: "Mama and [cousin] Louise dress, i.e., bathe, curl, anoint, powder, manicure, etc., and think about dress all day long. Louise is incredible. She misses her adorable baby, & sews exquisitely, & she & Mama both play cards sometimes in the afternoon & off & on go out to lunch or dinner and that is absolutely all that happens to them [...]. It is an incomprehensible life to me and very sad."[45] It was only later in their marriages that Elsie, Grace, and Lucy began to express resentment of husbands who failed to appreciate the extraordinary efforts the women made to keep their households running smoothly, children cared for, and husbands happy while also producing important work of their own.

In an era when careers and professional work were increasingly defined as requiring specialized training, certification, and ascent up a hierarchical ladder, and increasingly associated with full-time paid employment in an institutional setting, these women blurred the distinction between amateur and professional that male professionals were trying to draw.[46] Elsie and Grace were highly credentialed scholars — PhDs at a time when very few men and even fewer women earned them[47] — who published in professional journals, were recognized as experts, and won academic honors and awards. But they were independent scholars, not college or university professors, and they

45 Elsie Clews Parsons to Herbert Parsons, September 20, 1905. APS.

46 On professionalism, see *The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America, 1860–1920*, ed. by Alexandra Oleson and John Voss (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: the Middle-Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: Norton, 1976); J. W. Reader, *Professional Men, The Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth Century England* (New York: Basic Books, 1966); and Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 2002). On the gendered underpinnings of nineteenth-century notions of profession and career, see Glazer and Slater, pp. 1–23, 209–45 and histories of women in specific professions.

47 Margaret W. Rossiter, "Doctorates for American Women, 1868–1907", *History of Education Quarterly*, 22 (Summer 1982), 159–83.

did not have paid jobs or institutional affiliations. Others of these wives pieced together paid employment opportunities, founded their own institutions, or pioneered new types of jobs (paid or unpaid) in social investigation and children's education. Having control over their schedules was critical to their ability to work.

These multi-talented wives wrestled with a second balancing act that few husbands experienced. They struggled not just to fit their work lives around their domestic responsibilities, but also to accommodate a variety of intellectual and cultural interests. Wanting to do many things with their time, the women challenged the emerging — male-driven — expectation that professionals should work increasingly long hours and focus their work increasingly narrowly. Elsie Clews Parsons transitioned from writing probing social commentary on modern mores to writing highly regarded scholarly ethnologies of indigenous peoples. Grace Chisholm Young wrote scholarly papers on pure mathematics during and after the time she was training to become a physician.

All five wives developed outlets for creative self-expression — writing fiction, composing poetry, publishing children's books and stories, chronicling their own lives and accounts of their marriages. Some workaholic husbands dismissed these activities as time-wasting distractions. Such judgments tended to reinforce the unequal division of labor within the household and confirm the man's sense of superiority: women who pursued multiple interests or allowed their work to be interrupted by household responsibilities were being "unprofessional" and therefore did not deserve to be taken as seriously or given the same support as their harder working, more highly focused husbands.

* * * * *

These five couples were variously successful in articulating and resolving the tensions and contradictions that made it so difficult to maintain a dual career marriage in their era — or in any era. The narratives that follow progress from the couples who had the most trouble accommodating the wife's independent career (the Palmers and the Youngs) to those who were most successful (the Webbs and the Mitchells). The deeply divided Parsonses — who managed to maintain two careers, but failed to satisfy each other's emotional needs — hold the middle ground. The Epilogue brings the story of dual career marriages up to the present and

highlights the lessons that modern couples can learn from this earlier generation.

Individually, these narratives offer intimate, richly textured portraits of real couples struggling to balance work, love, leisure, and childcare over many decades of marriage more than a century ago. Together, they provide an enriched understanding of the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and behaviors, and a greater appreciation of the ways that professional standards intersect with notions of love and romance to shape marital roles and expectations in upper-middle class white homes. Seeing each of the marriages in the context of the other four sheds light on the constraints the couples faced, the choices they made, the progress they achieved in rewriting marital roles and relationships, and the conditions and supports that made it possible for them to succeed. Exploring the husbands' motivations and behaviors adds nuance and depth to the marital narratives.

Although dual career marriages have become the norm rather than the exception among the middle-class in America and Britain, modern wives still struggle against many of the impediments that constrained these five women. Despite the progress women have made in education and the workplace, gendered stereotypes persist in the public imagination. Ambition and forcefulness are still regarded as undesirable "masculine" traits in high-achieving women. Women win praise for being helpful, modest, and nice — while men are expected to be direct, assertive, and competitive. Masculinity is still strongly associated with earning a living. Husbands of very prominent women are counseled to show full support for their wives while also demonstrating they are not emasculated by the woman's success.[48]

The marital ideal of the angel in the house has lost its appeal, except among Christian conservatives. Men can now rely on secretaries, research assistants, and para-professionals to do many of the tasks that helpmate wives performed in the nineteenth century. Husbands are doing more in the home, especially more childcare, but women still

48 Emma Jacobs, "Secrets of Successful Dual-career Couples", *Financial Times*, October 13, 2019; Claire Cain Miller and Alisha Haridasani Gupta, "Why Supermom Gets Star Billing on Resumes for Public Office", *The New York Times*, October 14, 2020; Joan C. Williams, "How Women Escape the Likeability Trap", *The New York Times*, August 16, 2019; Sarah Lyall, "At Primary Debates and on Instagram, A Spouse Embraces His Campaign Role", *The New York Times*, August 20, 2020.

do the bulk of domestic work, and report spending an hour more per day on both childcare and housework than men do. Although growing numbers of men and women expect to have equitable marriages, in practice, many couples still give greater priority to the man's career than to the woman's. Working wives today are more likely than their husbands to make compromises that benefit a spouse's career but hurt their own — a trend that worsened during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020–21. Such decisions penalize women at work and perpetuate the gender and pay gaps that contribute to power imbalances in the home.[49]

These five early dual career marriages illuminate the painful personal choices that dual career couples still encounter. Their example and inspiration are still needed today.

49 Claire Cain Miller, "Young Men Embrace Gender Equality, but They Still Don't Vacuum", *The New York Times*, February 11, 2020; Jessica Grose, "It's Not your Kids Holding Your Career Back. It's Your Husband", Slate.com, November 18, 2014; Avivah Wittenberg-Cox, "If You Can't Find a Spouse Who Supports Your Career, Stay Single", *Harvard Business Review Email Newsletter*, October 24, 2017, https://hbr.org/2017/10/if-you-cant-find-a-spouse-who-supports-your-career-stay-single; Patricia Cohen, "Recession with a Difference: Women Face Special Burden", *The New York Times*, November 17, 2020.