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A SAFE PLACE FOR SMART WOMEN:
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IMAGES OF MOUNT HOLYOKE
COLLEGE DURING THE 1940s

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 1948, the Mount Holyoke College Press Bureau had a photographer take pictures of their annual May Queen celebrations. Although the May Queen event was an old-fashioned, once-a-year tradition, this image was used many times over in various media sources that referred to the college.¹ In fact, it was used much more extensively than another photo taken around the same time of a French class, which was only used once. Many members of the Mount Holyoke faculty were displeased that the image of the college being presented to the general public was that of girls dancing around in flowing dresses, rather than the image of rigorous academic work that the school was trying to foster. In response to the faculty outcry, the director of Mount Holyoke's Press Bureau said that "each [photograph] is more valuable because the other appeared."² She was implying that although many people would now see Mount Holyoke College as a lighthearted place, just as many people would see the college as a very academic place, and the two would balance each other out.

¹ 1948 Annual Report page 3, 1940-1948, Press Bureau Annual Reports, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley.

² 1948 Annual Report, page 3

This contretemps over images of Mount Holyoke college women captures conflicts over representing Mount Holyoke in the period of 1940-1950. College and non-college publications alike provide images of college women in the 1940s that include both serious, studious women, hard at work, as well as fun-loving women looking for husbands at elite men's colleges. Of course, both kinds of women probably went to Mount Holyoke in the 1940s. This is the basis of my thesis investigation into the way women's colleges shaped, and were shaped by, the rapidly changing social atmosphere expectations around women's roles during and immediately following World War II.

Historical Background

As the economy and social norms shifted from the harsh world of the Depression to the varieties of a wartime economy and more permissive gender norms and then back again to a more conservative society, women's lives changed drastically. Mount Holyoke provides an interesting case study for exploring these changes in a single institutional context. In its self-published college materials and internal communications, the changes that society was going through are evident. At the same time, however, the college retained its commitment to high academic standards. These major outside influences on the college – the economy, politics, and the labor market, to name a few –

were also major influences on women's choices and options in planning their lives.

The historical backdrop of World War II places women's colleges firmly in the debate over what women's lives should entail – keeping a good home, certainly, but also actively participating in the labor force? Or simply a well-educated woman, able to converse with her husband's business associates? Did education, however, lead to dissatisfaction in the home and a broken family? All of these questions were being asked and debated in various forums, and were on the minds of academics and administrators who were trying to figure out their female student's place in society. Historian Barbara Solomon notes that: “paradoxically, at a time when more college-educated wives worked, their educators were upholding the primacy of women's roles as wife and homemaker. Neither academic institutions nor society at large helped solve the increasing dilemmas of these women.”³ While more and more women were getting college educations, they still had to conform to other aspects of the female gender role.

As a large portion of the male population was serving in the war, women were called upon to fill the gap in the labor force, and even those who did not work faced months or years away from a husband or other male family figures. There was strict rationing due to the war, and often the loss of the husband's paycheck, as he went overseas and only a small fraction was sent

³ Solomon, Barbara Miller, In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. (page 188)

home to his family. Women had to adapt to filling in the labor void left by the men that went to war, and then had to once again adapt when those men came back and needed schooling and employment.

In the early years of the war, many industries were unwilling to hire women: “a survey of 12,000 factories in early 1942, for example, showed that war industries were willing to employ women in only one-third of the jobs available.”⁴ The increasing labor shortage, however, not only helped to break the gender barrier for women with previously unwilling employees, but it also changed the cultural understanding of what women’s roles were, both within the work force and in domestic life. Employers started to consider women as employees, and a significantly larger number of women began to work outside of the home during the war: “by 1940, 15.2 percent of all married women were working, and throughout World War II the trend accelerated, so that in 1945 nearly one-quarter of all married women worked, representing well over one-third of the female labor pool.”⁵ Although many of these women were working in traditionally female occupations, there was also a growing number of non-traditional occupations for which women were starting to be seriously considered.

Changing and conflicting cultural attitudes about women’s roles in the labor force also extended into higher education. Although newspapers and college guide books focused on the social aspects of college life, there were

⁴ Chafe, William Henry. The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972. (page 136)

⁵ Soloman, page 175

also plenty of scholarly and professional reasons for a young woman to attend college, although these professional reasons were still boxed in by the gender roles of the time. Thus, educated women “weathered the contradiction between the intellectual and social stimulation of their educational years and the isolation and routine of domesticity, viewing that dissonance as a personal problem or the result of inappropriate education.”⁶ By making educated women feel ashamed or bad about their intellect, they were even more isolated within the home, and were discouraged from using any of the skills they had acquired. Betty Freidan (Smith '42) commented that “the role of wife and mother did not ‘sufficiently’ utilize [women’s] ‘creative abilities’.”⁷ Freidan expresses the idea that being a wife and mother was not enough for many women who had been college educated. At women’s colleges this was especially marked as a conflict between educating women for roles at the beginning of the decade when labor market opportunities were open, and the end of the decade when it was permitted that women seek higher education⁸, but it was questionable whether or not they could use this education for anything other than being a wife and mother.

The war, in particular, seemed to provide an opening in gender roles and women’s education. In the early 1940s many women were trained for technical jobs, and had more attention paid to them in the classroom: “for a

⁶ Hartmann, Susan. The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982. (page 116)

⁷ Soloman, page 200

⁸ According to Hartmann, “in 1940, 77,000 women graduated from college; in 1950, 104,000 attained bachelors’ and other first-level degrees.” (page 107)

short time of national emergency the curriculum provided women with opportunities that seemed to belie sex labels.”⁹ However, these few years of opportunity did not last. While women college students may have had more women along side of them in the classroom and the support of female administrators and faculty members, many female college students also had lower expectations about where their degree would take them in the later part of the 1940s: “as enrollments climbed in the postwar period, women graduated from college in ever-increasing numbers, but relative to men their educational attainments [post graduation] declined.”¹⁰

So, although the numbers of women in higher education were still growing at the end of the decade, the opportunities they pursued began to change post-war. Part of this may have been a lack of female role models – as women were being laid off in the wartime workforce, they were also losing ground in higher education. Surprisingly, the “women’s share of faculty positions fell even at the women’s colleges which had traditionally employed a disproportionate number of women. The largest women’s colleges staffed nearly three-fourths of their faculty positions with women in 1940, but less than 60 percent in 1955.”¹¹ At Mount Holyoke, this shift may be partly explained by the transition from president Mary Woolley to Roswell Ham in 1937. Ham was the first male president of the college and it was under his watch that the faculty ranks became considerably more male. By the end of

⁹ Soloman, page 188

¹⁰ Hartmann, page 101

¹¹ Hartmann, page 108

the decade, women were losing much of the ground that had been gained during the war, both education-wise and career-wise. They were losing the number of role models available to them within the work force, and were being overwhelmed with the number of men in their classroom. The later part of the decade marked a revisiting of gender roles and social values that had been last seen during the more traditional time period of the Depression, with all the attendant social values – marriage, wife staying in the home, and one wage-earner within the family.

Before this period of conservatism, the stereotype of highly-educated women was that they often chose not to marry, instead pursuing a career – which was certainly true in some cases. By the 1940s, however, “college women no longer viewed careers as desirable alternatives to marriage, and close relationships among women had become increasingly suspect.”¹² The idea that education was for a lifetime of a career, in the company of other women who had taken the same track, was becoming obsolete in the era of strong family life and more conservative social values.¹³ Women’s colleges, therefore, had to work to prove that education was valuable for women, moreover, they argued such ideas were different and better than those of

¹² Hartmann, page 180

¹³ The one group that seemed to have the easiest time participating in the workforce were women who had been working since before the war – these women presumably had entrenched themselves in their jobs enough that they were not in danger of being laid off, or perhaps they were past the childbearing age, or they had enough time to realize that they enjoyed working outside of the home and were not swayed by societal pressure. As one female worker explained, “war jobs have uncovered unsuspected abilities in American women...why lose all these abilities because of a belief that ‘a woman’s place in the home.’ For some it is, for others not.” (Chafe, American Woman, page 178)

regular female college graduates. To justify and shore up their elite status, their graduates had to be seen as outstanding in all aspects of their lives – not just in a career.

A Map of the Thesis

This thesis documents conflicting representations of Mount Holyoke College during the socially fluctuating time of 1940-1950, and shows that there was no unified image of the college. Various departments represented and interpreted the college's image and mission in different ways to different groups. World War II was a five year anomaly in social, economic and political realities which liberalized women's roles, and affected the college and how it interacted with the outside world. Yet internal factors, such as Mary Woolley's replacement with Roswell Ham in 1937 as the college's first male president are evidence of more conservative trends in women's higher education and women's broader social roles, and these too affected how the college's image was shaped. As different departments and offices struggled to find a place for a liberal women's college in an increasingly socially conservative America, students came and went, bringing their own conceptions of a liberal arts education and post-graduate plans and goals to the college. The students reacted to both the college's mission, as well as to their own historical time and place. By analyzing different representations of

Mount Holyoke College at that time period, this thesis provides a window in changing social norms and values in 1940s' America.

The following chapters will address how Mount Holyoke worked to produce high-caliber graduates, as well as how the college navigated the constantly changing social expectations for women and women's colleges. These expectations, which originated from both inside and outside of the college, helped to shape what kind of graduates would emerge from the school.

Chapter Two describes how the public image of Mount Holyoke was shaped by forces within the school. The Admissions Office, in their interaction with prospective students, and the Press Bureau, in its interaction with media outlets, were both tasked with creating an image of the college that would entice applicants and donors. This image had to be both true to the college and respond to the fluctuating social atmosphere, which was sometimes, but not always, the same thing. As these offices worked to generate an enticing image of the college, other elite entities created their own opinions about women's higher education and in turn brought those ideas to Mount Holyoke.

Chapter Three addresses how different constituencies inside and outside of the college viewed the institution and its mission of higher education for women. Within the college, faculty shaped the curriculum and the Appointment Bureau guided students into careers and worked with employers to show them the value of hiring a Mount Holyoke graduate. On

the outside of the college, employers formed their own opinions about female college educated workers, newspapers ran articles on women's higher education and its place in American society, and college guide books offered basic advice to young women preparing for college. Together, these different sources indirectly shaped the general public's view of women's education while also contributing to a broader social narrative of the "good" of a women's college education. They also had a hand in how the college responded to changing social pressures on women, and more specifically, on how young women decided what path to take after high school.

Chapter Four describes student life during the 1940s on a women's college campus by looking at admissions materials, student organizations, and student's relationship with the administration. As the end products of the institution, students reflect the changes, if any, to the social atmosphere of the school over the period. By evaluating how student life changed over time, the ways in which conceptions of the school influenced and/or changed the student experience at Mount Holyoke can be inferred.

In the context of the broader social debate over what a woman's place was in the labor force and in higher education during the 1940s, the frustration that many faculty at Mount Holyoke showed when the prevailing image of the college was one of women dancing around a May Pole becomes clearer. While social norms and gender roles were fluctuating and the success of women in the workforce continued to vary, Mount Holyoke aimed to produce

the same kind of graduates, though these graduates could anticipate different roles in society as women's roles changed. The public representation of Mount Holyoke, and of other women's colleges, however, fluctuated in response to those social norms and gender roles, though not as drastically as the rest of society did. This mission of producing high-quality graduates was helped by the fact that women's colleges, like Mount Holyoke, did not have to deal with men flooding classrooms after the war, and so were still able to focus completely on their female student's educations. At the same time, the college had to make the decision between presenting itself as a serious academic endeavor, or presenting itself as a place where Harvard and Yale boys could come on the weekends to meet socially adept young women, or if the college imagery could reach a happy medium. Beyond the issue of what kind of academic courses the college offered them, the public image of the college was important in bringing in bright girls, who in turn insured the college's prestige and brought in the tuition that kept the institution running. In light of these considerations, I hope to show that women's colleges in the 1940s, and Mount Holyoke in particular, worked hard to maintain a proper public image of producing smart, well-adjusted female graduates who were equally able to be chemists, teachers or wives

CHAPTER TWO: PUBLIC IMAGE

Among the different offices and departments of Mount Holyoke, there were many people involved in creating public representations of the college during the 1940s. In my research of the Admissions Office, the Press Bureau, surveys sent out by the director of the Appointment Bureau as well as other Appointment Bureau data and materials, the Dean of Students Office, Freshman Handbooks, curriculum, faculty, student organizations, and annual reports from various departments and offices, I have found that some of these entities were more active in creating a public image of the college that was in line with current social trends than others. In particular, the Press Bureau and the Admissions Office were key figures in promoting the college in ways that showed Mount Holyoke graduates as successful women in society, whatever the definition of success. The Appointment Bureau, by contrast, worked to maintain an image of the college with employers that stayed the same throughout the plethora of social changes that characterized the 1940s. Analyzing these offices reveal what different parts of Mount Holyoke thought the college needed to be so that it would attract students and remain a viable

institution of higher education during the period of social and economic flux in the 1940s.

Mount Holyoke in the 1940s

Social norms and values in American society underwent massive changes between the Depression and the post-war economy. The economic uncertainties of the Depression were alleviated by the beginning of World War II. Subsequently, the war time boom ushered in more permissive gender roles on a tide of rising wages paid to higher numbers of females in the labor force. However, when the war ended, American social values once again became conservative. In this context, women's colleges had to make the choice about whether they wanted to appear as places where young women learned social cues and partook in traditionally feminine studies, or if they wanted to appear as institutions of rigorous academic study. The Appointment and Press Bureaus as well as the Admissions Office were three places in which these appearances were created and publicized.

The Appointment Bureau

The administration of the college had to both create and maintain a highly competitive educational environment while still directing the college image that the Press Bureau put out. The Appointment Bureau (later the Career Development Center) was charged with helping students and alumnae

find employment after graduation. The Bureau was also responsible for keeping track of recruiters, tallying statistics on the members of each class and which vocation they ended up in, and educating students on what career options were available to them. Through their correspondence with other colleges as well as a variety of employers, the Appointment Bureau also upheld the reputation of the college. Helen Voorhees, the director of the Appointment Bureau, strove to educate students and employers about what a Mount Holyoke graduate was capable of.

The Voorhees Survey

In the early 1940s, there were a number of industrial firms and companies that recruited at Mount Holyoke. In 1946, Voorhees sent surveys to thirty of these companies in an effort to discern their attitudes about women working in their companies. She especially targeted companies that had been reluctant to hire women to do anything beyond secretarial work before the war, since these companies had to change their policies during the wartime manpower shortage. Published in the 1946-47 academic year, the report was called “Women’s Success in Business: A Report Based on War-Time Experience”. (See Appendix One.) The overall impression that the Voorhees survey gives is that she was trying to convey to employers that female workers were at least as competent and employable as male workers and correlatively, that women’s education at Mount Holyoke was of the highest

caliber. She states at the beginning of the report that “the first year’s experience [of employing larger numbers of women] evidently convinced the recruiting firms that they could depend upon the new source [female employees] far more than had been thought possible or feasible.”¹⁴ In other words, employers who had hired women were happy with the results, and so the questionnaire was created in order to consolidate and disseminate those experiences in order to validate them and share them with a greater group of employers. Of course, one has to keep in mind that the survey was fairly biased in the questions it asked, leading many of the responses towards a positive view of female employees.

While the results showed that the corporate employers who were surveyed held positive attitudes about female workers that may have not existed prior to the desegregation of the labor force during World War II, the way in which Voorhees presented her findings to the President’s Office suggests that she did not change the way that her office presented the college to the public over the same period. During the ten years of president’s reports that were submitted during the 1940s, Voorhees did not waver in her idea that Mount Holyoke graduates were competent in the workforce, and she continually restated the argument to employers that they should be hiring Mount Holyoke students. Her survey and report show that the conclusions that

¹⁴ Women’s Success in Business: A Report Based on War-Time Experience, Career Development Records, Activities 1946-95, Series 1 Activities 1901-1999 Statistics – survey results 1946-87. [see Appendix One]

employers came to were similar to the ones that the Appointment Bureau wanted them to have.

Many of the questions in Voorhees survey were worded to elicit evidence that women had been accepted into the workforce and had succeeded, as a consequence were used to highlight the worth of a Mount Holyoke education. For example, she wrote to William Fulton Kurtz, president of the Pennsylvania Company for Banking and Trusts, explaining that the survey was done mostly in fields where college women were not employed until the war. She also mentions that the “worst” firms, the ones which hardly ever hired women to work as anything beyond a secretary, were where most of the graduates chose to work during the war years.¹⁵ Many of the people that she had contact with, such as employers from places such as the Ford Company and DuPont, responded that the report showed a fair representation of how women were viewed by employers in these fields.¹⁶ By using these firms to show the huge turnaround in attitude about employing women workers during the war, and then sending out their answers to show to other companies of similar types that their experiences with women workers were not unique, Voorhees tried to show an industry-wide trend that reflected positively on Mount Holyoke and women workers. She aimed to compare women’s performance on the job with that of men – with the ultimate goal of proving that there was no difference.

¹⁵ Correspondence with WM Fulton Kurtz, Career Development Records, Activities 1946-95, Series 1 Activities 1901-1999 Statistics – survey results 1946-87.

¹⁶ Various letters, Career Development Records

She used the report to show that that the perceptions of women's abilities were changing with the times, to finally match up with what women were actually capable of. The first question included in the report asked employers to compare female college graduates' with men doing similar work. Twenty six of the respondents said that the work compared favorably while two said no; similarly, when asked if women who had technical training proved to be as capable as men with technical training, twenty respondents said yes, and five said no. Numbers like this show that employers, at least during the time when they had to hire women, accepted the fact that women were able to do work typically assigned to men. This also provides some evidence that during wartime, perceptions of what women could and couldn't do were changing. Voorhees also used the report to represent the high value and usefulness of a Mount Holyoke education, and women's higher education in general. By describing how some Mount Holyoke graduates had already received vocational training, or would be taking additional training courses after graduation, Voorhees showed the wide range of talents that Mount Holyoke women could call upon when asked. She also used this report as a way of learning which career fields would be the most fruitful ones for students pursuing employment.

One of the more telling topics that the questionnaire touched on had to do with what fields were the best for women who wanted to pursue a career. Implicit in this question was that it was not atypical for Mount Holyoke

graduates to pursue a career, although the number of employed graduates may have been atypically high during the wartime years. Employers were asked if “college woman [would] have greater opportunity for advancement if she should specialize while in college in such fields as chemistry, electronics, advertising, economics and banking, merchandising, etc?”¹⁷ Keeping in mind that most of the respondents were in fields that required their employees to have such specialized education, twenty five of the respondents responded positively to this question, and only two said that such training was not necessary. This is not surprising, since these companies did require technical knowledge in many of their positions, but it was still useful, concrete information for women college students to focus on. The last question that employers responded to positively was one about their future plans for hiring women, once many of the men who had been involved in the military came back and expected to return to their jobs. Nineteen of the employers said that they did “anticipate continuing to employ well-educated women in positions of responsibility and opportunity,” while eight employers said “no” or “possibly”.¹⁸ While it has been shown that women did not enjoy the same opportunities in the job market after the war as they did during and immediately following it, during this time of flux in gender roles, employers were still willing to consider women in traditionally male roles. In the Voorhees survey and report, it appears that Mount Holyoke was trying to

¹⁷ Women’s Success in Business: A Report Based on War-Time Experience

¹⁸ Women’s Success in Business: A Report Based on War-Time Experience

capitalize on this encouraging sentiment and make sure that potential employers saw their competitors' opinions on hiring women.

However, not all responses to the Voorhees' survey were positive, and showed the often contradicting social values of the mid-1940s. When asked to compare the turnover rate between women and men, fifteen respondents said the turnover rate was higher for women in both peacetime and wartime, while only two said it was equal for men and women during peacetime. Of course, women faced a higher demand for their time away from a job – gendered expectations of traditional family roles didn't change during the war. As many college graduates faced the dual roles of homemaker and career woman, their jobs suffered, leading many employers to resist hiring women. The only other negative response listed in the report was regarding imagination and ambition – only eleven employers found women to be comparable to men in that respect, while thirteen employers found women lacking. So, although the survey was mostly positive about hiring women in traditionally male technical jobs, survey responses also show that there were deeply ingrained cultural expectations about men and women that worked against women entering the workforce.

Despite these limitations, the Voorhees report was greeted as a success by many people in and outside Mount Holyoke. In a letter from Fulton Kurtz to Voorhees, he writes thanking her for the report: “all in all, it appears that in summary the women seem to have done a thoroughly good job even though

there is a slight bit of reluctance on the part of the management to admit their equality.”¹⁹ Letters like this one show how many employers viewed women, and how the social norms at that time were still encouraging to the female college graduate. However, this may have ultimately worked against many women who graduated in the later part of the 1940s, since they were operating under the assumption that finding jobs would be as easy for them as it had been for their friends graduating just a few years before. As gender roles shifted back into their pre-war places, attitudes like Kurtz’s were less prevalent, and a fine women’s education once again was no guarantee of a career. Voorhees’ survey, placed on the cusp between a massive reshifting of gender roles, came at a time when college women did not necessarily know what their college educations were going to do for them. Departments like the Appointment Bureau saw it as their role to help Mount Holyoke students decide what their place was in society, while also creating opportunities for them to participate in the labor force if they so choose.

At the Press Bureau – Press Releases

In a similar way, the Press Bureau also tried to shape public perceptions of the college. Indeed, one of the main tasks in running a college is to make the case for why the college is important -- in other words, to make the case for why that college should exist. This, of course, affects what kinds

¹⁹ Letter from December 1949, Career Development Records

of students are attracted to the college, what sort of professors and lecturers want to be associated with the college, and who gives money to the college. In 1945, this was the job of the relatively new Press Bureau (first the Public Relations Bureau and then later the News Bureau). They took it as their duty to create an image of the college and disseminate it among various newspapers and other media outlets. The 1940s were a time in which liberal arts colleges like Mount Holyoke started to have more of a professional administration. When Mount Holyoke was starting their Public Relations Bureau in the 1930s, they enquired around to many other similar schools in the country, trying to figure out what exactly was needed to market the college. The Bureau saw the function of college publicity as “giving continuing evidence to the friends and supporters of the college that it is sound and its activities are important in the world of affairs, and, second, informing the general public about the nature and value of a liberal arts education.”²⁰

In this capacity, the Press Bureau saw their role as a “midwife, rather than progenitor” of the college’s reputation.²¹ They did not create the college, nor did they dictate how people perceived the college. They saw themselves as the vehicle through which a view of Mount Holyoke was made available to the general public. The director, Elizabeth Green, stated that she wanted to give more attention to “the relations of the college with its various ‘publics’; in writing news stories we have laid greater emphasis on the interpretation of

²⁰ Annual Report for 1946, Press Bureau Annual Reports

²¹ Annual Report for 1945, 1940-1948, Press Bureau Annual Reports, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley.

college policy or a liberal arts education and less on spot news and features.”²²

In other words, they wanted to frame the image of the college rather than shape the details. Thus, the Press Bureau’s enduring task was to create a representation of the college that was more than just news – it wanted to influence how “various publics” thought about the college. One of the ways it did this was by sending out press releases and maintaining relationships with media outlets around the globe.

While many of their pieces that were published have been lost to time, there are several examples still around that were deemed important enough examples of Mount Holyoke to keep. Reading through these newspaper clippings and magazine articles at the Mount Holyoke College Archives gives the reader a sense of Mount Holyoke in the 1940s, but these sources probably speak as much to what editors thought would sell newspaper copy as what the Press Bureau sent out or what the college actually was. At the same time, however, since the clippings show what newspaper editors thought was important about Mount Holyoke, they also provide a window on what the ‘public’ saw of the college. How much this public view shaped the college is yet to be determined, but it is likely that it played a role in how the college was publicly perceived, and in turn, what sort of people applied to or worked at schools such as Mount Holyoke.

²² Annual Report for 1946, Press Bureau Annual Reports

In a time when the value of women's education was being questioned for anything other than motherhood, the goals of showing that Mount Holyoke was important in the larger world and that a liberal arts education for women was a good social investment were lofty ones. The Bureau attempted to reach these goals not by focusing on prospective students so much as by focusing on an audience that was already connected to the college – parents and alumnae, as well as benefactors and other friends of Mount Holyoke.²³ In this way, the Press Bureau proselytized a group of people who already had connections to the college and urged them to become advocates for women's higher education. The image of the school that they cultivated was also one that would interest investors – people who had for one reason or another decided that women's education was important. In this way, the press Bureau attempted to raise a general awareness of Mount Holyoke, and of women's higher education, as a social investment.

There were several techniques that the Bureau used to get Mount Holyoke's name into the public consciousness, both to promote interest in the school and to bolster the reputation of liberal arts and women's education in general. One of these methods was to link Mount Holyoke to similar colleges in press releases so there would be more of a chance of a story running. The Press Bureau also employed a part time photographer in conjunction with

²³ Annual Report for 1945, Press Bureau Annual Reports

other local schools.²⁴ Many times, newspaper editors mentioned to the Bureau that while the Mount Holyoke story was interesting, it wasn't interesting enough to warrant the expense of sending out a newspaper photographer. By banding together with other local schools, Mount Holyoke was able to ensure photographs with all the articles they sent out. These organized ties that were constantly being created between the schools in the Connecticut Valley as well as between women's colleges all over the country worked to solidify the place of women's education in post-war America. One of the driving ideas behind the Bureau's campaigns was that "when a college wants to get funds, it must increase the number of its friends."²⁵ In other words, by making more people aware of women's colleges such as Mount Holyoke, and creating an atmosphere in which people appreciated what kinds of women these colleges could produce, more people would be apt to donate to the college or to send their daughters there. There were many ways that the Press Bureau did just that. For example, the director of the Press Bureau asked for a local list of people or organizations who might be interested in campus activities, which shows that Mount Holyoke was trying increase broad community involvement.²⁶ If they reached out to the nearby community, this not only strengthened ties with the community, but also helped the college to increase attendance at events and get their name out to more people. This work was

²⁴ Annual Report for 1946, Press Bureau Annual Reports

²⁵ Annual Report for 1947, Press Bureau Annual Reports

²⁶ Letter on 9/20/45, Series 1, Press Bureau Correspondence, LD7083.5, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley.

seen as "insurance" for the college's reputation; the idea was that if Mount Holyoke was on good terms with the local and national press²⁷ the college would get good publicity, therefore making it on "good terms" with the rest of America.

Shaping Mount Holyoke's Image: Political Conformity and National Security

The Press Bureau's ultimate goal was to show that Mount Holyoke women were able to work for the country in whatever capacity was needed, be it in the labor force or in the home. One of the main issues that the college faced in creating an image of women's education was that they did not want to appear too radical or too progressive, a reputation that some women's colleges had had in the past. The Press Bureau realized that "one of the most serious problems facing all us colleges today is how to increase public understanding of the way freedom of thought and speech should function in a democracy without endangering national security or international cooperation."²⁸ By describing the college not just as a haven for women's education, but also a font of freedom and democracy, the Bureau tried to broaden the appeal of Mount Holyoke as a women's college. This quote also avers to a more political history of the college by stressing not just the freedoms of thought and speech, but the national and international implications that come from

²⁷ Annual Report for 1945, Press Bureau Annual Reports

²⁸ Annual Report for 1949, Press Bureau Annual Reports

educating women this way at Mount Holyoke²⁹. The leaders at the Press Bureau had to be careful, however, not to appear too radical. During a time of fervent patriotism, national pride and loyalty were mandatory at educational institutions. The Bureau director hoped that Mount Holyoke would “have many opportunities through deeds and words to make clear our faith in the combination of freedom and self discipline that underlies liberal education.”³⁰

With the belief that a woman’s education was essential for the continuation of freedom and self discipline in America, the college was allying itself with the post-war patriotism that was evident in the late 1940s. Linking the college, women’s education, liberal arts education, and democratic principles worked to elevate Mount Holyoke as more than just a women’s college, showcasing it as an institution responsible for furthering American values. Throughout the changes in social norms and social structures that marked the 1940s, and especially in the context of the massive gender desegregation and resegregation of the work force during the War, Mount Holyoke’s Press Bureau made efforts to maintain an image of the college that fit in with popular opinion about women’s social roles.³¹

²⁹ Mary Woolley, for example, arranged for internationally renowned political speakers to come to campus, was a speaker at a peace conference at Carnegie Hall, was an ardent suffragist, served on a foreign mission to China through the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, and was appointed as the only female American delegate at the 1932 disarmament conference in Geneva, according to Arthur Cole in One Hundred Years of Mount Holyoke.

³⁰ Annual Report for 1949, Press Bureau Annual Reports

³¹ Please see Chapter Three for a discussion of indicators of women’s social roles through the medium of newspaper articles and college guidebooks.

Press Bureau – Maintaining the Mount Holyoke Legacy / Tradition

However, keeping up with changing social norms was not the only goal of the Press Bureau. The picture of a Mount Holyoke graduate as a productive and strong member of society was one that the Press Bureau continued to promote, no matter what the current social situation. They even battled other departments in the college to gain the autonomy to make their own choices about how to represent and advertise the college. Within the school community, the Press Bureau had to establish itself as an office that deserved funding, both because it was a relatively new organization and because it was difficult to provide any tangible results – it was hard to prove that admissions numbers or the endowment rose in any direct way as a result of the Bureau. When asked why the Press Bureau should get more money, with no measurable results, the director responded that “we believe the major aim of the college is to maintain and improve the caliber of its faculty and students,” which came by getting the name of the college out there to increase its prestige, not necessarily having a direct effect on enrollment or endowment numbers.³² While the Bureau did make changes in how it represented the college over time I argue that there are far more aspects of its work that stayed the same throughout the social changes of the 1940s. By the end of the 1940s and the early years of the Cold War justifications for women’s education were sometimes linked to statements of strong patriotic feeling in Press Bureau

³² Annual Report for 1947, Press Bureau Annual Reports

publications and materials. Indeed, looking through the various articles that the director of the Press Bureau included in her annual reports over the period, there is a shift in how the college was represented, though the underlying image of a high caliber of students and faculty remains unchanged.³³

Because of strong influence it could have with the outside media, the Press Bureau saw itself as an office that was given the task of creating an image of women's higher education that conveyed education, hard work and studiousness. Yet, in 1949, they still did not see their office as fulfilling this role: "the millennium will have reached this office [the Press Bureau] when the only activities in which it engages are sending out answers to bona fide requests for information, not about pretty girls or college fashions, but about *the serious business of getting a liberal education and putting it to work.*"³⁴ [emphasis mine] So, while the college was looking forward to a time in which women's education was taken seriously, the queries they received from the general public (or the people interested in women's colleges) pointed to the fact that women's higher education was not taken seriously by many people, and that this had not changed much over the decade of the 1940s. In realizing

³³ The head of the department, in her annual reports to the president of the college, gave a listing of the major magazines and newspapers which visited campus that year to write stories and visit people within the college. By the later 1940s, the number of newspaper clippings had increased, as had the size of headlines, length of articles and number of pictures of the college. The Director also mentions that the Press Bureau sent out 325 stories in March and saw 100 of those in print in the following year. The increased press that the college received could be due to the increased work and talent of the Press Bureau, but since the Bureau had been in place for several years already under the same direction, it is more likely that the general media was more receptive to promoting women's higher education in this time period.

³⁴ Annual Report for 1949, Press Bureau Annual Reports

this, the Press Bureau made a distinction between the ideal of women's educations that they sought to represent and the reality of the time period.

In order for any progress to be made in that regard, the Press Bureau had to keep reaching for that ideal. For the future of Mount Holyoke, women's education had to be stressed, more so than the college itself. If the American public did not value a woman receiving an education, it didn't really matter what they thought of an individual women's college. Mount Holyoke would lose its reputation, the college's graduates would have problems finding jobs in a society that didn't value an educated woman, and a Mount Holyoke education would be less prestigious than it had once been. While there were changes in how Mount Holyoke was represented to the general public during the 1940s, the basic tenets of what the Press Bureau said that the college stood for did not change drastically throughout this time period. It worked to promote liberal arts education in general, and made the case for allowing smart women use their brains for whatever public good they chose.

The Admissions Office

Yet another medium in which the school presented itself to the public in the 1940s was through Admissions Office publications. This office was responsible for creating an image of the college that would appeal to prospective students, targeting female high school students and their families.

The Admissions Office, as any advertising group does, portrayed the college in a certain way which may or may not have exactly correlated with the student experience of the time. It also may have targeted specific individuals with different materials – science information for a girl who had expressed interest, and dance information to a dancer. However, by looking at these materials, one can see how the college administration had decided that Mount Holyoke would be portrayed to prospective students, and in what ways this image changed in the later 1940s to reflect post-war American values.

Their materials show that the ways in which the Admissions Office described the ‘ideal’ Mount Holyoke woman changed with the times. In the 1940s, along with an informational picture packet and a pamphlet entitled ‘Mount Holyoke College – Everybody’s College’, the Admissions office handed out brochures on the Creative Arts, Sciences, and Social Sciences, as well as a general brochure about campus life. While there are two sets of brochures, each without conclusive date labels, it is fairly easy to conjecture which ones were published during the war and which ones after the war. All but the Arts brochure, which spoke of the war, were textually the same in both time periods; the only differences between admissions materials at different time points were the images used to portray campus life.

Admissions brochures from during the war have images where students are in active, engaged roles – rowing, doing experiments, and giving speeches. In the later set of brochures which I think were produced after the

War, many of these images were replaced with passive and traditionally feminine pictures of women sitting in classrooms listening or holding babies. The overall impression is not unlike college admissions materials of today – that is, giving a picture of college life that the college itself wants perpetuated.

There were also packets given to potential students which described the overall atmosphere of the college, from courses of study to extracurriculars to the fellowship of faiths on campus.³⁵ Professors will “open to them [students] a vision of knowledge and service, not merely as teachers and missionaries but in the hundred and one fields of life that women have entered as their due...”³⁶ In other words, women can be and do anything, and Mount Holyoke was in the business of showing them the numerous options available. In comparing the different materials, it is important to note how Mount Holyoke women are portrayed in both the text and the images, and what kind of graduate the college claimed they would produce.

Admissions Office - Changes in Public Representation

The most glaring way in which the Admissions Office changed the way they represented the college to prospective students during the 1940s was

³⁵ There is only evidence of one issue of these materials, and so an analysis of how they changed is not possible, though they can be analyzed in the context of the body of admissions materials. In describing the faculty, however, one of the packets given to potential students speaks highly of the professors who will help students find all the possibilities that their lives have to offer.

³⁶ Green packet, Admissions Office Publications - 1940s, Series E, Admissions Office Publications, LD7083.5, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley.

through images within the two different versions of the brochure sets, describing different aspects of college life. Although none of them are conclusively dated, as the text is exactly the same and all have the label ‘[ca. 1943.44]’ it is reasonably easy to guess which ones came first.

There are two science brochures, one with a microscope on the cover and one with a student looking at tests tubes on the cover.³⁷ The one with the microscope on the cover has fairly ‘active’ photos: a class catching specimens in a creek with a female instructor, students getting books in the library, and students who are experimenting with live rats during what looks like a lab, for example. All of these images show women doing activities instead of passively taking in information from a professor. Since during the wartime women were more socially accepted in “masculine” tasks, I would conjecture that this brochure was from an earlier part of the decade. On the other hand, instead of the more active photos of earlier years, the other brochure has pictures of students in the greenhouse and a male professor showing geology field work. While the events that the images portray may have been as academically rigorous as the images that they replaced, the overall impression – plants, babies and male professors – gives a different feel to the college than previously shown. In the more conservative era of the later 1940s, fitting in with the image of women as less career-oriented and more family-oriented would be a benefit to the college, at least in the eyes of the Admissions Office.

³⁷ Please see appendix two for all images related to the Admissions Office.

The social sciences were also strong at Mount Holyoke, and the Admissions Office represented this grouping of majors by a drawing of two students reading a newspaper on a scenic part of the Mount Holyoke campus. Perhaps they were trying to indicate that Mount Holyoke women were both social and interested in the world around them, or maybe that the beautiful campus lent itself to study and reflection. Either way, these brochures were much the same as the science ones in that they had entries from all the majors included under the heading of 'social sciences' (earlier labeled 'social studies').³⁸ The two brochures have the same text but different images inside, which are indicative of changing images of the college. The later brochure also contains pictures of girls in scrubs looking at a baby, a teacher reading to a group of young children, and a class of girls looking at portraits of what appear to be famous men in history. The Social Studies pamphlet, which is the older one, has the same reading group picture, but the later images replace a picture of a female student presenting in front of a classroom of her peers, and a picture of students walking and socializing in front of Abby Chapel. The pictures that are the most striking are the ones in which there was a switch from a very active, engaged picture of a young woman giving a presentation in the earlier brochure to the picture of students looking at a baby in the later one. The fact that this picture is in the Social Sciences brochure makes it clear that this was not any sort of natural science class - biology, physiology or the

³⁸ The Social Science one is the newer one, since it contains a photograph found elsewhere in the archives dated 1948.

like – but instead implies that it is a less technical and more ‘feminine’ course, regardless of the actual subject matter of the class. The obvious switch from depicting a photograph that is more directly intellectual to an overtly motherly one does not come as a surprise if one is to align the Social Studies brochure with the later and more socially conservative 1940s.

The perception of both the sciences and social sciences were disciplines that the Admissions Office saw necessary to alter in order to fit with the social framework of the time. These disciplines encompassed most of the majors at the college, besides the arts, and so the ideological changes seen in the changing images in these two brochures are suggestive of how the Admissions Office wanted potential students to view the school as a whole. As the 1940s wore on and social expectations, especially for women, became increasingly conservative, the college responded in kind by showing their programs in a more gender-traditional light.

Admissions Office – Continuities in Public Representation

At the same time, however, the Admissions materials suggest underlying continuities in the education Mount Holyoke was offering to well-prepared high school girls. The careers listed in the science brochure were varied, such as chemical librarians, research analysts, biochemists, working in a museum or botanical garden, or as a social service worker, to name a few. Many of them are more traditionally feminine jobs as opposed to CEOs, heads

of labs, or other positions of power. This points towards the lower cultural expectations for women in science careers, even women from a prestigious college, such as Mount Holyoke, that was known for its strength in the sciences. The descriptions of each academic major are interesting because they not only describe what courses different science departments offered, but what a student could do after college with a degree in that major. Some departments come across as more academic and career-oriented, while others cite fewer career applications and make the case that they are more useful for women who would apply their college educations to home and family.

The astronomy department, for example, displayed high hopes for their graduates. They stated that their majors “will later be found working as college teachers, as research assistants in the larger observatories, or aiding an astronomer husband in various activities of mutual interest.”³⁹ While helping one’s husband does not seem like an independent career nowadays, these were all viable options for the time. The last case, assisting a husband with his work, combines fulfilling one’s duty as a housewife as well as the fulfillment of one’s own interests. The chemistry department, on the other hand, presented more career options for their majors. It appears as though many chemists were being retrained as the field grew more sophisticated, so there were a large number of vacancies within the discipline. This was especially true for recently trained college women, who were not in danger of going off to war

³⁹ The Sciences [two brochures], Admissions Office Publications - 1940s, Series E, Admissions Office Publications, LD7083.5, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley.

like their male counterparts. Although there were an abundance of job openings, the main ones that were highlighted in the chemistry section were being a chemical librarian, being a research assistant, teaching and “the industrial field”. Although these are all careers involving chemistry, they are still fairly female-orientated jobs in that they all include assisting and teaching the men, and in many cases not actually doing the research and experiments.⁴⁰ Whatever a woman wanted to do, however, there were options presented to her.

In a time when motherhood and being a wife were full-time careers that women were expected to pursue, no matter what their employment was outside of the home, places like Mount Holyoke provided an education that could be used both in the workforce and in the home. The variety of practical, science-related career options in a range of fields shows that many women were in fact using their college educations for more than just finding a husband or working in the home. For example, in accordance with the war, the physics department stressed the demand for physics majors in research and teaching, it appears as though they were really trying to gain outside interest in their department and so also offered shop work, music and photography classes for both majors and non-majors.⁴¹ Combined, the science brochures paint a picture of variety and choice in post-graduate plans that could include anything from glass blowing to working in an astronomy lab.

⁴⁰ The Sciences [two brochures], Admissions Office Publications

⁴¹ The Sciences [two brochures], Admissions Office Publications

The first department listed in the social sciences brochure is the department of economics and sociology. They state that their “goal is the equipment of the members of each college generation with the fundamental economic and social facts about the society in which they must live so that they may think and act with awareness of the basic forces behind surface trends.”⁴² Jobs varied from research positions to banks to social agencies, but they also mentioned that this major was good for making the student a “more useful citizen.”⁴³ While there was of course emphasis on careers, there was also the understanding that many of the women in the program were not necessarily going to use their knowledge for, say, a career in economics. Similarly, the political science major was intended “to meet the interest of the student who regards her education as incomplete without the knowledge and habits of thinking that will enable her to participate actively in the political affairs of her community.”⁴⁴ Although the jobs listed ranged from teaching to congressional committees, the description also stressed engagement in local politics and government. Both of these majors had usefulness both inside and outside of the home, though the career choices point more towards a women’s active engagement outside of the home, in volunteering and civic involvement as opposed to a paid career.

⁴² The Social Sciences / Social Studies, Admissions Office Publications - 1940s, Series E, Admissions Office Publications, LD7083.5, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley.

⁴³ The Social Sciences / Social Studies, Admissions Office Publications

⁴⁴ The Social Sciences / Social Studies, Admissions Office Publications

Some of the departments, however, candidly stated that their subjects lent themselves more towards personal enrichment than a career outside of the home. For example, in the history department, the student was offered a “variety of opportunities to use her knowledge after graduation.” There was no mention of the word ‘career’ but the text stated that “our country needs able and patriotic teachers” and gave options for jobs doing research, since history students would graduate knowing how to present material in an organized way. Other options discussed are the diplomatic field, social work, journalism, and secretarial work. The brochure also stated that “still others may be content to study history in college, not as a profession, but just because they like it and find that it makes life richer, more interesting, and more intelligible.”⁴⁵ This indicates that it was more than acceptable for women to use their college educations simply for personal gain and satisfaction. Even at a school that advertised itself as progressive just a few decades before, there was the understanding that while women did deserve to have a good education, they did not need to use this education in pursuit of a career. The religion department in particular gave the impression that the duration and seriousness of careers after college were extremely flexible. It counseled that “the student who wishes to secure employment but for a few years” is advised to do church work, while “the student who thinks of a life-long career” needed to do graduate study to work for her personal satisfaction

⁴⁵ The Social Sciences / Social Studies, Admissions Office Publications

or for a service minded job.⁴⁶ All of these disciplines lent themselves very well, possibly more so than the study of the natural sciences, to a woman who wanted to have a strong educational background in running a home and being involved in her community. There seemed to be three options: marriage and home as a woman's sole career, staying in the workforce for a few years before marriage, and (more rarely) going on to graduate study in one's field, without a mention of marriage.

Besides the offerings in the Sciences and the Social Sciences, there were other departments at Mount Holyoke that students could major in. The admissions brochure focusing on the arts is easier than the others to date since the text of the brochure changed to reflect the politics and social atmosphere of the time. In several of the discipline descriptions, allusions were made to the war, while they were taken out in the other brochure in corresponding paragraphs. During the war, the brochure was entitled Creative Arts, while in the later part of the 1940s, it was simply called Arts. In the segments on the drama and theatre, students were described as doing all of the aspects of putting on plays. In the earlier brochure, it was clear that every part of campus was doing their part to help out the war effort: "for the duration...courses will include training in recreation leadership in dramatic arts and should prove valuable to recreation leaders, either civilian or military."⁴⁷ Although the

⁴⁶ The Social Sciences / Social Studies, Admissions Office Publications

⁴⁷ The Creative Arts / Arts, Admissions Office Publications - 1940s, Series E, Admissions Office Publications, LD7083.5, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley.

dramatic arts may not seem to be an integral part of the war effort, this note shows how pervasively the war had taken over and changed so many parts of American life. Post war, however, the brochure doesn't talk about audience feedback for plays, or about possibilities for thesis and graduate work, perhaps lessening the seriousness of the major.⁴⁸ All of the departments seemed to expect that some of their students would go on to careers.

Some of the departments, however, were clearly for both advanced studies and for personal enrichment. In the "dance of today" section, for example, the major is applied to life in general. It stated for example that "to adapt oneself to group patterns and yet retain one's identity is one of the best ways to learn the principles of democratic living."⁴⁹ While the post-war Arts brochure does not mention democratic living, it mentions even more opportunities for students to participate throughout the other dance departments in the area. The music department also had opportunities for studying the discipline in depth or for simply becoming an "intelligent listener."⁵⁰ So, even though there was definitely room for serious study of the arts, they also were more generally applicable. By giving the option to major in something that would not be used in a career, the college was endorsing the image of higher education as purely another step between high school and marriage, while still giving room to those students who were planning to further their educational or career options. The major changes in the arts

⁴⁸ The Creative Arts / Arts, Admissions Office Publications

⁴⁹ The Creative Arts / Arts, Admissions Office Publications

⁵⁰ The Creative Arts / Arts, Admissions Office Publications

brochure, however, were specific to the war, and so the only changes that the Admissions Office saw necessary were practical ones like courses that helped the war effort, and not ideological ones.

Rounding out the grouping of pamphlets that were given out to prospective students during the 1940s is the Supplementary Information brochure. It gave an overall view of the college, from post-educational options to social life to leadership opportunities. During the war, Mount Holyoke was proud of the fact that the college did what it could for the country. It noted that “during the summer session many students and faculty worked in the college gardens. There they cultivated and weeded the vegetables that were eaten later in the halls and incidentally acquired hardened muscles and an enviable tan.”⁵¹ There was also an acceleration program started in 1942 that allowed students who wanted to prepare for government work or military-related careers to attend two six-week summer sessions in order to graduate early. In addition to this program, the packet mentioned that “the major may lead toward a liberal education with emphasis in a chosen field, or it may be planned more definitely as preparation for some one career after college.”⁵² The careers highlighted included pre-med, working in libraries and museums, teaching, and business. Beyond the academics, the social life of the campus was discussed, creating an image of a close-knit community full of extremely

⁵¹ Supplementary Information, Admissions Office Publications - 1940s, Series E, Admissions Office Publications, LD7083.5, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley.

⁵² Supplementary Information, Admissions Office Publications

diverse women. Men are only mentioned as an afterthought to the school-sponsored dances – men’s colleges also received invites to those. Apparently they were not overly concerned with young women coming to college simply to find a husband. Becoming a leader was also an important part of being a Mount Holyoke student in the 1940s. On participating in student government, the brochure stated that “this experience is of definite value to [graduates] in securing and holding good jobs and in running their own homes in an efficient, democratic way.”⁵³ Both brochures, from before and after the war, do not make a differentiation in the choice between working and raising a family – both are presented as options that are valid and even complementary.

Yet another booklet put out by the Admissions Office was a picture book published in 1948. It shows different facets of the college, highlighting both the active social life of Mount Holyoke students and the plethora of academic opportunities. It stressed that the idea of doing ‘worth-while’ things was prevalent among Mount Holyoke graduates, “whether in their own homes or communities or as professional and business women intent on their chosen careers.”⁵⁴ It does not, however, mention any careers except science related ones. The natural sciences are shown several times, and are showcased as strong majors for women who wanted to continue on with a career. One caption stated that: “industry called for college-trained workers in chemistry and physics, and Mount Holyoke continues, with marked success, her long

⁵³ Supplementary Information, Admissions Office Publications

⁵⁴ “Mount Holyoke College Picture Book.” Worcester, Massachusetts: The Davis Press, ca. 1948.

established tradition in this field.”⁵⁵ Though the call for female workers in traditionally male-dominated jobs was long over, Mount Holyoke was still invested in giving a strong science-based education to those students who wanted it.

The college seems to be saying, through the Admissions materials, that whatever a woman chooses to do, she will be prepared with a Mount Holyoke degree to do it. If a prospective student was to solely read the texts of the brochures, she would come away thinking that not much had changed at Mount Holyoke in the previous years beyond concessions made to wartime activities. However, the inclusion of pictures, especially the comparison between earlier and later editions of the same brochures, adds another element to the image of the school. Many of the newer pictures were fairly obviously gendered and conveyed a sense of Mount Holyoke women as being family-friendly as well as studious, more so than the previous pictures had shown.

Mount Holyoke is Everybody’s College

One of the more substantial publications by the college was a hardcover booklet called ‘Mount Holyoke – Everybody’s College.’ Though it is unclear which office published it, the book is publicity for the endowment. The final section is entitled ‘Is there a benevolent gentleman in the house?’ and is an appeal to parents and other benefactors of the college for money to

⁵⁵ “Mount Holyoke College Picture Book.”

improve campus facilities.⁵⁶ This booklet relies on Mount Holyoke's academic strength to appeal to donors. It attempts to show the broad academic and social potential of Mount Holyoke graduates and the need for an improved campus. It first appeals to the reader's sense of country. The title page is extremely patriotic, since the first two paragraphs are entitled 'American Miracle' and "'Democracy Made Manifest.'⁵⁷ In 1948, America was still recovering from the after effects of World War II and starting to wage the Cold War, and patriotic feelings were running high. Perhaps because women's education was not associated with traditional American values, the school had to work even harder than other institutions to emphasize their dedication to country as well as to education. While this time period was more conservative socially, women's education was still socially accepted, just not as a guarantee for a career path.

The second focus of the booklet was to dispel negative stereotypes by showing how Mount Holyoke students were engaged in the world around them and were extraordinarily diverse and well-rounded, as opposed to career-driven or bookworms. It described how young women were chosen to go to Mount Holyoke, proving that they were from all parts of the globe and committed to coming together to work and learn. The book goes on to describe Mount Holyoke women as engaged in the world in a variety of ways.

⁵⁶ Again, please see Appendix Two for some photographs from various college-published materials.

⁵⁷ Merrill, Phyllis. Mount Holyoke – everybody's college. South Hadley, Massachusetts: Mount Holyoke College, 1948.

It proudly describes the activities of the students that took them off campus: “our students are both guests and hosts at all kinds of intercollegiate and inter-world affairs. They discuss student government at conferences with their sister colleges...debate with Columbia and M.I.T....send delegates abroad to international meetings...participate in South Hadley Red Cross work...entertain veterans at nearby hospitals.”⁵⁸ All of these things show an engagement with the outside world and a skill set that will be useful to the graduate in her home and work life. To dispute the impression many readers may have had about the reasons behind young women going to college, the booklet is quick to point out that though Mount Holyoke women do have active social lives, they also benefit academically from an all-female environment. The author states that: “certainly on weekends any stranger would assume that Mount Holyoke was coeducational...but on weekdays the girls spend most of their time studying, undistracted by the battle of the sexes.”⁵⁹ This statement both assures parents and potential donors to the college that Mount Holyoke students were not social pariahs, that they were protected within the confines of the school during most of the week, and that they were also committed to an excellent education – one that needed to be further funded in order to be effective. Another way that the publication fought the idea that a college education is wasted on women, is when the view book assures the reader that “we have dozens of laboratory technicians, for

⁵⁸ Merrill, Phyllis

⁵⁹ Merrill, Phyllis

instance, whose careers are almost command performances: their Holyoke science training makes them so valuable that hospitals, medical schools and research institutes will hardly let them stop work long enough to have a baby.”⁶⁰ This statement is loaded with cultural implications and a subtle social transgression. Mount Holyoke women are so smart and so valued in the workforce, that they have to be persuaded to take time off during pregnancy – and they will return to the workforce after they have children.

Counter to this socially challenging picture of uncommon women, it is interesting to note the overall domestic tone of the booklet. It characterizes the school as a family, it points to the ways college education will enhance families, and it uses family-based wording in many of the descriptions of college life. This may have been an attempt to show that young women who attended Mount Holyoke would be well taken care of, even out of the supervision of their parents or husband, as well as to demonstrate and memorialize the “threat” to traditional roles posed by female education and achievement. The author states that if you “educate a young woman and you educate a family.”⁶¹ For example, there is mention of the college as a mother to five colleges that were spawned from the idea of Mount Holyoke, that it was a sister to six colleges, that “scores” of granddaughter schools were founded by Mount Holyoke graduates, and that the college was the

⁶⁰ Merrill, Phyllis

⁶¹ Merrill, Phyllis

“sweetheart of several,” including Amherst, M.I.T., Yale and Harvard.⁶² There is also the sense that, women were forever linked as part of the Mount Holyoke family, and this of course would prepare them for when they had a family of their own. The ability to have both a social life and a strong academic career “results not only in the acquisition of excellent husbands (over 75% of each class marry nowadays) but in the ability to make them excellent wives.”⁶³ This high rate of marriage, and the implication that a Mount Holyoke wife is expected to be as smart and competent as her husband speaks to the hopes that the school had for its graduates. Mount Holyoke women were wives and mothers, just as they were expected to be, but they were also on par with their husbands when it came to education and intellect.

This book shows the ways in which Mount Holyoke skirted the issues of socially acceptable ways for women to behave. While it showcased the achievements of Mount Holyoke graduates in the work force, it also made sure to appeal to a fatherly sentiment in its donors and stressed the femininity and social graces of the students.

Conclusion

The Admissions Office and the Public Relations Bureau both worked to reach various audiences to enlighten people about the college’s mission and purpose in the world. They created an image of women’s higher education in

⁶² Merrill, Phyllis

⁶³ Merrill, Phyllis

general, and of Mount Holyoke in particular, as a place where rigorous academic training had the same emphasis as things such as social life and other “feminine” pursuits did at any other elite college. By looking at the materials produced in the early and then the later part of the 1940s, one can see definite trends in the changes made to the publications, as well as trends throughout. The Admissions Office tended to show less active imagery in the later brochures, though the text for the most part stayed the same in both time periods. This can be attributed to the changing attitudes about a women’s place in the workforce once they were no longer needed to fill in the labor gap. The Appointment Bureau maintained the same high standards for the students it tried to place, though the ways in which the employees of the Appointment Bureau had to approach potential employers had to transition with the changing social times. Although the Admissions Office and the Press Bureau may have toned down their projections of women doing more typically masculine things, and the Appointment Bureau had to work harder to prove the competency of Mount Holyoke women, overall I think that these alterations to public image were superficial at best, and the general assumptions about the school remained the same. If there had been significant changes in such a short amount of time, I think that the college publications would have better reflected that change, beyond a few altered pictures and sentences. Mount Holyoke did make concessions to social trends involving

women's involvement in both higher education and the work force, but more things stayed the same than changed during this time period.

CHAPTER THREE: ELITE VIEWS

As much as offices that dealt directly with the outside world tried to impose their views of the college onto the college as a whole, other offices took it upon themselves to make changes within the college structure and community that they thought were concurrent with the social and economic atmosphere of the time. These offices affected, and were affected by, outside agents such as employers and media that was not directly influenced by the Press Bureau. These all combined with the previously discussed methods of creating a public image of the school, and were influential in student's decisions about what their educational expectations were.

Mount Holyoke students, like other college students of the time, were faced with a set of expectations about what their educations consisted of, and what their educations would mean for their futures. From one end, students figured this out through the expectations of their professors; how faculty interacted with students, how the departments were structured, and what faculty talked about at Faculty Meetings said a lot about the attitude that the professors had about women's education. From the other end, the

Appointment Bureau acted as a liaison between students and the outside world, setting up interviews, contacting companies and businesses, and maintaining good relationships with employers. As chapter two documents, though efforts like the Appointment Bureau survey, they ensured that the Mount Holyoke name was publicized among prospective employers so that graduates would have an easier time finding jobs. Still another source of influence, outside media, published expectations and opinions about college life for women. In looking at things such as annual reports to the President's Office, a survey on women's success in the business world, correspondence between the Appointment Bureau and various employers, newspaper articles describing college girls, and college guide books, Mount Holyoke's complex response to a world with fluctuating social values can be seen. The combined pressures of Ham's presidency and shifting social norms for women served to provide a framework for changing the ways in which different parts of the college viewed themselves and their interactions with the student body.

Historical Background

Changing gender roles led to a massive shift in the cultural acceptability of middle and upper class white women joining the workforce or getting an education. After the war, however, there was yet another shift in culturally acceptable gender roles. That is, although many women had to, or chose to, leave their jobs after the war ended, many others who wanted to

keep their jobs were able to do so.⁶⁴ The labor market remained strong as the economy shifted from war time production to one of high consumer consumption. Though their numbers, proportion-wise, were falling, the actual number of women in the labor force at the end of the decade was almost as high as during the war,⁶⁵ and many women still had the burden of running a family and working full time.

So, despite the public opinion against women going to college and then on to a professional career if it interfered in their duties as a homemaker, there were plenty of women who did go to college, for both personal and career-related reasons. Certainly, many young women went to college for the social aspects of it – finding a husband was at the top of many girls’ lists. But there were still female graduates who wanted good jobs. There is evidence however, that these jobs, especially traditionally male occupations, were becoming more difficult for women to enter after the war. Among women who had graduated between 1946 and 1949, for example, those “who had chosen traditional female fields such as teaching, nursing and secretarial work had been largely successful. But less than half of those who sought work in science, psychology, music, personnel work or journalism landed a job in

⁶⁴ A woman fresh out of college, perhaps not married or just starting her family, was an even more enticing employee than an older married woman, since she was freshly trained and perhaps not as entrenched in domestic rituals as her older counterpart. In part, this may be due to the fact that the average age at which a woman married fell during the war, from 21.5 in the early 1940s to 20.3 by the end of the decade. According to Susan Hartmann, the age for men dropped too, from 24.3 to 22.7 years. As social norms around marriage ages and around gender roles changed, so did the gender and marital composition of paid workers.

⁶⁵ Hartmann, Susan. The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982. (page 24)

those fields.”⁶⁶ And when they did land a job in a traditionally male-dominated field, that was only half the battle – and no guarantee that gender roles were changing in any permanent way. For example, women in the medical field graduated in record numbers during the war, but their numbers dropped rapidly as men came back to take their places in school: “the war had permitted several hundred women who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to become doctors, but their younger sisters faced the same quotas that had prevailed in the 1920s and 1930s.”⁶⁷ Even more telling is that in 1949, 12% of medical school graduates were women, while in the mid-1950s, this number had decreased to only 5% of the student population. Similarly, in 1940, 27.7% of professors were women, but in 1950 only 24.5% were, and in 1960, the number was down to 22%.⁶⁸ In looking at women who received their Ph.D.s during and right after the war, one sees that “the high proportion of female doctoral recipients held (within one or two percentage points) throughout the 1940s and fell off significantly only in the early 1950s.”⁶⁹ Could this be because they were already on that track in the early 40s, and the aftermath of the decrease in the prestige of women’s education in the late 40s caused the drop in doctorates in the early 50s? Another measure of the feeling women had on college is to look at what they were majoring in, and, possibly

⁶⁶ Hartmann, page 114

⁶⁷ Hartmann, page 109

⁶⁸ Soloman, Barbara Miller, In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. (page 189); at Mount Holyoke the numbers were much higher – please see Table Five in Appendix Three.

⁶⁹ Soloman, page 172

more importantly, what they weren't.⁷⁰ For example, Susan Hartmann reports that in the 10 years after the war at Vassar, women physics and chemistry majors dropped fifty percent - many of the gains in the war period were lost across the country in these fields, at least for women.⁷¹ Even when a woman was well-qualified by way of a college education to pursue a career, there was no guarantee that she would be hired, especially over a man with the same qualifications.

Professors

Professors, since they were in the business of education, clearly had an investment in the continuation of higher education for women. After the college's presidential transition from Mary Woolley to Roswell Ham in 1937, there was a slow change in the gender composition in departments, and in the power structure within those departments. In looking through the campus directories for the time period, one can see the marked change in gender composition of the Mount Holyoke faculty – between 1935 and 1950, the percentage of female faculty dropped 8%.⁷² In 1935, there were 193 female employees of the college, making of 86.9% of the entire “Faculty, Officers, and Assistants” body of the college. In 1950, however, there were 247 female faculty members, making up only 79.1% of the employees of the college.

Further expanding on the significance of these numbers is the fact that

⁷⁰ Please see Chapter Four for a more in depth discussion of academic majors.

⁷¹ Soloman, page 188

⁷² Please see Table Five in Appendix Three for a more complete picture of this.

President Ham was not in the practice of firing people, and so would wait for employees to retire before replacing them, often with men.⁷³ This change in the gender composition of employees did not, however, have immediate effects on things such as departmental literature.

Publications by the departments, such as course catalogues and Admissions brochure text, did not show major changes spanning the time period surrounding the 1940s – namely, from the Depression to the beginning of the Cold War. For example, the text that was in the Admissions Office brochures has already been demonstrated to have had very few changes made to it, even though the photos in those brochures did indeed change. The only significant changes had to do with speaking about war-related programs, which of course were not still in place in the later part of the 1940s. I believe, although this cannot be conclusively proven, that the departments supplied information about their course offerings to the Admissions Office. This would explain the lack of changes to the text, since the course catalogues did not have huge changes in them either.

Employers

The ways in which employers saw college-educated women was changing in the years during the war too, although the cultural attitudes surrounding their employment were still not favorable. Employers, usually

⁷³ Conversation with Patty Albright in the Mount Holyoke Archives on 4/26/07.

male, were the ones that chose who entered the workforce and who did not. While a college education of any type (single-sex or co-ed) in theory should have recommended students for employment, women were certainly under-represented in the labor force for a variety of reasons, including social stigmas against women working outside of the home. Mount Holyoke enjoyed, during this time, an unprecedented rise in the employment of their graduates, and tried to keep these numbers up after the war ended and cultural expectations of gender began to have a more similar feel to the pre-war environment. From newspapers to corporations to industrial giants, Mount Holyoke graduates, especially during the early 1940s, had a comparatively large amount of employment options.

The Press Bureau had close ties with many of the major (and not-so-major) newspapers, especially along the East Coast. The director of the Press Bureau wrote to several of her press contacts and asked them for advice to give to aspiring journalists at the college. An overall theme from the newspaper correspondence is that marriage won't get a woman fired if she can prove that she can still do the job. This was probably an improvement from earlier times but still was a gendered assumption that women couldn't do jobs as well while they were married.⁷⁴ This also implied that all women got married, even career women, and that their marriage should take a larger role in their life than a job outside of the home. If career wasn't an ultimate goal of

⁷⁴ Letter from December 15th 1950, Press Bureau Correspondence

a college-educated woman, the seriousness and purpose of four years of hard studying was called into question. Even women who did pursue a career with their educations were up against fairly rigid institutional barriers to successful employment. Women who wanted to go into journalism, for example, received the following advice from a Washington, D.C. correspondent. He said that they needed persistence, smarts and charm, and that appearance unfortunately was important as well. He also advised that they should be studying languages and history. The entire letter, while not focusing on 'feminine' characteristics, certainly mentioned them.⁷⁵ All told, the advice given did not discourage smart women from following a professional path, but made it clear that things like charm and looks counted in the hiring process. Another correspondent, this one from the Associated Press, "welcomes" applications from women college grads,⁷⁶ and stated that although women can be married and still work, implied that many do not stay on after marriage.⁷⁷ He also didn't answer directly if a woman was more likely to lose her job than a man during cutbacks, seemingly avoiding the question.⁷⁸ The rest of that letter, and many of the other pieces of correspondence, assumed that women could use their educations for work, but that they would naturally place their families and husbands first. I would say that it's a fair assumption to think that women would be the first to go during cutbacks. So, while "the mores are

⁷⁵ Letter from December 6th 1950, Press Bureau Correspondence

⁷⁶ Letter from December 11th 1950, Press Bureau Correspondence

⁷⁷ Letter from December 11th 1950, Press Bureau Correspondence

⁷⁸ Letter from December 11th 1950, Press Bureau Correspondence

changing” in regards to married women working outside the home,⁷⁹ it seemed to be understood that women with a husband and children did not have as much longevity in their careers as did their male counterparts. All of the correspondence with the newspaper contacts points to both a respect for educated woman and an understanding that however talented a woman is, her first priority was in the home. Implications of the hardship women faced in finding employment reflected on the purpose of going to college in the first place – for many women, college was not the step between high school and a career, but rather the step between high school and a family. This is an important distinction to make, since approaching college with the intent to move onto a related career and approaching college with the intent to learn social skills and find a husband makes for very different college experiences and expectations. This advice from the newspaper sector was mirrored in some ways by the results from another part of the labor market – the business area.

In the early 1940s, there were a number of industrial firms and companies that recruited at Mount Holyoke. Helen Voorhees, the director of the Appointment Bureau, sent surveys to thirty of these companies in an effort to discern their attitudes about women working in their companies. She especially targeted companies that had been reluctant to hire women to do anything beyond secretarial work before the war, since these companies had to

⁷⁹ Letter from December 15th 1950, Press Bureau Correspondence

change their policies once there was a manpower shortage. The report was called “Women’s Success in Business: A Report Based on War-Time Experience,” and came out in 1946-1947.⁸⁰ The 6-page report included a number of questions from the survey, though it is unclear if there were more questions left out of the report. Voorhees wrote to William Fulton Kurtz, president of the Pennsylvania Company for Banking and Trusts, explaining that the survey was done mostly in fields where college women were not employed until the war. She also mentioned that the “worst” firms, the ones which hardly ever hired women to work as anything beyond a secretary, were where most of the graduates chose to work at during the war.⁸¹ This indicated the social attitudes towards women at this point – if even the firms and companies that had very negative attitudes towards women in ‘masculine’ roles were hiring women, the ideas surrounding what women could and couldn’t do had clearly been altered. Much of this was out of necessity, for sure, but having women working in their companies, and if the survey is any indication, doing a comparable job to the men in most regards, then their presence hopefully had an impact. Letter writers (from places such as the Ford Company and DuPont) said that the report showed a fair representation of how women were viewed by employers in these fields.⁸²

⁸⁰ For further analysis of this survey, please see Chapter Two, and for the complete survey as presented within the report, see Appendix One.

⁸¹ Correspondence with WM Fulton Kurtz, Career Development Records

⁸² Various letters, Career Development Records

While the report itself is extremely interesting, the correspondence surrounding the report also is very helpful in explaining employer attitudes towards hiring women college graduates, and how the college interacted with and reacted to these people. In a form letter from Mrs. Voorhees concerning the survey in 1946 to the participants in the survey, she writes that “we requested information especially as to your success with college women during the war years.” She goes on to write that “our survey covered largely industrial fields and fields of work where male competition and the usual male specialization training was particularly felt.”⁸³ In other words, she was attempting to prove that women were able to do the same job as men did – and this came at an opportune time, when the labor market post-war was beginning to lose its desire for women workers.

Mass Media

Another one of the ways to discover the public attitude towards women’s colleges and Mount Holyoke is to look at how the college was portrayed in the mass media – newspapers, magazines, and the like. While this is not emblematic of all opinions on women’s higher education, it is a way to judge and compare general public attitudes on the topic. In the various representations of women’s higher education, some positive and some not-so-positive, one must of course remember the audience to which the material is

⁸³ Women’s Success in Business: A Report Based on War-Time Experience

directed. A mid-western local newspaper will have a different take on women's education than will Ladies Home Journal, and a college guidebook aimed at high school seniors will probably be completely different from both of them. And, as happens in the present day, no one news source is a representation of all, or even most, of the people who may comprise its readership. The two main ways in which the public learned about women's colleges was through newspapers and college guidebooks.. The Press Bureau at Mount Holyoke certainly had a lot to do with the information that was being sent to press outlets; however, there was leeway between what Mount Holyoke sent out and what was printed where.

Newspapers could be used as a way to change opinions on the value of women's education by showing different facets of college life and by integrating typically feminine things – such as fashion – with the academics and independence of higher education. The head of the Press Bureau, Elizabeth Greene, wrote an editorial on the more academic side of female college students: “today's co-ed, whether she sports a yellow slicker or a gabardine suit, is apt to be on her way across the campus to lead a discussion on world government, attend a labor meeting or write a letter to her congressman about conscription.”⁸⁴ She is trying to make the point that it didn't matter if female college students followed the traditional feminine rules of social interaction, since they all were in college for a common goal of

⁸⁴ Greene, Elizabeth. “Blue-Jean College Crowd Doing Some Heavy Thinking.” Providence Rhode Island Bulletin 12 March, 1946, 1940-1948, Press Bureau Annual Reports, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley.

learning and education. Greene also gives other examples of the women's colleges participating in conferences and other world-issue discussions, for example when Mount Holyoke students replied directly to one of their congressman with their opinions on the U.N.O. and atom bomb after an earlier successful letter writing campaign.⁸⁵ The article attempts to give the average newspaper reader a vision of college girls as both feminine and smart: "college girls on college campuses are still picturesque. But the dungarees and loafers may well be the badge of a young woman who knows the difference between the May-Johnson Bill and S.1717, and is already becoming an active citizen of the world."⁸⁶ Mount Holyoke students in particular, since they attended such a prestigious institution, were expected to be engaged in the world around them, no matter what they ended up doing with their lives post-graduation. When Dean Emeritus Florence Purington was interviewed in 1946, she noted that her current undergrads "have broader intellectual interests. They know more about what is going on in the world and are quite as concerned over Iran and Russia as over their next day's assignment."⁸⁷ Both of these women strove to present the college in an academic light, while still allowing for traditional feminine characteristics that the general public expected of young female students. There were also, of course, many unprompted mentions of the college in the general media, as well as mentions

⁸⁵ Greene, Elizabeth

⁸⁶ Greene, Elizabeth

⁸⁷ Delos W. Lovelace. "The Dean Catching Up On Her Reading." New York Sun: Who's News Today, 11 May, 1946, 1940-1948, Press Bureau Annual Reports, LD7083.5, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley.

on women's education in general. While it was not feasible within the scope of this project to find all the newspaper articles from different regions about Mount Holyoke from this time period, an assortment of New York Times articles gives a good cross section of what was being presented in the media.

After a 1944 photograph of two Wellesley girls wearing men's dress shirts as their every-day attire were published in the New York Times, the paper decided to do an exposé on why exactly college girls wore what they did. The five reasons most cited by the college women they spoke to were a "desire for comfort, the locale of the school, the absence of men, the war, and last, but not least, an unashamed desire to be 'different' and to slap at convention."⁸⁸ While the article only spoke to students at Smith, Radcliffe, Wellesley and Barnard, one can assume that these feelings were prevalent among a large portion of Seven Sister students. While the article treated these fashion predilections as a way for college girls to define themselves as a group, it also stressed the practicality of their clothing. Since there was rationing on many of the materials traditionally used to make women's clothing, and women were doing more strenuous, dirty work, blue jeans and other typically male clothes were cheaper and more suitable to a college girl's life. A few years later, in 1946, the paper ran an article of the same title – *Why College Girls Dress That Way* – that featured cartoons of the many ways in which college girls dressed. This article focused more on girls playing what the

⁸⁸ McBride, Estelle Safier. "Why College Girls Dress That Way." New York Times, 10 December, 1944, natl. ed.: Magazine SM28.

author named “Beauty and the Beast:” dressing up for social situations but looking like complete slobs otherwise. She saw this as snobbery: college girls “wear jeans and patched shorts to class, at women’s colleges, for the same reason a millionaire rides around his home town in a broken down jalopy...she will be attractive only when her surroundings warrant it, and when it pleases her.”⁸⁹ She was dismissive of college girls who looked like stereotypical, Bohemian academics, since “after graduation college girls can cozily settle down to marriage and babies, thinking they’ve run the gamut, lived the full life.”⁹⁰ She went on to say that college girls only dressed the way they do to hide their insecurities and lack of confidence in themselves. The author was confident that the ways of college dress had nothing to do with economics or practicality, as the earlier article suggests, and their clothing choices were instead vanity-driven pleas for attention. She ended the article on a hopeful note, however, stating that students could be dressing much worse. She assured the readers that “college girls can be pretty girls – when they want to be.”⁹¹ These articles showcase perfectly the change that happened after World War II. During the war, practicality excused much of how women dressed and behaved – to the point where it was okay for women to go around in jeans and other men’s clothing. After the war ended, however, women were expected to dress more appropriately for their gender, and were sometimes

⁸⁹ Blake, Patricia. “Why College Girls Dress That Way; there are many theories, including the one that it’s fun to be a bohemian before settling down.” New York Times Magazine, 7 April, 1946, natl. ed.: pp 104.

⁹⁰ Blake, Patricia. pp 104.

⁹¹ Blake, Patricia. pp 104.

ridiculed for dressing the same way their counterparts did just two or three years before. These public images of college girls had real impact on college campuses – at Wellesley, for example, girls were banned from wearing jeans until a foreign dignitary showed up in slacks, and Barnard girls tried to defy the messy stereotype of college women, since they were in a city and surrounded by men.⁹² This embracement of more traditional gender roles was common, but not the rule.

Not all wartime opinions held a positive view of women taking a larger part in more ‘masculine’ worlds such as the workforce. In a 1940 column about women and economics, it was argued that there was no longer a need for feminism, since “women are thinking themselves now not as a separate group fighting for specific rights for themselves, but as citizens working along with men to set up a social order in their communities where free women and free men combine to preserve those rights and institutions [they] both cherish.” It was no longer a feminist issue whether women got jobs or not – it was an economic one. With prices rising during the war, and many men unable to support their families on a military salary, it was often necessary for the female head of household to seek outside employment.⁹³ This can be translated into public opinion on women in higher education as well, since many jobs that needed to be filled by women also needed to be filled by someone with a college education. The concept of women going to

⁹² Bender, Marylin. “The Class of 1942: What Happened to Those Girls in Saddle Shoes?” New York Times 10 June 1967, natl. ed.: FS24.

⁹³ “Women’s Interest Seen in Economics.” New York Times 20 April, 1940, natl. ed.: Sports

college and continuing on with a career was less a breakthrough for women and could be seen as more of a wartime necessity that would reverse itself when the war came to an end and the natural order of things returned.

In 1967, the New York Times reported on the 25th reunions of several Seven Sisters graduates. These women are described as having “survived disgruntled housewifery” and expected to “seek further education and new careers” in the next 25 years, especially since their children were grown and out of the house.⁹⁴ Less than a third of the returning Vassar class was employed, which surprised some of the women. One woman “speculated that the reasons lay in suburban living patterns...and the fact that her classmates worked during World War II and may have appreciated homemaking more when they could get to it.”⁹⁵ Many women were excited to continue their educations and look for a career after their children had left; however, there was some discontent at the preparation they received for working in the home: “some felt that they had been trained for important jobs they had never been able to fill and had suffered frustration and guilt as a consequence.”⁹⁶ This article, entitled “The Class of 1942: What Happened to Those Girls in Saddle Shoes?,” showed some of the aftereffects of a college education on a 1940s woman. While they were engaged with the world around them and looked forward to even more education, some of the dire predictions by social conservatives had turned out to be true. College had not adequately prepared

⁹⁴ Bender, Marylin.

⁹⁵ Bender, Marylin.

⁹⁶ Bender, Marylin.

some women for working in the home, and left some women feeling unhappy with their jobs as a homemaker. These effects were not entirely unforeseen.

There were some real changes on college campuses that reflected a growing concern that women would be unprepared for life after graduation. Stephens College, a small liberal arts school in Missouri, began a Home and Family division in the fall of 1942. The head of the new department commented that “educators often seem to forget that students marry, live in homes and have children, and that for most women homemaking and motherhood become the equivalent of professional pursuits. It puts homemaking education on the same level as education in science, social studies, the arts, vocations or any other traditional area.” He went on to say, reported the Times, that “although increasing numbers of married women are becoming wage earners and the war is bound to have a profound effect on women’s status and role in the modern world, the great majority of them do become wives, homemakers and mothers.”⁹⁷ This realistic expectation that many of the graduates would indeed not be able to put their college educations to practical use precluded the Vassar alumnae’s dissatisfaction with their lives immediately following their release from college. However, the fact that these same alumnae were excited about getting more of an education and finding a job after their children left home is telling of the values that were instilled in them during their college years.

⁹⁷ “Course to Stress Homes, Family; Stephens Creates Division to Cover Whole Range of Domestic Life.” New York Times 28 June, 1942, natl. ed.: D5.

Mass media not only gave information out about concrete topics such as specific colleges and courses, but also produced a certain set of expectations and assumptions about women's education. Through forms of media, such as newspapers, a picture of what the average person thought about topics emerges – even though this may be a stereotypical viewpoint not held by the majority of readers.

College Guidebooks

Beyond newspapers and other general publications, there was plenty of literature aimed directly at young women who were considering higher education. College guidebooks were a fun way for students planning on continuing on to college to get a view of what college life was like and how to adjust to a new way of living. They gave different views of both how women should adjust to college life and how women's colleges were typified. While I did not find any books specifically aimed at girls attending women's colleges, the more general books did offer some advice towards those choosing non-traditional schools. One book, entitled You Can Always Tell a Freshman, advised those who were going to a women's college that they were “apt to be pitied as ones who are about to take a four-year vacation from the bright lights and all things masculine...a woman's college is not a graveyard, so if you are

buried there you have no one to blame but yourself.”⁹⁸ In other words, swathe stereotype was that women’s colleges were a way to hide from the real world of men and dating for a few years. However, if one looks at college advertising, there is a heavy emphasis on the social scene at women’s colleges, and the fact that there was plenty of intermingling between Mount Holyoke and other top liberal arts schools. The one worry that several of the guidebooks expressed was that girls who went to women’s colleges were apt to lose themselves in the academics and not seek out social life. The college guidance book She’s Off to College, for example, “suggested that a girl who ignored social opportunities ‘might just as well never have come to college at all.’”⁹⁹ While none of the books indicated that academics were not a large part of the college experience, they also outright told young women that the social connections they made in colleges, especially with college men, were at least equally as important as the actual education. While this may simply have been an effort to get more young women interested in applying to college, by downplaying the hard work involved, it still perpetuated an image of women going to college solely for the procurement of a husband. Students at women’s colleges merely had to work harder to do this, since there was no college-aged male population readily available on their own campuses.

⁹⁸ Hudnut, Elisabeth Ann. You Can Always Tell a Freshman; How to Get the Most Out of Your College Years. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1949, pp 103.

⁹⁹ Peril, Lynn, College Girls: Bluestockings, Sex Kittens, and Coeds, Then and Now. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006, pp 94.

Many college guidebooks jumped at the chance to reassure readers that clichéd feminine desires – such as a handsome boyfriend – could still happen, despite their degrees. After describing a ballroom scene, in which the girl is in a beautiful dress and with a date-of-her-dreams, the author reassured the reader that “the beauty of these daydreams is that they can, and usually do, come true.”¹⁰⁰ While it is true that the dating scene has always been an important part of any college-aged person’s life, the emphasis on dating and finding that perfect someone was very high on the list for the stereotypical 1940s college girl. As one college advice book pointed out, “your opportunities to meet your colleagues in coeducation are, you see, boundless. If you are apt to be the type who goes Crazy Over Numbers, remember to watch yourself. College rhymes with knowledge. Your primary purpose in being here is bigger and better than learning to distinguish fraternity pins at fifty paces.”¹⁰¹ While it was widely accepted that dating and meeting members of the opposite sex were a large part of any college experience, there was also a stress on the education part of a college education. Girls had to be careful, it seemed, to resist the social pressures of focusing completely on finding a husband and put their years in college to good use – then they could focus more on a combination of marriage, motherhood and working.

Of course, many prospective college students did wonder what they were to do after college, beyond marriage. In response to the question of what

¹⁰⁰ Hudnut, page 97

¹⁰¹ Hudnut, page 98

one will get out of college, it was advised that: “we presume you will have a deep-rooted desire to accumulate some knowledge...to have a few facts at your disposal for fairly serious thought or discussion. Let us say that you want to become an Educated Person.”¹⁰² This “Educated Person” is a fairly vague term, but does at least indicate that despite the earlier focus on the social aspects of college life, an education was also a large part of what was expected. Besides the fact of learning for learning’s sake, “most college women expected to work until marriage or motherhood, and a minority of those hoped to resume employment after they had raised their families.”¹⁰³ This took into account many different factors, from the woman’s economic situation, to her husband’s employment and enlisted status, to how early on she had her children.

This particular guidebook, You Can Always Tell a Freshman; How to Get the Most Out of Your College Years, goes on to tell the potential college student that “your college classes are merely a starter, you see, for what should be a lifetime of interest in reading and further study of the subjects you enjoyed in your window-shopping period.”¹⁰⁴ While this does assume that college girls were interested in learning and expanding on their college courses, it does not assume that they will be using their education for both learning and a career.

¹⁰² Hudnut, page 174

¹⁰³ Hartmann, page 114

¹⁰⁴ Hudnut, page 177

Of course, a college education did not always have to be used towards a career. One reason for getting an education, according to one Vassar student, was so that she could “converse with my husband’s friends and business acquaintances with a mature and confident manner that can only come from a thorough education.”¹⁰⁵ In this way, a college education had far-reaching effects, although the primary implication of the above statement was that a husband was found during the college years, and that the college education was to benefit his career, not hers.

Even when one was not planning on going on to a career, many women wanted to use their brains after high school, and college was the perfect place for them to gain knowledge before moving on to a marriage and a family. Most advice given to young women in the form of guidance books was straightforward about aspirations after college. As one stated, “you’re educated – maybe for a job, maybe not.” College should give you the tools to express yourself, to live in the greater world and to realize how much you already know.¹⁰⁶ While expressing yourself and living in the world can be achieved through having a career, that was not necessarily a requirement.

Conclusion

Mount Holyoke continued to produce and expect the same kinds of women, although the prospects outside of the college for their graduates

¹⁰⁵ Hartmann, page 114

¹⁰⁶ Hudnut, page 177

shifted during the wartime period, as evidenced by the attitudes of employers towards the prospect and realities of hiring college educated women, and by how the college itself reacted to changes in social expectation for women. Much of the on-campus activities and attitudes stayed the same, with the exception of things having to do directly with the war, and so women graduating from Mount Holyoke in 1940 and 1949 probably had many of the same experiences in regards to how they were treated by the faculty, administration and outside sources. However, what they were expected to do after graduation, and what their own expectations were, changed drastically from the beginning to the end of the decade. While they once expected to find employment if they so desired, and were indeed recruited heavily and intensively, by the end of the decade women were faced the same sorts of gender expectations that they had before the war.

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDENT CULTURE

The students of Mount Holyoke had the experience of going to college during a time of social and economic changes as the more permanent structure of the college underwent personnel and ideological shifts. While the students were only transient members of the college population, their activities and post-graduation plans reveal the college student atmosphere of the time and how women's higher education was represented in the United States. While it has been documented earlier in this paper that the public image of the college went through changes during the 1940s, the differences over time enacted by the student body are another way of looking at the ways in which the concept of higher education was in transition. As shown in previous chapters, Mount Holyoke did not have a cohesive policy from department to department or from office to office on what the official image of the school was.

By looking at the Freshman Handbooks, student views on post-graduate life, the shifts in patterns of student majors, student organizations, and wartime activities, however, one can sketch what college life was like during this time of social upheaval. I have found that some of these documents

of student culture did not change much over the period, though some, such as wartime specific activities and the expectations that students had of careers after they graduated, did. Overall, students responded to outside social changes by the majors they chose, the organizations they joined, and the expectations they had about their post-graduate plans.

Freshman Handbook

One of the ways to get a picture over time of college life is by paging through the Freshman Handbook. The Freshman Handbook was published by the rising junior class each year and distributed to the entire incoming freshman class before the beginning of the fall term. This follows the tradition of assigning each junior to a freshman as her 'Big Sister' who showed her around campus and helped her to adjust to college life. It included a calendar for the year, a short history of the college, greetings from important people such as the President of the College and the Dean of Students, descriptions of student organizations and publications, a reassuring note for mothers, information about riding lessons, school songs, and a list of abbreviations and other college lingo.

The handbook gives a broad view of what the rising junior class thought a freshman should know about life at Mount Holyoke before she arrived. While some of the book contained more practical logistics, such as how to get from the train station to campus and how much spending money

was appropriate, it had light hearted tone, talking about various traditions such as the May Queen, who was “elected as the most beautiful in the senior class by the college at large.”¹⁰⁷ It also went over how students were expected to dress (they were supposed to change into nicer clothes for dinner and could not wear pajama pants except at Sunday breakfast) and how mothers could be popular (send letters and baked goods for your daughter to share with her new friends). An interesting point that was brought up in almost all of the handbooks was in addressing the changes that young women would go through as they were exposed to different people and ideas in their first few weeks of college: “don’t be alarmed when your daughter comes home all set to free the world from democracy or marriage, etc. We’re discovering the old ideas over again, and they’re just as exiting as they were the first time up.”¹⁰⁸ The juniors knew that, just as when they started their college educations, there were so many different influences on new students that they were bound to open up to new ideas and opinions. Throughout the 1940s, college was a time for young women to figure out who they were and what they stood for. The college, in this respect, was regarded as a place in which faculty, staff, administration and other students were key parts in the shaping of young women.

The welcome notes in the handbook, coming from various members of the administration, all reassured the new students that they would be

¹⁰⁷ Junior Class, 1940 Freshman Handbook. (Mount Holyoke College, 1940)

¹⁰⁸ Junior Class, Freshman Handbook.

successful at college. President Ham's welcome to the incoming class in 1940 said that "you will now participate and be a part of a great tradition – one of inner development and broad service."¹⁰⁹ The next year, addressing the class who came to the college in the fall of 1941, he reassured them that "though you are many separate individuals now and of wide diversity of origin, you will shortly grow to be a single unit, devoted as your predecessors to your college, and for all which it stands."¹¹⁰ Each year, he spoke to the class about many of the same themes, from growing as an individual to becoming part of a strong group of women. He also focused on their continued commitment to the college after they graduated – a plea to keep the Mount Holyoke community alive and well (and donating) long after they had left the school grounds. This attitude did not seem to change over the years, and neither did the attitude of the other administrators and student leaders that wrote welcoming notes to the incoming class. Since students had already decided that they were coming to Mount Holyoke, the college did not have to change its presentation of itself in order to agree with social norms of the day. Of course, these welcoming notes are not exactly transgressive, but they are still official statements by the college administration that characterized their view of the college. The emphasis on personal development, service to self, college and country, and cooperation are themes that transcend the social situation of

¹⁰⁹ Junior Class, 1940 Freshman Handbook.

¹¹⁰ Junior Class, 1941 Freshman Handbook.

the time, and can be seen as the importance the college placed on producing strong women, regardless of as the values of others.

The Appointment Bureau's Role in Student Employment

One of the largest changes between the earlier and later parts of the 1940s was the student's expectations of what they would be doing after they graduated. As I have documented earlier, for a few short years, during the war, the labor market was open for women and so most Mount Holyoke graduates who wanted a job were able to get one. During and after the war, the Appointment Bureau tried to educate students about what career options were open to them, and so brought in speakers on a variety of topics each year. (See Table One) The most frequent lecture topics were teaching, civil service, and graduate study, followed closely by nursing and various sorts of therapy. During the war, however, jobs were so easy to obtain that students didn't really care to go to talks about employment for women.¹¹¹ This did not stop the Appointment Bureau from hosting these lectures, and the director reported in several of her annual reports that while they were not always well attended, the students who did attend got much out of the information. Although these lectures were geared mostly for juniors and seniors who were beginning their job searches, "an effort was made to present [in the vocational lectures] some vocations that those who are now students in the freshman and sophomore

¹¹¹ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President's Office 1944-1945

classes may have basic information on fields of work open to women in peace time.”¹¹² In this way, younger students could start to prepare in their classes and by taking vocational courses well before they would have to enter an extremely competitive job market when they graduated. The college assumed that a large population of the student body would be interested in getting information on a variety of career opportunities.

The Bureau was an optional service until a student’s third year, when there were scheduled interviews with all juniors in the effort to find the best employment placement or vocational training for them. On the subject of these scheduled interviews, the director of the Appointment Bureau, Helen Voorhees, wrote in her 1940 annual report to the president that “world conditions may be responsible for a somewhat more keen desire on the part of the juniors to know how soon they may begin their vocational training.”¹¹³ Although the world conditions of the time did not have a good outlook, this was nonetheless a good thing for the college, since it meant that more Mount Holyoke women wanted a chance to place themselves in the workforce and do a service to their country, ultimately bolstering the reputation of the college. The overall attitude of these reports is one that promotes careers for Mount Holyoke graduates, and many of the statistics that are cited in the reports show that the college was one of the more successful colleges in placing their

¹¹² Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1942-1943

¹¹³ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1940-1941, Career Development Records 1917/18, 30/31-66/67, Activities 1901-1999, Director of Appt Bureau and Vocational Advisor 1930/31, 31/32, 33/34, 36/37-45/46.

students, even among co-ed colleges. As the decade went on and the labor market grew, so did the success of Mount Holyoke students. After the war, as the labor market shrank for liberal-arts educated females, the college had to combat the idea among some students that it would be easy for their graduates to find a job – many students did not take seriously the work they would have to do to find employment in the post-war social and economic landscape. For the beginning of the decade, though, finding jobs was not as large a concern for Mount Holyoke students.

In part because of the aggressive presence of the Appointment Bureau, Mount Holyoke students were able to find jobs fairly easily throughout the wartime years. The staff at the Appointment Bureau worked hard to make sure that employers and students had access to each other. This was important on all college campuses, but especially on a women's campus, since many employers did not think to recruit there on their own. For example, in 1940, the main bulk of the Appointment Bureau's work with the senior class was over Christmas, significantly earlier than in previous years. Voorhees wrote that "matters were both complicated and simplified by the fact that this year there has been an unusual demand for the services of college women...in nearly every field there was an increased demand and a desire to employ members of the graduating class several weeks in advance of graduation."¹¹⁴ The staff was working hard over the winter break and in the first few weeks of

¹¹⁴ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President's Office 1940-1941

the semester to ensure that employers were able to connect with students and that the upcoming graduates would have placements in the fields they deserved to be in. As evidenced by the large amount of personal correspondence that Voorhees had with a variety of people in different industries, personal networking played a huge part in who came to campus and what they thought of the school in general. This work by Voorhees and her staff paid off, since in 1940, 466 vacancies were reported to the office, and 33.6% of them were filled with more expected up to and through graduation. In comparison, Voorhees mentions in her annual report that other college bureaus reported 20-25% rate of placement.¹¹⁵ This trend continued into the next few years, with the class of 1942 having the same sort of success in the job market: 31.7 % of the class had job placements that year, compared to 23.4% of Columbia grads.¹¹⁶ The shift in the acceptability of hiring women for jobs traditionally held for men signified a change in how gender roles were seen; the Appointment Bureau was able to capitalize on this by their already close relationship with various companies, many of which were in more typically masculine fields.

Many of the jobs that became available in the early 1940s were in math and science related fields. Voorhees first mentions this in her 1941 report, noticing that Pearl Harbor had been bombed right after all the juniors were interviewed to find out where they wanted to focus their job search, and

¹¹⁵ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President's Office 1940-1941

¹¹⁶ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President's Office 1941-1942

so there were lots of offers for employment from both the business and industrial sectors.¹¹⁷ Although women traditionally did not occupy this space, Mount Holyoke had a strong tradition in the sciences, and so many of their graduates were not at as much of a disadvantage as women from other schools. However, this disadvantage was not as large as it could have been, since many colleges were offering vocational training courses in addition to their liberal arts curriculum, which were available to both men and women. She also points out how the start of the war brought about a shift in gender roles, and that employers were starting to pay attention to this shift: “industrial firms which for years had seemed to forget the existence of women suddenly realized that they are capable for filling many kinds of positions.”¹¹⁸ While the college had always known that its students were as capable as their male counterparts, the rest of the world was finally catching on to this notion. By 1942, “practically every student who had taken a major in chemistry, mathematics or physics had been offered several positions before February, and nearly everyone had accepted one of the offers.”¹¹⁹ These majors were more likely to give their students training and knowledge that could be applied directly to the job, making them more desirable to employers, especially during a time where production was focused on war time pursuits.

It was also hard to convince students in other majors that some jobs not directly related to the war effort and post-war reconstruction were also

¹¹⁷ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1941-1942

¹¹⁸ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1941-1942

¹¹⁹ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1942-1943

patriotic and needed filling. The glamour of working for the war department often overshadowed working as a teacher or any other more ‘mundane’ occupation. Voorhees noted that “it is the unusual young person who realizes that it can be just as patriotic to accept a position in a library as in a war industry.”¹²⁰ Although many of the vocational lectures offered by the college were on the topic of teaching, it is said over and over again in the Appointment Bureau annual reports that many teaching jobs were available, but students weren’t taking them, instead going for the higher-paying jobs with less longevity.¹²¹ As shown by Table Two, however, the percentage of students taking teaching positions after the war rose steadily. This may have been because a large number of students assumed that they would be working after college, and they were unable to be hired in many other professions by the time they reached graduation. These war time pursuits, new graduates soon found out, were much of what was driving the labor market, and so when the war ended so did many opportunities.

After the war, once it became clear that women were not as welcome in the labor force as they had been in previous years, the ways in which the college responded to the wishes of its students in regards to jobs had to change. There seemed to be disillusionment among students who expected to find jobs easily in the post-war labor market but were unwilling to train for them.¹²²

The students were warned, without always listening, that these wartime jobs

¹²⁰ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1943-1944

¹²¹ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1945-1946

¹²² Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1945-1946

would not last, and to take advantage of all the education and training that they could get to ensure a better shot at post-war employment. Since many jobs were looking for vocational training in potential candidates, many students found this an essential part of their junior year class schedule. The Appointment Bureau encouraged students, especially ones with multiple job offers, to carefully select which job would be the most advantageous in the long run: “acceptance of employment without thought to the various elements involved may only be postponing a decision as to one’s vocational career.”¹²³ In other words, students who chose jobs that did not have vocational training risked only working there for a few years and then not having any training to do anything else. Specifically in a short-lived war time economy, there was the danger of the inevitable fall in the job market once the war was over. Consequently, “the students have all been warned of this and have been advised to take every opportunity to add to their training and to build up sound experience which will prove an asset in the post-war reconstruction.”¹²⁴ This advice was not just coming from the college. John Studebaker, from the U.S. Office of Education, sent out a release to all colleges, advising that students able to complete college degrees should do so as opposed to intensive defense training courses: “the first obligation of college students is to fit themselves for the highest type of service; they should not give up the chance to prepare for their unique service in order to render a service on a level which can be

¹²³ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1940

¹²⁴ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1941-1942

rendered by a much larger number of men and women.”¹²⁵ Even if students wanted to graduate early in order to sooner help out with the war effort, the Office of Education was of the opinion that staying in school and getting an advanced degree would be more beneficial to the country and the individual than rushing through and getting just enough training to be hired without a college degree. Studebaker saw college students as a privileged group of people who should use that privilege and let others who were not going to college anyway fill the positions that did not require a degree. In sum, while the people working at the Appointment Bureau understood the reality of their female students finding well-paying jobs they enjoyed in this time of uncertain and changing gender roles, the students themselves were still under the impression that the roles their classmates in the workforce had taken on would last.

As in war time, students with math and science backgrounds had the most luck finding employment. In fact, “the only group who seemed to be at all sure of themselves were the majors in science, including mathematics, and a few who had decided on graduate or professional study.”¹²⁶ As a further attestation of Mount Holyoke’s superior science departments, “one recruiting personnel officer from the chemical industry mentioned that Mount Holyoke was the only one of the women’s colleges visited this year.”¹²⁷ Although there was the ever present worry over the post-war economy and social atmosphere

¹²⁵ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1940

¹²⁶ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1945-1946

¹²⁷ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1949-1950

being detrimental to the hiring of female students, this did not apply to all students. The one category of students that Voorhees was not worried about finding placements for after the war was the science students: “it will be two or three years before the G.I. candidates are likely to replace women in the ordinary laboratory positions.”¹²⁸ This is surprising in that the sciences are often assumed to be a masculine field, which points to the reputation that Mount Holyoke had among laboratories that were hiring college graduates. However, this also could be due to the fact that laboratory positions necessitated several years of training, which the returning G.I. candidates simply had not had the chance to obtain.

Another reason that made students more excited about joining the labor force, besides the large number of jobs and the greater acceptability of women working, was for love of country. Patriotism drove a number of students to graduate early in order to contribute to the war effort. For example, over 70 members of the class of 1945 who were graduating early (by August of 1944) to work for the war effort had secured employment by winter of 1943.¹²⁹ Besides being able to work for their country in times of crisis, employers were eager to hire well-educated young people and made it worth their while to graduate early from college. Voorhees also mentioned that students graduating early in September or December are eager “to make their

¹²⁸ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1947-1948

¹²⁹ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President’s Office 1943-1944

contribution to the winning of the war.”¹³⁰ However, she cautioned against students giving up a complete liberal arts education in an effort to secure employment, since she felt as though this education would serve them far longer than the war would last.

Vocational Training

As you can see from the Vocational Training table (Table Two), there were definite changes to the types of training that students had during the war as opposed to after the war. As mentioned previously, this can be attributed to more permissive social norms regarding female labor, as well as a need for college educated females in the work force. While some areas, such as business, library work, and graduate study experienced a dip in numbers during the beginning and middle of the 1940s, areas such as lab work, various sorts of government and aid work, and teaching all rose during the war years, and often continued to have those high numbers after the war as well. Women graduating without any plans for their futures, or who didn't report back to the Appointment Bureau with their information dropped during the war, but rose again after. This is perhaps a testament to the pressures of the labor market and social atmosphere during the war, in which everyone was expected to pitch in. The director of the Appointment Bureau mentions several times that teaching as a profession had lost its glamour in the face of government and

¹³⁰ Career Development Center Annual Report to the President's Office 1942-1943

war time jobs, though since Mount Holyoke graduates have a strong history of going into teaching, the actual numbers remained high.

Surprising is the decline in the number of women going on to graduate study. During the war, of course, many people put off advanced degrees in order to help the war effort, but that does not explain the continuation of this decline. I would guess that since college for women had become more socially acceptable, women who went to college were expected to keep within social norms of getting married and having children, while previously, the number of college educated women was smaller, and those women were already seen as outside of the boundaries already, so they often would continue their studies.

Student Organizations

Student organizations are another way to judge the interests and activities of the overall college campus, though of course they are not a precise map of Mount Holyoke student interests. The information about student organizations was provided by the Freshman Handbooks, as described earlier, were written by members of the Junior Class and distributed before the beginning of the fall semester. These handbooks gave an image of the college to incoming classes. While they may not have given a comprehensive listing of all student organizations, they did seem to make an effort to include all the organizations on campus, even ones that were only around for a year or two.

As on college campuses today, there was a huge range of clubs, from the United World Federalists to Skating Club.

The political clubs on campus (International Relations, Student Action Committee, Student Consumer Cooperative, Student League for Progressive Action, Student League of America, and the United World Federalists), with the exception of the International Relations club, were all short lived, lasting only one or two years each. Most of them were started during the war, though the Student Action Committee and the United World Federalists were closer to the beginning of the Cold War. While the existence or non-existence of political clubs on campus does not necessarily show the actual amount of political activity on the campus at this time, it does document some level of school-sanctioned political activity as well as the extent to which the Freshman Handbooks talked about politics and the political involvement of the campus.

Majors

Another change between the beginning and the end of the decade was the composition of majors within the college, which shifted from a focus in the humanities and social sciences to the natural sciences as the labor force became more war-orientated, and then back again to pre-war standards in many places. For example, women in the medical field graduated in record numbers during the war, but their numbers dropped rapidly as men came back

to take their places in school: “the war had permitted several hundred women who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to become doctors, but their younger sisters faced the same quotas that had prevailed in the 1920s and 1930s.”¹³¹ In looking, for example, at women who received their Ph.D.s during and right after the war, one sees that “the high proportion of female doctoral recipients held (within one or two percentage points) throughout the 1940s and fell off significantly only in the early 1950s.”¹³² One can conjecture that this is because they were already on that track in the early 40s, and the aftermath of the decrease in the prestige of women’s education in the late 40s caused the drop on doctorates in the early 50s. Another measure of the feeling women had about college is to look at what they were majoring in, and, possibly more importantly, what they weren’t.

At Mount Holyoke, the percentage of students majoring in the humanities, languages, mathematics and social sciences dropped from the 1930s to the 1940s, and an associated rise in the natural and physical sciences, as well as to psychology and education.¹³³ Into the 1950s, the natural and physical sciences dropped down to 1930s levels, while social sciences surpassed its prewar level and humanities and languages slowly regained their numbers. Although I have not done a comparison between the decades, these data show that the number of women graduating with natural and physical

¹³¹ Hartmann, Susan. The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982. (page 109)

¹³² Soloman, page 172

¹³³ Please see Table Four.

science degrees did rise during the 1940s. College advertising does not make the point that more Mount Holyoke students were graduating with these types of degrees, but the natural sciences are extremely prevalent in the college marketing.

Wartime activities

During the earlier part of the decade, wartime-specific activities took place on the campus, and other changes happened that were concurrent to comparable institutions. At the same time, however, the overall composition of student life did not seem to change drastically. One of the more obvious changes on campus had less to do with overall campus trends and more to do with the war itself, as Mount Holyoke hosted a WAVES training facility on its campus. In the Freshman Handbook, a War Activities section makes an appearance starting in 1942. Students are informed that they can be on the war service committee, or take classes in everything from first aid to nursing, typing, radio, leadership and nutrition.¹³⁴ Then in 1943, a group of WAVES moved into part of one of the dorms (Rockefeller) and took their classes on the first floor of Skinner.¹³⁵ These direct changes to daily life on the Mount Holyoke campus were of course war-related, but do not reflect a greater social change or trend. As the war ended, traces of wartime concessions – different classes, early marriages and graduations, and housing shortages to name a few

¹³⁴ Junior Class, 1942 Freshman Handbook.

¹³⁵ Junior Class, 1943 Freshman Handbook.

– slowly left the campus. The small mentions that the wartime activities were granted in college publications seem to reflect the impact that these activities had on campus, which was not a huge one.

Conclusion

The transitions that the public representations of Mount Holyoke went through during the 1940s were concurrent with the social values of American society at the time. The student body at Mount Holyoke also underwent transitions at the same time – from what majors students chose to what organizations they took part in – that can be linked to greater social trends. However, I do not think I can conclusively link these changes to the advertising and public image of Mount Holyoke or of women's higher education. To be sure, the fact that, for example, science majors rose during the 1940s and then declined into the 1950s can be linked to the need for more science knowledge in many positions during World War II, and the fact that more women were being hired in typically male-dominated fields such as ones in the sciences. However, would those women have chosen to major in something else if the college literature of the time been more strict in their representations of gender roles? I believe that the changes in student culture were mostly influenced by outside sources, such as the media, and had less to do with direct college advertising or public representation. Viewing a college guide book or admissions brochure may suggest to a student what types of

values that the college holds. Those values, which in Mount Holyoke's case, are a commitment to academic excellence that is supported in part by a strong science program, do not mean that a student must major in the sciences. I think that influences outside of the college's control, such as the media, had much more influence when they presented the values of society. Those social values – which, during the war, included a stronger push for service to country – dictated far more than the college's values could in terms of what students expected from their college career. Since they would be using what they gained during their years at college in the greater world, the social values associated with the outside world had more influence on student's decisions made within Mount Holyoke.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This thesis shows that Mount Holyoke College responded to the general social trends of the 1940s while still maintaining high expectations of their graduates. As the country grappled with gender roles and social values in the face of a World War and massive upheaval of daily life, the college struggled to respond in an appropriate way to these changes that allowed for a positive public image as well as for a continuation of college values.

Departments such as the Admissions Office, the Public Relations Bureau, and the Appointment Bureau all used their own missions as well as their ideas about the school to create and perpetuate images and descriptions of Mount Holyoke to various publics – potential students, media outlets, and employers, to name a few. In turn, newspapers, magazines, and college guidebooks also had ways of talking about and showing women's colleges that sometimes, but not always, were concurrent with what the college was putting out about itself. All of these sources show changes in how they represented the college, most significantly between the war years and the post-war years. These changes, many having to do with how the economy and

labor force responded to the lack of male workers, showed a response to what a typical female was supposed to be like. Women became more commonplace in the workforce, and it became more socially acceptable for women to use their college educations for both motherhood and careers, especially in math and science related fields. However, once the country started to recover from the effects of being at war, society became more conservative and women once again were expected to not compete with their male counterparts for jobs, instead staying solely in the home.

Inside of the college, the Appointment Bureau, the Dean of Students, and other administrative groups still pushed Mount Holyoke students to excel in their courses and be interested in the wider world – not surprising for an institution of higher education. What student's own expectations for themselves were, however, did undergo some changes, as well as what their options were once they graduated. From the majors they chose to the clubs they started, Mount Holyoke students did show a rise in science and math majors during the 1940s, and a rise in political organizations during the war. After the war, however, expectations about careers did not change – students still wanted to use their educations primarily for work, though the current social situation was not as permissive as it had been for their immediate predecessors.

While 1940s gender roles may seem archaic and old-fashioned to many modern readers, how much has actually changed in the ensuing 60 years?

Are gender expectations still as persistent as they once were? One can look at modern college publications and make an argument that gender norms are still very present in much literature. For example, in the 2007 endowment campaign booklet, one female professor is described as “an intellectual, a woman, a wife, and a mother...the students recently voted her as possessing the ‘best hair,’ of a faculty member.”¹³⁶ However, this is one of the few mentions of gender in the entire booklet – it is a much less pervasive concept than it was in the literature I looked at for this thesis. Thinking about how much the above statement matters to how most people live their daily lives, is this college booklet an accurate representation of how people on the Mount Holyoke campus think of gender expectations? Were the college publications of the 1940s completely indicative of what people actually thought?

Then, as now, imaginings of women’s higher education are often typified in college literature and other publications, but are not always clear indicators of what people actually thought. Overall, Mount Holyoke’s public representation of itself can be shown to have changed as a response to changing social values, and those changes can also be shown within the college as well, as students responded to the opening of the labor force and less strict gender roles. While the college did not suddenly have higher standards or expectations for its students, social limitations that may have once

¹³⁶ Mount Holyoke College Office of Development. Endowment Cultivates Great Teachers. South Hadley: Mount Holyoke College, 2007.

held many Mount Holyoke women back were lifted for a few years, allowing them to use their educations for a wider variety of livelihoods.

APPENDICES

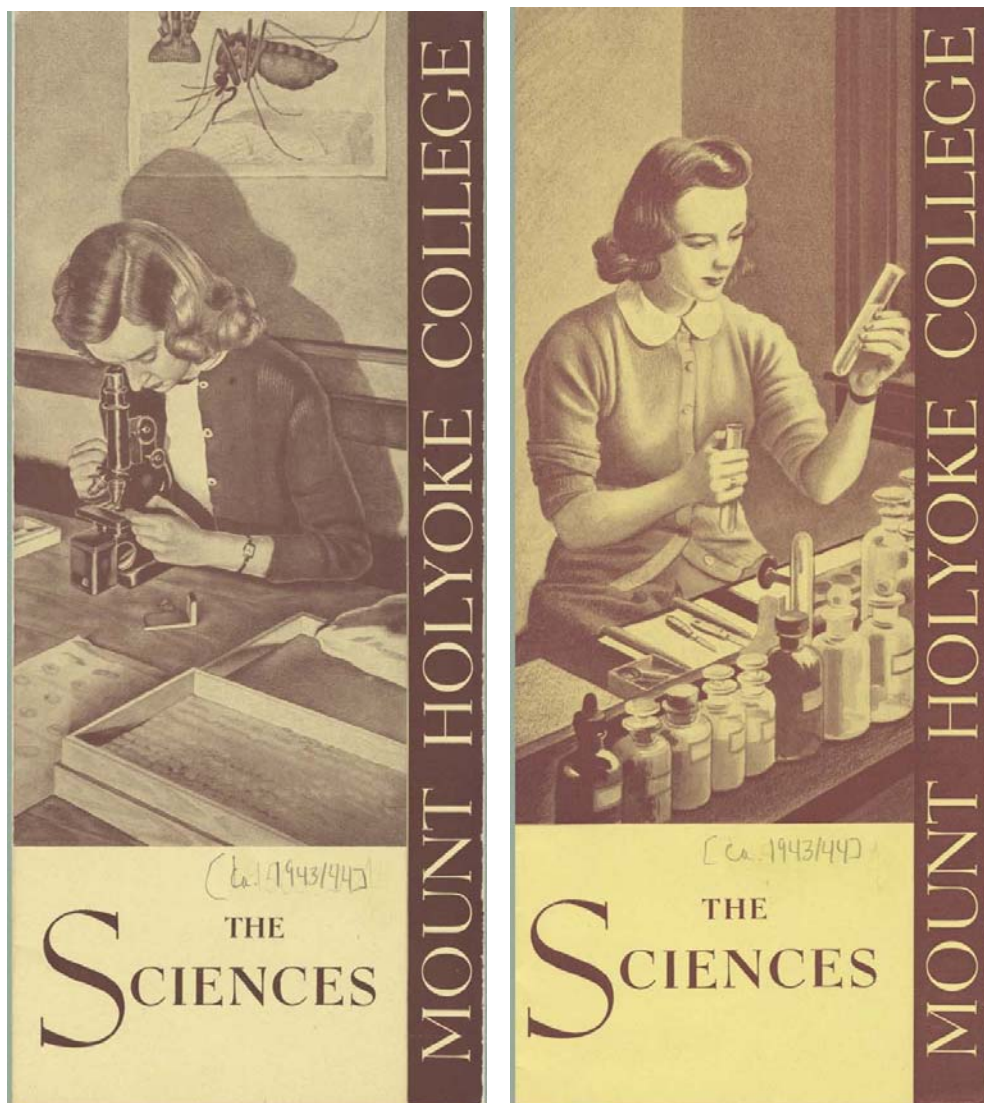
Appendix One: A Women's Success In Business questions

- Over the past few years had the work of the women college graduate compared favorably with that of the man of similar background and education?
 - o Yes 26
 - o No 2
 - o Can't Compare 2
- Have the college women with technical training or special skills proved as capable and useful as men similarly equipped?
 - o Yes 18
 - o No 5
 - o Can't Compare 2
- Have the college women in managerial capacities demonstrated an ability efficiently to supervise their subordinates?
 - o Yes 20
 - o No 1
 - o Can't Compare 7
- Has the college woman shown the same sense of imagination or ambition as her male counterpart?
 - o Yes 11
 - o No 13
 - o Can't Compare 1
- How does the turnover among women compare with that among men? In peacetime? During wartime?
 - o Higher – both peacetimes and wartime 15
 - o Equal – peacetime 2
 - o Don't Know 3
- In your opinion, would the college woman have greater opportunity for advancement if she should specialize while in college in such fields as chemistry, electronics, advertising, economics and banking, merchandising, etc?

- Yes 25
 - No ---
 - Not Necessary 2
- Now that there is the expected increase in available manpower, do you anticipate continuing to employ well-educated women in positions of responsibility and opportunity?
 - Yes 19
 - No 4
 - Possibly 4

Appendix Two: Images from College Published Materials

The two science brochures put out by the Admissions Office – I conjecture that the one on the left was produced during the war, while the one on the right was produced in the later part of the 1940s.



Images from the pre-1945 Science brochure showing active and engaged Mount Holyoke Students.



Images from the same Science brochure, post-1945, which are more passive in nature.



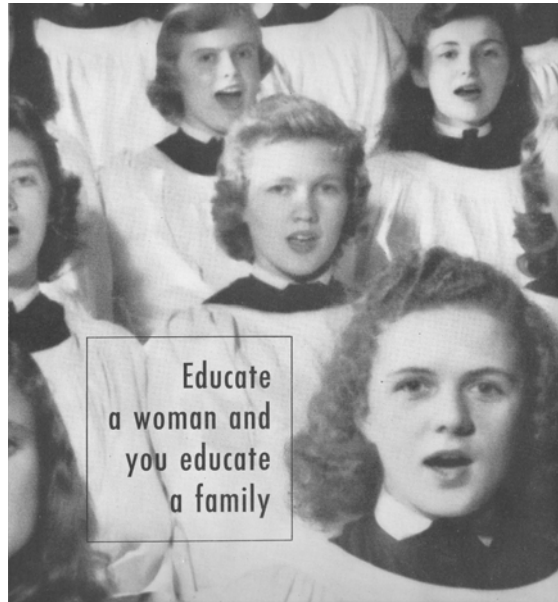


Image from the Social Sciences brochure of students in scrubs observing a baby, which replaces a photo of students giving a presentation in a classroom. Whatever the students were actually studying when the photo was taken, it connotes motherhood and other traditional feminine characteristics.



Images from “Mount Holyoke – Everybody’s College” showing the social, familial and academic potential of Mount Holyoke students.





Appendix Three: Tables

Table One: Vocational Lectures Offered, 1940-1949

1940	The Profession of Teaching Library Work The Ins and Outs of Publishing Radio as a Vocational Opportunity Graduate Study The United States Civil Service
1941	The Profession of Nursing Nursery School Teaching Forum on Civil Service Occupational Therapy Graduate Study The First Position in Business and How to Obtain It
1942	Opportunities in the Industrial Field for College Women Forum on Civil Service in the Field of Social Studies The Joys and Sorrows of Teaching Statistical Work as Related to Scientific Fields
1943	Nursing, A Peacetime and Wartime Profession Enlistment in the Navy Vocational Opportunities in Religion Forum on Civil Service in the Field of Social Studies Graduate Study The Privilege of Teaching Enlistment in the Navy Opportunities with the Women's Army Corps
1944	Nursing: A Wartime Profession Civil Service Forum Opportunities for College Women with the American Red Cross Graduate Study Out of Bed – Into Action Forum on Summer Work Enlistment with the W.A.C. – The Medical Program
1945	Opportunities for Women in journalism The Profession of Teaching Graduate Study Physical Therapy Professional Opportunities for College Women in Girl Scouts Forum: Volunteer Work in the Community
1946*	Careers in Publishing Religious Education Special Libraries

	Graduate Study Forum: Government Jobs in Washington and Overseas and the International Civil Service
1947	Personnel Work Teaching and Its Rewards The Profession of Nursing Graduate Study
1948	Department Store Work Graduate Study Opportunities in Medicine for Women The College Woman and a Business Career Civil Service as a Career Opportunities for Women with the United States Marines Corps
1949	Careers in Business Graduate Study Nursing The United States Navy Teaching Professional Girl Scout Work Emergency Training Program Offered by the Connecticut Department of Education Advertising

Table Two – Vocational Training

Percentage of the class taking training as of October of their graduating year*

Position**	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946***	1947	1949
Armed Services			1.2	15.5	5.2				
At home - travel	1.3	2.7	1.7	.4	5.2				
Business	9	17.6	25.4	15.8	14.8	21.45	13.2	11.76	15.35
College Department Assistant	7.7	7.9	1.2			5.15	3.77	5.88	4.15
Government (Special Corps, Army Map Service or Office of Strategic Services)					7.8				
Graduate Study (Graduate, Medical, Nursing or Vocational)	41.4	33.5	25	18.7	22.6	22.31	17.45	14.5	16.17
Laboratory Technician / Assistant	3.6	2.7	13.1	9.4	6.9	10.3	8.49	9.41	11.62
Library	1.3	.9	1.2	0	0	2.14	1.41	1.56	2.07
Literary or Journalism	.9	1.3	2.1	1.2	4.3	1.71	1.41		
Marriage	5.9	7	8.6	11.8	19.1	9.44	13.68	7.7	10.79
Museum or Art		0	.4			.42	.94	.39	
Music			.4						
Nurse's Aid				.4					
Personnel			1.2	.8		.85	.94	.78	.41
Psychology	.4	.4	.4	0	.9	.85	0	.39	2.07
Radio					2.6				
Red Cross				.4					
Social and Religious Education	1.3	3.5	3.3	0	5.2	5.15	2.83	3.92	2.9
Teaching (Apprentice, Private or Public)	3.1	4.9	4.9	5.3	5.2	8.15	7.54	9.8	11.62
Unreported / No Plans	24.1	17.6	8.2	13.4		9.87	30.18	20.66	31.12
War Industries			1.7	6.9					

* No data is available for 1948; blank spaces mean that the position was not listed in that year

** Women who were married and had careers are counted in both categories

*** Statistics taken in June of 1946

Table Three – Student Organizations

Information provided by the Freshman Handbooks, which were written by members of the Junior Class and distributed before the beginning of the fall semester. Clubs that seem to be more politics-based are in italics.

	1940-1941	1941-1942	1942-1943	1943-1944	1944-1945	1945-1946	1946-1947*	1948-1949	Years Active
American Student Union	X								1
Athletic Association	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Blackstick [literary club]	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Boots and Saddles Club	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Camera Club			X						1
Cosmopolitan Club	X	X	X						3
Dance Club	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Debate Club	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Delta Sigma Rho [national forensics society]	X	X	X		X	X	X		6
Department Clubs	X		X		X		X	X	5
Dramatic Club	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Fellowship of Faiths	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Fencing Club						X	X	X	3
Flying Club						X	X	X	3
Glee Club / College Choirs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
<i>International Relations Club</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Llamarada [yearbook]	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Outing Club	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Pangynaskean [literary magazine]				X	X	X	X	X	5
Phi Beta Kappa [based on G.P.A.]	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Press Bureau		X			X		X	X	4
Red Cross			X	X	X	X	X	X	5
Skating Club						X	X	X	3

Sketch Club						X			1
Speech Club	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
<i>Student Action Committee</i>								X	1
Student Alumnae Hall Committee	X	X							2
<i>Student Consumer Cooperative</i>		X							1
<i>Student Fund Committee</i>				X	X				2
<i>Student League for Progressive Action</i>		X							1
<i>Student League of America</i>		X	X						2
The Mount Holyoke Monthly	X	X	X						3
The Mount Holyoke News	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
<i>United World Federalists</i>								X	1

* no data for 47-48

Table Four – Majors

This table was created by Olga Karagiozi '07 and shows the distribution of majors from the 1920s through the 1960s, divided up into categories. .

Category / Decade	1920's	1930's	1940's	1950's	1960's
Humanities & Language	46.3%	47.5%	40.8%	41.1%	49.5%
Mathematics & Computer Science	4.6%	2.6%	2.2%	3.5%	3.6%
Social Sciences	22.6%	15.6%	22.3%	26.6%	25.5%
Natural & Physical Sciences	16.7%	15.7%	23.8%	18.2%	15.4%
Psychology & Education	3.1%	5.9%	8.8%	9.8%	5.8%
Totals	93.3%	87.2%	98.0%	99.1%	99.8%

Table Five - Employee Gender Composition

In the first two years (1935-1936 and 1940), in the section was labeled “Faculty, Officers, and Assistants,” there was no differentiation between faculty and other staff members in the directory, while in 1945 and 1950 titles were listed next to the names, ranging from Associate English Professor to Housekeeper. Since I could not differentiate between positions for the first two years I looked at, I did not want to skew the data by choosing which positions to look at and which positions to skip over in the later two years.

	1935-1936	1940	1945	1950
Female Employees	193 (86.9%)	225 (83.9%)	225 (82.7%)	247 (79.1%)
Male Employees	29 (13%)	43 (16%)	47 (17.2%)	65 (20.8%)
Totals	222	268	272	312

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