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CYCLING AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE SUFFRAGE PRESS

By

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B.A., American University, 2004
M.S.W., The University of Vermont, 2006

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Women's and Gender Studies
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2011

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A Thesis Approved on

March 31, 2011

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Thesis Director

ABSTRACT

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Christine Neejer

March 31, 2011

Responding to research gaps in both cycling and women's rights history, the purpose of my thesis is to investigate conceptualizations of cycling in the 1890's suffrage press. I analyze six aspects of cycling in suffrage periodicals: advice and tips to women cyclists; dress reform and women's cycling; women's cycling clubs; health, medicine and exercise; travel and touring; and cycling among anti-suffrage women reformers. I argue cycling and women's rights activism should not be framed as separate aspects of women's lives in the 1890's, but joint practices that influenced and informed the other. Suffrage press authors did not view cycling as mere recreation, but located it within the broader context of women's political activism and social reform. To the women cyclists who contributed to the suffrage press, cycling was ultimately a meaningful and practical way they could challenge Victorian gender constructs and implement women's rights ideology in their everyday lives.

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INTRODUCTION

Cycling, a “seemingly neutral technology,” is a complex practice that has the power to reflect, disrupt and change the social systems of a rider’s life (Furness 2005, 401). Yet the body of academic work on the history of cycling, especially in the Victorian era, is minimal, disjointed, and does not reflect the complexities of the subject (Horton, Cox and Rosen 2007). This is particularly true of women and cycling, which is generally treated as a marginal concern in the historical study of the practice. This occurs because nineteenth-century cycling is primarily pursued as the study of three areas, all of which center on men’s experiences: athleticism (racing, record-breaking, riding skills); adventure (length-based contests, travel); and technological innovation (development of new models and accessories) (Simpson 2007). Women’s involvement in these areas as well as women’s experiences that do not fit into these presupposed categories are typically left out of cycling histories, or at best, relegated to footnotes or small chapters outside of the historical narrative. This reflects a larger reality that “women's sporting experience is a vastly underresearched area” by historians of women and feminism as well as sport, athletics and recreation (Hall 1995, 83). The literature on American women and cycling in the nineteenth century is especially limited, as many of the authors who provide the most thorough accounts of the history of cycling that include women are from

Canada, Great Britain and New Zealand (i.e. Norcliffe 2001, Mackintosh and Norcliffe 2007, Simpson 2007).

When included, cycling historians often propose two simplified, opposing relationships between women, cycling and women's rights activism during the late nineteenth century. The first argument proposes a cause-and-effect relationship between women and cycling, in which the bicycle is an object of enlightenment that is virtually responsible for convincing women they deserved equal rights. This argument is more common among the older, foundational historical studies of Victorian era cycling. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's declaration that "woman is riding to suffrage on a bicycle" is frequently quoted and Smith refers to the women's bicycle as the "freedom machine" which showed the woman cyclist that she alone could be "her own mistress" (Aronson 1952, 308, Smith 1972, 76). The bicycle is framed as a democratic force in which hierarchies between women and men dissolved as they both became simply cyclists, making women confident enough to demand full citizenship and men willing to see them as equals and thus grant such changes. For example, in his widely cited 1977 essay, David Rubinstein argues "cycling brought the sexes together on equal terms more completely than any previous sport or pastime" (68).

A second argument has emerged in the contemporary research on cycling, partly as a response to the work of the early cycling historians described above. This new group of scholars argue that the supposed revolutionary impact of cycling on late nineteenth-century American society has been inflated by "extravagant claims" and "elaborate myths" which have little historical evidence (Rush 1983, 1-2). These historians see the bicycle as merely a commodity of emerging middle-class consumption that not only did

little to empower women or challenge gender roles, but overall maintained gender essentialism and women's inferior status. In his multiple publications on nineteenth-century cycling, Phillip Gordon Mackintosh conceptualizes women's cycling during this period as an attempt to control and domesticate male cyclists by taking over public spaces and feminizing riding practices. He argues that women cyclists did not challenge gender norms, but purposely touted the notion of woman as natural mother as part of an overall belief in themselves as civilizing forces which would reform the modern city (Mackintosh 1998, Mackintosh 2007). Others, such as Andrew Richtie, simply argue that women had no desire to politicalize cycling: they "did not consider their pasttime important enough to want to make a political platform out of it, and they were happy enough to have their new freedom and exercise" (Ritchie 1975, 153). As my research of cycling and the suffrage press will show, many women engaged in cycling as a distinctly political project of women's rights activism.

Neither of the above two arguments frame women as capable of constructing their own bicycling practices or utilizing bicycling to improve their lives; neither do these arguments thoroughly explore the complexities of both cycling and feminism during this era. Primary documents used by both sets of scholars are overwhelmingly written by men, and outside of isolated quotes from feminist leaders of the period, documents from the women's rights movement have not yet been used to develop a more complete history of women, cycling and the social changes that occurred in the 1890's. Overall, American academics have only an elementary understanding of women's experiences as cyclists in the early years of the practice.

The purpose of my thesis is to complicate these two largely unchallenged

arguments regarding the relationship of cycling and women's rights activism in the 1890's and to respond to this research gap in both cycling and women's history. I will provide a more thorough explanation of how these two social practices worked in conjunction with one another during this period, as part of women's overall challenge to Victorian gender ideology, culture and politics which limited women's roles in the public sphere. Building upon secondary literature from both cycling and women's rights history, my thesis will center on primary documents from the suffrage press, a diverse set of periodicals from women's rights organizations and activists during the 1890's. I will be focusing on *The Woman's Tribune*, *The Woman's Column*, *The Woman's Signal*, *The Woman's Journal*, and *The Woman's Herald*, which were the leading papers during this period. Contributors to the suffrage press newspapers documented, discussed and debated many issues of concern to women cyclists.

I will begin my thesis by illustrating the lack of attention to women's cycling within scholarship by both cycling and feminist historians. I will then outline the secondary literature on women's cycling and showcase how women were actively engaged in cycling throughout the nineteenth century. I will conclude my analysis of secondary literature by discussing the development of the suffrage press and the specific political ideologies and goals of prominent suffrage newspaper editors in the 1890's. This analysis of secondary literature will provide the context for the scholarly conversations of which my thesis contributes.

In the remaining chapters will be analyzing six specific aspects of cycling in suffrage press articles. First, I will explore how the suffrage press was used as a national forum for idea exchange on advice and tips to women cyclists, a much-needed resource

to both new and experienced women cyclists during this period. Second, I will document the relationship of dress reform and women's cycling. Contributors to the suffrage press directly confronted this highly contested issue by advocating for a variety of cycling costumes to challenge Victorian dress norms and improve women's experiences as cyclists while maintaining a gender performance of middle-class respectability. In my third chapter I will discuss women's cycling clubs, which were framed as evidence of women's success in political organizing. I will also show how suffrage press reporters often highlighted the efforts of club leaders to serve as role models for readers. In my fourth chapter I will document the medical discourse of women's cycling in the 1890's. I will then illustrate how contributors to suffrage newspapers used their personal experiences to describe the both physical and mental benefits of cycling and how fueled women's overall empowerment. By conceptualizing themselves as having the agency to improve and control their health, suffrage press authors destabilized the power of medical authorities and constructed new images of women as healthy, strong and independent. In the next chapter I will discuss the impact of women's cycling on traveling and touring. Suffrage press contributors highlighted the intellectual, physical and practical skills of women cyclists who engaged in touring. I will showcase how women's success and passion for cycling-based travel was framed as a direct challenge to the social and political constraints placed on women in the public sphere. In my sixth chapter I will analyze the anti-suffrage newspaper *The American Woman's Journal* to investigate conceptualizations of cycling by women reformers who were against their own suffrage. I will discuss how cycling was framed in this periodical as a political practice that was part of a larger effort to advocate for an anti-suffrage, but pro-reform women's platform. I

will conclude my thesis by summarizing my findings and discuss the implications of my research.

The central argument of my thesis is that cycling and women's rights activism should be framed not as separate aspects of the lives of women in the 1890's, but joint practices that influenced and informed the other. Throughout the articles, authors did not view cycling as merely recreation, a hobby or an athletic activity. Instead, authors located cycling within broader efforts to advocate for a number of issues relating to women's rights and social reform. Contributors to suffrage press newspapers described in detail their dedication to women's rights ideology and political efforts along with their identification with the image of the healthy, politically active, educated and independent New Woman. Cycling both practically and philosophically inspired women activists; it gave many women a forum to both conceptualize and engage in women's rights and reform work in new ways. Suffrage press contributors similarly utilized their participation in women's activism and reform as a framework to view the value of women's cycling within the larger socio-political context of the women's rights movement. By documenting cycling in their newspapers, suffrage press editors acknowledged the inherent political and social value of the practice. But support of women's cycling went far beyond mere publication. Women who contributed their ideas, experiences and talking points to suffrage newspapers did so because it was a meaningful and practical way they could implement and embody women's rights ideology in their everyday lives.

SCHOLARSHIP ON CYCLING

While cyclists authored articles and books documenting the history of the practice as early as the 1860's, it was in the 1950's when the small but growing field of cycling history developed in academic institutions (Ritchie 1975, Smith 1972). While women's experiences as cyclists were not the same as men, and women often faced barriers to cycling that men did not (i.e. Victorian era dress and ideology regarding women's bodies and reproductive health), men and women did share similar experiences, problems and enthusiasm for cycling throughout the nineteenth century. Yet modern cycling historians have consistently conceptualized the project of cycling history as the documentation and celebration of men's athleticism, adventure and innovation. The experiences of women cyclists, especially in the late nineteenth century, remain on the margins of historical work on cycling. Historians locate women's cycling outside of the central narrative of cycling itself, most often by adding a short chapter or a few paragraphs that briefly identify the specific issues and barriers women cyclists faced. While cycling historians often acknowledge the significant impact of women's cycling on Victorian culture and society, this impact is acknowledged in a sweeping, generalized statement without a complete analysis or evidence from primary documents. The practice of locating the entire scholarship on women's cycling into a separate women's section or chapter,

instead of incorporating women's experiences throughout the text, constructs the primary cycling narrative as male-normative and women's experiences are treated as secondary.

The first major scholarly article on the history of American cycling was Sidney H. Aronson's "The Sociology of the Bicycle" which was published in a 1952 volume of *Social Forces* (Aronson 1952). Aronson argues that the widespread popularity of the bicycle in the 1890's fueled significant social changes, and that the bicycle "provided a preview on a miniature scale of much of the social phenomena which the automobile enlarged upon" (Aronson 1952, 312). Aronson describes efforts of individuals and groups to resist these social changes, in particular medical professionals, religious leaders and political conservatives. He also celebrates those that promoted cycling, including the League of American Wheelmen; inventors, manufacturers and other leaders of the bicycle industry; and athletes of the period who demonstrated to the public that cycling was an adventurous and rewarding pursuit (Aronson 1952). Even though Aronson acknowledges that "[p]erhaps the bicycle's greatest impact was upon the American woman," his analysis of women and cycling is limited to a single page (Aronson 1952, 307). Aronson constructs a completely separate narrative for his discussion of women cyclists; women are not incorporated into any other section of the article. Aronson briefly mentions that women's cycling inspired changes in women's dress but that many women, such as members of the Woman's Rescue League of Washington, DC, believed cycling was immoral and tried to stop women from learning to ride and purchasing a bicycle (Aronson 1952). Aronson does not identify women cyclists as part of cycling as a whole, but a separate group entirely. The rest of his article, including his analysis of the cycling industry, athletics and cycling clubs, as well as his discussion of individuals against

cycling, only document the lives and texts of men.

Aronson's treatment of women's cyclists reflects the work of cycling historians from the 1950's to the present. Some cycling historians completely exclude women from their work. For example, Bruce D. Epperson's recent book on the history of the cycling industry, *Peddling Bicycles to America: The Rise of an Industry*, does not mention women at all even though other scholars have documented the quantity and diversity of women's cycling patents in the late nineteenth century (Epperson 2010, Gray and Peteu 2005). Most cycling historians follow Aronson's framework of using a separate chapter or section to document women's cycling and leaving the rest of the text to focus on men exclusively. In *The Story of the Bicycle*, author John Woodforde allocates only thirteen pages to women's cycling. He begins the chapter by arguing that women did not ride any versions of the cycle before the development of the safety in the 1880's. As I will show in the following section, there is evidence that some women began cycling in the early 1820's, roughly the same time period as men. Woodforde briefly describes women's tricycles in this chapter (instead of incorporating this description into his much larger chapter on tricycling) and women's cycling costumes. Woodforde alludes to the connection between cycling and women's rights activism when he states that "women used their bicycles not so much to get anywhere as to get away," but he does not identify what social traditions, practices or institutions women were trying to get away from (Woodforde 1970, 134). Instead, he uses the rest of the chapter to frame women's cycling as a leisure activity with no political consequence. In his 1997 article "Cycling in the 1890's," David Rubinstein uses the same set of primary documents as Woodfode and Aronson (the vast majority were texts written by and about male cyclists) and uses a

male-normative framework. Rubinstein also makes very short but sweeping statements about the revolutionary impact of cycling on women's rights with no analysis or primary source evidence (Rubinstein 1977).

The treatment of women cyclists somewhat improved in Robert Smith's *A Social History of the Bicycle*. Smith only includes women's cycling in twenty-three pages of his 251-page book, and most of those pages are in a section on the impact of cycling on dress reform (Smith 1972). But Smith does recognize the distinctly political impact of cycling in regards to dress. Unfortunately he limits most of his discussion on women's cycling in his entire book to dress reform, when in fact dress was only one issue among many facing women's cyclists during the nineteenth century. While Smith also acknowledges that "[t]he most vigorous debates over the influence of the bicycle on health came when women began to ride," he only spends two pages in his chapter on health discussing women's cycling and never fully explores this argument (Smith 1972, 65).

Andrew Ritchie's 1975 book, *King of the Road: An Illustrated History of Cycling* provides a much needed visual history of nineteenth-century cycling. But as the title suggests via his use of 'king,' his cycling research is also structured around a male-normative stance even though he states that no area of cycling "was more bitterly debated or aroused more passionate feelings than the subject of women and cycling... the topic was continually discussed from almost every angle under the sun" (Ritchie 1975, 145). Ritchie discusses women only in the designated women's chapter, which makes up nineteen pages of his 181-page book. Unlike Woodforde, Ritchie acknowledges women's engagement in cycling started with the development of the hobbyhorse and documents women's cycling at every major development in nineteenth-century cycling overall. Yet

Ritchie does this within his separate chapter on women and does not incorporate women's experiences into chapters on specific models or time periods of cycling (for example, his analysis of women who cycled on the velocipede in the 1860's is only in the chapter on women and not in his chapter on velocipedes) (Ritchie 1975). Even though the title of Ritchie's chapter on women is 'Women's Liberation,' he argues that women cyclists "did not consider their pasttime important enough to want to make a political platform out of it" and includes no analysis of the role of women's rights and reform activism in his book (Ritchie 1975, 153).

The most recent major text in cycling history to include women is Glen Norcliffe's *The Ride to Modernity: The Bicycle in Canada, 1869-1900*. Norcliffe acknowledges the impact of women's cycling on women's health and clothing in only a few sentences, and also publishes a few photographs of women cycle clubs as well. In his 256-page book, Norcliffe does not include a chapter on women's cycling at all, instead summarizing the changes in nineteenth-century gender relations in a three-page section of his larger chapter on the impact of cycling on social patterns. Norcliffe documents that by 1896 one-third of cyclists in Canada were women, women's cycling clubs were quite popular and cycling texts like Frances Willard's *Wheel within a Wheel* were best sellers. Yet Norcliffe concludes that cycling's "social impact on women coincided with a series of related changes" (Norcliffe 2001, 193). While Norcliffe is correct in stating the cycling was one of many significant social changes of the late nineteenth century, he also misses an opportunity to explore the unique impact of cycling on women's lives and gender roles as a whole. Phillip Gordon Mackintosh, another leading Canadian cycling historian, has published two significant articles on cycling that include women. Yet Mackintosh argues

that women's cycling in the nineteenth century was an effort to secure Victorian gender norms, not challenge them, as middle-class women reformers viewed their own recreational and moderate cycling style as a way to feminize and thus civilize the public sphere. Mackintosh does not consider the cycling's potential to transform gender relations or empower women either political or socially (Mackintosh 1998, Mackintosh 2007).

Cycling historians are not the only group of scholars that have failed to fully incorporate women's cycling into their research. Historians of physical education have published a wealth of material on the history of women's exercise, athletics and health in the late nineteenth century. Yet women's cycling is often mentioned as one of many sports that became popular during this period and few scholars have examined the specific social and political impact of women's cycling. Many physical education scholars limit their analysis to listing the dates of the development of women's cycling clubs or classes in universities (Mangan and Park 1987, Gems, Borish and Pfister 2008, Ziegler 2005, Hargreaves 1994). Similar to texts on the history of cycling, physical education historians often make sweeping generalizations about the cycling and dress reform without a without a full analysis and only include dress among the many political issues that were involved in women's cycling. In *American Woman and Sport* for example, the authors acknowledge that the challenging of Victorian dress traditions by women cyclists "marked the beginning of woman's emancipation" (Gerber, et al. 1974, 33). Yet the authors' analysis of nineteenth-century cycling is limited to only one paragraph and only mentions issues of dress, which leads to a shallow investigation of cycling in the text.

While no historians have published entire books on women's cycling, there are a few articles that document nineteenth-century women's cycling more fully than most historians of cycling and physical education. Yet these articles do have limitations, and no studies of women's cycling have used the suffrage press. The only historian that works solely on nineteenth-century women's cycling is Claire S. Simpson, a historian from New Zealand. Simpson's work is incredibly thorough, she highlights the complexities of women's cycling during this period, and she does not limit her analysis to dress reform or use a male-normative framework in her research. While there are many similarities between women's experiences as cyclists in New Zealand and the United States during this period, her work does have some limitations for American cycling historians (Simpson 2001, Simpson 2007).

The International Cycling History Conference publishes papers from their annual conference, and women's cycling has been the topic of a few of these articles. Ross D. Petty published an article which solely investigates women's cycling in the nineteenth century, and is one of the few publications by an American cycling historian that does not limit the political impact of women's cycling to dress reform (Petty 1996). Phillip Mackintosh also published an analysis of Frances Willard's cycling memoir *Wheel with a Wheel* (Mackintosh 1998). While both articles address the research gap in women's cycling, they are shorter than most scholarly articles and have not gone through the rigorous editing process typical of publications in scholarly journals. These articles provide an important starting point for historians of women's cycling but not a thorough investigation of the topic. Both Patricia Marks and Ellen Gruber Garvey document the anti-feminist discourse of women's cycling in turn-of-century popular periodicals,

focusing on short stories and cartoons (Marks 1990, Garvey 1995). While helpful in the use of popular culture to investigate women's cycling, neither author allow for the possibility that women readers could find any sources of empowerment within this discourse. In a particularly innovative use of primary sources, Sally Gray and Michaela Peteu showcase women's active involvement in cycling via an investigation of cycling patents registered by women in the nineteenth century (Gray and Peteu 2005). Gray and Peteu's work highlight the possibility of using documents other than newspapers and books to explore women's cycling in the nineteenth century.

Frances Willard and her role in nineteenth-century cycling has been the topic of two recent scholarly articles. Lisa Strange and Robert S. Brown compare Frances Willard's point of view on women's cycling to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who never cycled herself but did write about the empowering impact cycling could have on women's rights activism (Strange and Brown 2002). This article is quite helpful because it showcases the variety of opinions about women's cycling among women's rights activists during the late nineteenth century. Strange and Brown have to limit their analysis to a small sample of Willard's and Stanton's writings due to the length requirements for their scholarly article. Their work does not conclude the scholarly conversation about the role of nineteenth-century women's rights activism and cycling, but proposes questions to inspire more research in this area. Susan Hanson argues that Willard's focus on individual mobility was central to her ideology regarding both activism and cycling. Hanson is unique as she connects the history of women's cycling to current feminism, as she proposes that Willard could be useful for eco-feminist activists today due to her interest in politicizing mobility (Hanson 2010). Ultimately, these scholars have provided

important frameworks to study women's cycling, documented information that is critical for understanding women's experiences as cyclists and proposed necessary challenges to the male-normative cycling historiography. Yet many research gaps on women's cycling remain and ultimately the body of work on women's cycling in the nineteenth century is quite limited.

SECONDARY LITERATURE: WOMEN'S CYCLING

While exact numbers are difficult to surmise, there is overwhelming evidence that women were in fact engaged in the practice of cycling in a variety of ways throughout the nineteenth century. The first model of a two-wheeled machine for riding, commonly called the hobbyhorse (*draisine* or dandyhorse), was invented in 1817 (Aronson 1952, Oliver and Berkebile 1974). Given the great expense and free time it took to ride, the hobbyhorse was used by only the wealthiest individuals in the United States and Britain. While it did not have widespread popularity, riding schools were established and the image of the hobbyhorse soon became common in popular publications (Ritchie 1975). The hobbyhorse was typically ridden in gardens and other private, outdoor spaces, although some riders ventured into public parks, which would attract significant attention and interest from onlookers (Aronson 1952, Oliver and Berkebile 1974, Smith 1972).

Men primarily rode the hobbyhorse, and exact rates of women riders are difficult to pinpoint. Yet, it would be incorrect to state that no women rode the hobbyhorse (Woodforde 1971). Hobbyhorse builder Denis Johnson developed a few women's models within a year of his original model. A respectable, upper-class woman straddling a hobbyhorse was simply unthinkable in the early 1800's. So unlike the men's model, in which the rider would straddle a seat and push the machine with his feet (peddles and

cranks had yet to be invented), the women's model was three wheeled, peddle-powered carriage designed around women's dress of the period (Oliver and Berkebile 1974). Perhaps foreshadowing the tremendous growth of women cyclists by the end of the century, in his 1869 text, cycling enthusiast (and self-diagnosed sufferer of 'velocipede fever') J.T. Goddard recalled that upon the development of the women's three wheeled model, women were known to "have looked on [men's models] with envy and emulation. They have not been satisfied with the tricycle... and have felt it hard that they should be denied the exercise, amusement, risk, dash, and delightful independence, which the bicycle so abundantly afford" (Goddard 1869, iii, 86).

After decades of technological innovations and a number of failed models, the French velocipede was invented in 1863 (Ritchie 1975). Still made of entirely of wood, the major change between the velocipede and the hobbyhorse was the addition of pedals connected to the axel of the front wheel (Oliver and Berkebile 1974). A leather saddle also replaced the wooden plank upon which a male rider would sit. By 1868, the velocipede, now called the 'Boneshaker' in the United States (due to the uncomfortable ride) was a popular among a select group of riders in Europe. The boneshaker gained notoriety in the United States as French circus performers would travel to America and put on shows. Interestingly, the most popular performances were those put on by women cyclists. Because France was the first European country to both legally and socially permit women to cycle, French women were able to have a performance careers based on their cycling skills decades earlier than women in Britain and the United States (Ritchie 1975). In scantily clad outfits and vibrant make-up, young women would perform tricks as part of a traveling circus act or similar performance company (Ritchie 1975). Pictures

of the women would often be in French periodicals such as *Le Monde Illustre* with race highlights and descriptions (Ritchie 1975). Historians imagine that male spectators did not see these women as athletes per se, but rather exotic, eye-catching performers. But, in 1869 the first cycling rink allowed women to enter and ride, a significant gain for women cyclists (Petty 1996). While not necessarily connected, the growth of co-ed cycling rinks, which were increasingly popular by the 1860's, does illustrate a change in social attitudes regarding women cyclists.

Significant social changes occurred after the Civil War. One major change was the experience of 'sporting life' in the United States. Before the Civil War, athletics had been "causal," "non-competitive" and largely unorganized (Bulger 1982, 1). The upper class enjoyed horseback riding, hunting and yachting, while working class people engaged in activities that involved less money, such as prize fighting and running (Bulger 1982). Periodicals of the early nineteenth century, such as widely popular *Godey's Lady's Book*, encouraged middle- and upper- class women to participate in horseback riding, calisthenics and walking for exercise (although other forms of exercise were highly discouraged). Women also took an active role as spectators; women's stands were typical in upper class sporting events (Bulger 1982). Activities for young women were minimal, as the practice of playing games and the space and equipment to do so were uncommon during this period (Mangan and Park 1987).

The ways in which athletics were practiced, as well as the meanings associated with these practices, changed greatly after the Civil War. During this period, working and middle-class white men were forced to confront the reality that their longstanding power and privilege was destabilized by the abolition of slavery and other social changes. Men

became involved in practices that provided ways for them to reassert their gender privilege and participate in performances of dominating masculinity. A key forum for this practice was athletics. During the 1870's and 1880's, men's sports became team-based, competitive, highly organized, and increasingly violent. Men's sports also became commercialized and a popular spectator event (Bulger 1982). During this period, sports such as football, boxing, and baseball were central to young men's lives. Whether one attended sporting events, read or wrote about them in popular periodicals such as the *National Police Gazette*, or participated in them even in the most casual of games or teams, sports became a major way for men to both define and perform masculinity (Mangan and Park 1987).

Yet, the growth of the sporting life in the mid-to late nineteenth century did not affect men alone. The major innovations of women's athletics occurred in colleges, both in those for women and those that became co-ed after the Civil War. Believing that women students needed a healthy body to be fit for study and to discredit popular beliefs that girls were unfit for higher education, women's educational pioneers, such as those at Mount Holyoke, began the first callisthenic programs for women students in the 1830's (Bulger 1982). By the 1860's, these small programs grew exponentially as did the professionalization of the physical education. Colleges began to build entire gymnasiums for women students along with training programs for physical education instructors (Ziegler 2005).

Bored with the callisthenic routines of their mothers' generation, in the 1860's women students started demanding and organizing programs and clubs for a variety of sports, including field hockey, croquet, horseback riding, tennis, bowling, archery and

baseball (Ziegler 2005). While students did not play in public, teams formed along with intercollegiate leagues, with games played in the privacy of their campuses (Bulger 1982). Unlike for young men, professional sports for women did not develop, as there were no socially sanctioned ways for respectable women to be involved. For example, efforts to start a professional baseball league for women in this period were thwarted due to concerns that the organizers were recruiting players for prostitution. This occurred not because of direct evidence of the organizers' ties to the sex trade. Rather it was assumed that if a woman was willing to give up her respectability to play baseball, an activity of raucous working class, Irish and African-American men, then the plausible next step would be prostitution itself (Bulger 1982).

The 1879 development of the Ordinary model (also called the penny-farthing or highwheel) is generally attributed as the beginning of modern cycling (Rubinstein 1977). The Ordinary, the first model to be called a 'bicycle,' had a large front wheel, small rear wheel and the rider sat at the very top of the large wheel, with the pedals connected to the wheel by an axel (Rubinstein 1977). This occurred during the post-Civil War period in which many organized sports aimed at young, middle- and working-class men emerged as described above. The Ordinary was very difficult and dangerous to ride, and was ridden primarily by risk-seeking young men (Aronson 1952). The Ordinary was a very large model (the high wheel would often reach to the top of the rider's shoulder) (Oliver and Berkebile 1974). This meant that it took great effort and skill to mount and dismount, as well as ride through the muddy, debris filled city streets and avoid pedestrians, those on horseback and carriages. Falling off of an Ordinary could mean significant injury, and deaths were common enough that some cities, such as Rochester, New York, actually had

a cyclist's section of the obituary page in their local newspaper (McCally 2008). Like other popular sports of this period, the Ordinary was also a way for young men to express a specific form of masculinity – tough, dangerous, risk-taking and brave (Norcliffe 2001).

Although not taken on by the masses, the Ordinary gained a dedicated following among urban men. Ordinary riders were popular circus acts and men who worked to beat riding records (distance, speed, etc.) were reported in mainstream newspapers. Parts and repairs for Ordinaries were quite expansive, yet cycling shops grew during this period (Smith 1972). Ordinary riders also developed riding clubs throughout the country in an effort to promote the sport, advocate for the rights of cyclists and organize the sport itself. While some velocipede clubs existed, the practice of cycling in clubs did not take off until the Ordinary. The first Ordinary club was the Boston Cycle Club, formed in 1878. Cycling clubs quickly became a central way for cyclists to practice their sport and were very popular by the 1880's. Clubs were typically small (fewer than 100 riders) and based out of specific neighborhoods in urban areas or some small towns (Griffin 2006). Riders organized social events, races and other contests (some with significant prizes) and had uniforms with unique insignia and colors (Norcliffe 2001, Smith 1972). In 1880, the national American League of Wheelmen (LAW) was founded as a governing, regulatory body for clubs and races as well as to advocate for cyclists (most notably through the Good Roads Movement which aimed to build and improve roadway systems throughout the country) (Smith 1972).

Cycling clubs were the primary forum for racing, including amateur, semi-professional and professional races within teams as well as against local or region teams. Development of state and national championships, with growing spectators (as well as

prize money) became very popular during this period, with major forums (such as Madison Square Garden) hosting races with audiences in the thousands' (Wells 1993, Smith 1972, Ritchie 1975). Top cyclists were typically professionals who paid both agents and trainers as part of maintaining their career (Wells 1993). It became common for amateur riders and fans to follow their favorite racer and wear the colors of their favorite racer's uniform on race day (Wells 1993). Others attended for pure entertainment value, and gambling on race results was also quite common (Wells 1993).

While clubs were often promoted as democratic organizations that put "wheelman first," thus uniting all riders despite racial, ethnic and socio-economic differences, cycling clubs of this era "proved to be only an extension of the existing social order" (Goodman 2010, A18). Cycling clubs were completely and purposely segregated by race and ethnicity. By the early 1880's local cycling clubs in the South (most notably in New Orleans, which had a booming cycling scene) who were affiliated with the League of American Wheelman, threatened to disband if African-American riders were allowed to join or ride with them. Fearing loss of membership, the LAW limited membership to whites in the national bylaws, which resulted in both increase membership among white riders as well as the growth of African-American men's clubs (Somers 1967). Immigrant men also established their own clubs throughout the country due to discriminatory practices both by local clubs and national organizations (Somers 1967).

Documenting and analyzing women's involvement with the Ordinary model is a project rarely conducted by cycling historians. In the classic cycling history text, *The Story of the Bicycle*, John Woodforde states that "the highwheeler was strictly for men" and women riding the Ordinary was simply "impossible" (Woodforde 1971, 142).

Woodfode's approach reflects the stance of the vast majority of cycling historians. While it is clear that the majority of Ordinary riders were men, what cycling historians often overlook is the popularity of the small but notable group of women who were professional racers during 1870's and 1880's and in fact rode Ordinaries. Rochester, New York native Elsa Von Blumen and French-Canadian Louise Armaindo were the most successful female professional cycling racers during the late nineteenth century. They were trained by the top cycling trainers of the period and made thousands of dollars in prize money. According to newspaper accounts, their well attended races had an audience as high as 6,000 (Wells 1993). Archrivals, Von Blumen and Armaindo raced against each other quite often, as well as other women (both American and European) and the top male cyclists. It was also popular for Von Blumen and Araindo to race against horses, and Von Blumen's 1881 victory against Hattie, a mare, made national headlines (Wells 1993).

While it is safe to assume that many in attendance came for the spectacle and did not see Von Blumen and others as genuine athletes, how these races affected women audience members has not been explored. Women in the audience (just as male fans) would follow and cheer for their favorite women racers. In a particularly notable 1882 race, when Louise Armaindo raced John S. Prince, arguably the best cyclist of the period, newspapers reported that the audience was full of women fans wearing Armaindo's trademark crimson and white colors and holding banners to support her (Wells 1993). In one of the few articles on women Ordinary racers, historian Michael S. Wells acknowledges women's enthusiasm for cycling as fans and spectators, but he assumes that while "there is a history of women on the high wheel in America... it probably has

little to do with equality, or women's rights" (Wells 1993, 13). Yet in all reality, this is an assumption he makes with no analysis or research. Cycling historians in fact have not published on women's role as race fans during this period at all, nor on any connection between races and feminist activism, so this is mere speculation.

Outside of the small number of women who rode the Ordinary, most women who wanted to ride during the 1870's and 1880's were limited to the tricycle, a heavy, cumbersome model with three equal size wheels and a center saddle (Woodforde 1971). With certain models weighing up to 80 to 100 pounds, the tricycle was difficult to maneuver and took much more effort to pedal compared to Ordinary models, which were light and designed for speed. Like Ordinaries, tricycles were dangerous, but for different reasons. Women riders frequently complained that their clothing would easily get caught in the wheels, causing them to crash or fall off (Smith 1972). Because the tricycle was so much wider and heavier and breaking systems would often malfunction, accidents on steep, narrow or debris-filled roads were common (Griffin 2006).

The tricycle was too expensive for most American women and not suited to urban riding, thus it had limited popularity among middle and working class women (Smith 1972). The tricycle was popular primarily among circles of aristocratic women. The few tricycle riders who ventured into public spaces were typically ridiculed and harassed by onlookers, and given the difficulty of maneuvering the large machine, most tricyclists rode in private gardens and paths (Smith 1972, Griffin 2006). In 1881, Queen Victoria made international headlines by requesting a tricycle for her own use. Along with the Queen, the popularity of tricycling among European royalty and wealthy American women helped to make riding more acceptable for wealthy women during this period

(Petty 1996, Smith 1972). By the mid 1880's, tricycling became a more common practice for upper-class women and was less shocking to see in public.

From the very onset of tricycling, accounts consistently reported that women generally tricycled with other women in small groups, especially in the early 1880's (Griffin 2006). Cycle clubs for male riders of all racial and ethnic backgrounds by in large did not allow women tricyclists into their organizations (the involvement of women who rode Ordinaries is not known, but photos of Ordinary clubs during this period show no women members) (Norcliffe 2001, Oliver and Berkebile 1974). Some clubs barred women's involvement altogether, others would include women only for specific rides or social functions, and the most progressive clubs would grant women limited membership if they were related to a member (typically a brother) (Norcliffe 2001). Women tricyclists were typically thought of by male cyclists and portrayed in both popular and cycling press as less capable riders who would slow down club runs (Griffin 2006). Women often argued that any cyclist limited to a tricycle would be unable to keep up with an Ordinary rider no matter their gender, yet men rarely agreed (Griffin 2006). Due to these discriminatory practices, women began forming their own cycle clubs in the late 1880's (Griffin 2006, Goddard 1869). In 1878, the first cycling recreation program for college students formed at Smith College (Gerber, et al. 1974). More women's cycling clubs were established during the 1880's, including the Nenagh Ladies' Cycling Club, the first formal women's cycling club in Britian (Griffin 2006). These tricycle clubs would become the foundation for the popularity of women's bicycling clubs in the 1890's.

Seeing the possibilities of the tricycle and the Ordinary, many women began to advocate for a safer, affordable version of the two models. Bicycle manufactures also

began to recognize the purchasing power of young, active women of the emerging middle class. Seeing them as a distinct consumer group within the cycling industry, manufacturers began to design models en masse specifically for women (Mackintosh and Norcliffe 2007). In response to growing consumer interest, especially by women, a number of improvements were made to the cycle itself. By the late 1880's, models had a rear wheel only slightly larger than the front wheel and metal frames were developed. In 1887, the first modern bicycle model for women was invented. In 1889, the Starley Brothers bicycle manufacturers invented the 'Psycho Ladies' model, the first women's bicycle to be mass-produced in the United States (Ritchie 1975). The next year, the same company introduced the 'Rover,' which had a dropped metal frame typical of women's frames today (Ritchie 1975).

These improvements set the stage for the bicycle 'boom' or 'craze' which hit as a result of the invention of the safety model, which provided the first major challenge to men's overarching dominance of cycling (Norcliffe 2001, Griffin 2006). The safety had two equal size wheels, a saddle position hip distance from the ground for easier mounting and dismounting, and the wheels were not pedaled directly, but instead the rear wheel was connected by a chain (Aronson 1952). In 1890, bicycle inventors began testing rubber tires, some of which were inflatable (Smith 1972). When the innovative safety model was updated with a pneumatic tire instead of a solid rubber or wooden one, the safety became easy to ride, dependable on both urban and rural roads, simple to repair and cheap to manufacture (Woodforde 1971). True to its name, the safety was much lighter and easier to handle than both the tricycle and the Ordinary, and the accidents,

injuries and deaths resulting from riding were far fewer compared to previous models (Norcliffe 2001).

Cycling historians credit the safety model as the major fuel for the development of the modern bicycling industry. While approximately one million riders existed in 1890, it is estimated that by the middle of the decade four million Americans cycled regularly (Strange and Brown 2002). While exact rates are difficult to quantify, the rapid growth of cycling is clear. From 1890 to 1899, there was an 1100% increase in bicycle producers (Strange and Brown 2002). This increase in the number of cyclists parallels the growth of the bicycle industry as well. In 1896, the president of the League of American Wheelman reported that 2.5 million cyclists were affiliated with the League and estimated that there were 250 bike factories, 30,000 retailers, 6,300 repair shops and 60,000 workers in 'sundry' factories, making the American bicycle industry worth approximately 75 million dollars (Potter 1896). As bicycling became increasingly popular, prices quickly dropped. By the 1890s, the price of a safety was lower than a horse in most urban areas, many bicycle shops had payment plans, sold used models, and bicycling was more affordable than other growing sports of the period (i.e. golf) (Smith 1972). By the end of the 1890's, approximately ten percent of all periodical advertisements were for bicycles or bicycle accessories, parts or clothing (Petty 1996).

It was not just the emerging middle class en masse that purchased the safety models in record numbers, but in particular young women. In 1892, only two years after the development of the first safety with pneumatic tires, approximately one-third of bicycles on the streets were ridden by women (Mackintosh and Norcliffe 2007). Seeing a woman on a bicycle was largely a rarity in American cities circa 1890, but by 1895

women cyclists were not only increasingly visible in the streets but their cycling practices were growing and diversifying (Rubenstein 1977). Along with women's increased economic purchasing power and the affordability of the safety, other social factors fueled the virtual explosion of women cycling by the middle of the decade (Strange and Brown 2002, Fee and Brown 2003). Building upon trends in the 1870's and 1880's, women were increasingly interested in exercise and sport. By the 1890's, many women's and co-ed colleges had a wide array of athletic activities for women students (Ziegler 2005). The first women's college basketball game occurred in 1892 at Smith College, and the professions of both physical education and medicine promoted and formalized physical activities as part of education for girls (Gray and Petcu 2005). The first college bicycling club for women was established in 1892 at the University of Wisconsin and courses in bicycling were offered at Oberlin College in 1896. Many other colleges developed clubs and programs as well during this period (Gerber, et al. 1974, Ziegler 2005).

It was not simply college women who joined the 1890's 'boom' of bicycling. Middle-class women were the major portion of bicyclists during this decade. Middle-class women not only viewed exercise and physical health an important part of their lives, but as the middle class grew, more women actually had both the time for recreation and the spending money for a bicycle. It became increasingly popular for middle-and upper-class women to cycle for errands, for visiting friends, and for exercise (Woodforde 1971, McCally 2008). While less is known about working-class women, journalists frequently spoke of seeing working women, especially 'shop girls,' riding to work (Woodforde 1971). Cycling historian Glen Norcliffe has documented women who developed new employment opportunities due the mobility of bicycling, such as traveling

seamstresses (Norcliffe 2001). Historians have explored the riding practices of African-American men who dominated the early years of professional cycling and African-American soldiers who pioneered the use of cycling for military purposes (Racer 1988, Schmitzer 1999).

Yet the cycling practices of African-American women during this period are virtually unknown to historians. Scholarly work on nineteenth-century cycling does not include primary documents, including any photos, of women of color. While presumably some middle-class African-American women had the money to purchase a bicycle in the 1890's, there is no research to indicate if cycling shops owned by white men would serve women of color as customers, nor is there information about the existence of shops owned by African-Americans. In documenting how bicycle clubs of the 1890's were segregated by race, ethnicity, immigration status and gender, historians allude to the existence of African-American women's clubs but provide no evidence to support the existence of any actual clubs in the late nineteenth century (Goodman 2010).

The bicycle became a critical aspect of women's social life in many different ways. Women's cycle clubs became popular in response to the continued refusal of men's clubs to grant women's membership and some clubs reluctantly admitted women by the middle of the decade (Norcliffe 2001). Bicycling outings and parties became quite popular with young couples because they could spend time together unsupervised, and women's professional cycling was a popular novelty entertainment by the end of the decade (Gray and Peteu 2005, Mackintosh 2007, Simpson 2007). Women also voiced their passion for cycling as consumers. By the late 1890's, it was common to see women riders in popular periodical advertisements for bicycles, bicycle accessories and even

unrelated products; and women designed, marketed, sold and purchased a large number of products specifically to meet their cycling needs (Garvey 1995; Gray and Peteu 2005). Women also became active building and patenting inventions for improved models and accessories specifically designed for women riders. While only one percent of all patents were made by women throughout the entire nineteenth century, from 1893 to 1903, 62 percent of cycling-specific inventions were patented by women (Gray and Peteu 2005). Women cyclists also became an image in popular culture, with songs, stories and cartoons about women cyclists that took a variety of positions on women riding (Marks 1990).

Despite the popularity of cycling for women, it was often an isolated practice. There were not many ways to share information, riding tips, or strategies to advocate for women's cycling beyond their small social groups, neighborhoods, and riding clubs. Women cyclists in smaller towns or conservative areas often had no access to cycling information or to other women who enjoyed the practice – many learned from men, and then rode alone (“Cycling for Ladies” 1891). Women riders frequently faced tremendous pressure to stop riding, often fueled by discourse from the medical profession; many doctors were supportive of women cycling at first, but then felt by the mid-1800's that women were not moderate or restrained enough in their practice (Vertinsky 1990). Individual doctors commonly discouraged cycling and medical journals routinely published ‘evidence’ of the negative effects of cycling for women (Strange and Brown 2002). This discourse fueled a hostile culture for women cyclists, in which they often experienced street harassment, threats, refusal to be allowed into a store or restaurant if they were seen riding, and in some cities laws prohibited women bicycling altogether

(Smith 1972; Rubinstein 1977). Due to these struggles and women's continued desire to ride, it was evident that women bicyclists needed a way to connect, share information, and advocate as a group.

SECONDARY LITERATURE: THE SUFFRAGE PRESS

The isolation and lack of communication between women riders reflected a larger problem for the feminist movement during the 1890's. Feminist leaders during this period, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Clara Bewick Colby and Carrie Chapman Catt, framed their work as a war of words, texts and ideas – they believed that a well-crafted argument was the most powerful strategy to frame women's subordinate political and legal position as both immoral and impractical, bring more women into the movement and ultimately to organize and engage in action for suffrage and reform issues on a national level (Solomon 1991, Jerry 1991a). Yet, there were few forums for such idea exchanges. One of the major ways ideas were presented was by speeches delivered by feminist leaders, and this approach had a number limitations. Many women did not have the time to attend speeches, especially working women and mothers, and speeches were rarely recorded, thus limiting the impact to those that attended and their ability to remember the ideas to tell others (Solomon 1991). Also, speeches were commonly attended by women already supporting feminist causes along with local feminist leaders in the community where the speeches occurred. Thus it was less likely that women undecided or unknowledgeable about women's rights activism would attend, even though these were the women that speakers were deliberately trying to bring into the movement.

The lack of diverse audiences often limited the experiences represented by feminist arguments to women already dedicated to feminism (often upper class, educated women) – the needs and views of women indirectly or marginally involved in feminism, both by choice and circumstance, were not frequently incorporated into women’s rhetoric for suffrage and reform (Jerry 1991a)

Most feminist leaders of the period similarly believed that mainstream newspapers could not be a major forum for idea exchange for the movement due to repeated denial of access and representation (Jerry 1991b). Anti-feminist opinion pieces, reports, and cartoons were common and influential in shaping public opinion; and papers that were more supportive of feminist causes would often only have a few lines announcing an upcoming speech with no background information about the speaker or feminist ideas in general (Marks 1990; Jerry 1991b). Geography only worsened these problems for women’s rights strategists. State and local-level suffrage groups were generally isolated from each other and national organizations, thus limiting recruitment abilities for women living outside of urban centers (Jerry 1991a). This made coordinating state and national actions, such as referendums that were key to gaining suffrage, particularly challenging because women from different areas of the country did not have easy ways to network, communicate and strategize with each other (Solomon 1991). Overall, these limitations isolated feminist women from each other, thwarting attempts to create a national, unified feminist movement.

In response, organizations for women’s rights began publishing their own newspapers. This first began in the 1840’s. Early papers were of limited audience, length and scope, often focusing their reports on single political issues (Jerry 1991). Women

activists soon began to imagine the impact such papers could have for feminist causes. In the coming decades, organizations increasingly began to publish their own newspapers. This reflected the rapid growth of newspaper reading overall in the late nineteenth century due to a number of social changes, such as increased literacy rates (especially for women) and interest in politics, and technological developments that decreased newspaper prices and postage rates (Jerry 1991). The first suffrage newspaper was the *Lily*, which was founded by Amelia Bloomer in 1849. The *Lily* primarily documented the temperance movement and linked temperance to other issues of women's rights and morals, including suffrage. The *Lily* was known for publishing 'moral literature,' short stories and poems with a political message, as well as articles. Bloomer published the *Lily* until 1856, and set the foundation for future suffrage periodicals (Solomon 1991). The next suffrage newspaper was the *Una*, which was published from 1853 to 1855 by Paulina Kelling Wright Davis, a wealthy young woman and activist. While the *Una* contained both fiction and reports like the *Lily*, the *Una* was the first to have a variety of feminist leaders contributing regular columns, to report on many political issues concerning women (not just suffrage and temperance, with a focus on the needs of working women) and to publish readers' letters and opinion pieces in full (Solomon 1991).

The most widely studied suffrage periodical of the mid nineteenth century is Elizabeth Cady Stanton's and Susan B. Anthony's *The Revolution*, which was published from 1868 to 1870 (Solomon 1991). *The Revolution* was the platform for Stanton and Anthony's multi-issue and radical agenda for the women's rights movement of the period. It was during this period when women's rights reformers and activists split over

the issue of African-American suffrage and the Reconstruction Amendments. Stanton, Anthony and others wanted to wait out suffrage reforms until women were included, maintain a multi-issue platform that did not focus solely on suffrage, and conduct activism (often of more radical tactics) at the national level. Other women activists, notably Lucy Stone and Carrie Chapman Catt, advocated for a political strategy of gradual gains on local and state levels and argued that the support of suffrage reforms for African-American men would serve as a stepping-stone to women's suffrage (Solomon 1991). Internal factions within the Equal Rights Association, the central organization of the woman's rights movement during this period, evolved into separate organizations by 1870 (Masel-Walters 1977). Lucy Stone was a central figure in the conservative-leaning American Woman Suffrage Association, which was founded in response to the more radical National Woman Suffrage Association formed by Stanton and Anthony.

This split in the movement greatly impacted the suffrage press. In 1870, Lucy Stone established the dominant suffrage newspaper of the woman's suffrage movement, *The Woman's Journal*, in direct response to *The Revolution* (Masel-Walters 1977). Stone undoubtedly reached her goal of having this newspaper be the 'organ' of the suffrage movement (Solomon 1991). Published from 1870 to 1890, *The Woman's Journal* was the most long running and profitable suffrage periodical of the nineteenth century. As *The Revolution* struggled and ultimately collapsed due to limited financial backing, Stone ensured *The Woman's Journal* would be "no fly-by-night enterprise, dependent on a financial 'angel,' but a real business conducted in the best Boston tradition of family trusts, annuity systems, trusteeships, and sound funding" (Masel-Walters 1977, 104). Henry Beecher was the paper's largest funder, and Stone sold shares to the leaders of

political and social movements throughout the Northeast (Masel-Walters 1977). Stone claimed that the first issue of *The Woman's Journal* sold 5,000 copies in the first three days of publication (Masel-Walters 1977). While this statistic is difficult to verify, *The Woman's Journal* quickly became the most popular and profitable suffrage paper of the period. *The Woman's Journal* promoted the point of view of the American Woman Suffrage Association quite clearly. The paper was “aimed to resurrect the viability of woman suffrage for a great number of conservative, professional women and men by depicting the cause as a gateway to a host of middle-class reforms” and in the end “corrupt you gradually” with moderate, non-abrasive political strategies and tactics (Huxman 1991, 89, Irwin 1933, 260). As such, concerns of the politically moderate, mid- to upper-class woman were the focus of the paper: suffrage, temperance, property rights, women's access to higher education and the professions, the promotion of women's clubs (Huxman 1991).

Stone was far from alone in her success, as *The Woman's Journal* was one of many suffrage newspapers during this period. The 1880's and 1890's were in fact the peak decades of the suffrage press, with over thirty separate newspapers existing for various years of publication and with a diverse range of readers and article subjects (Jerry 1991). While some were limited to certain geographic regions, the many of the most popular papers had subscribers throughout the country (Huxman 1991). It is difficult to know the race of the subscribers, readers and writers of the suffrage press outside of the well-known activists of the period. Race is not addressed in the scholarly work about the periodicals. The race of writers is not clear when reading the articles themselves because many articles were attributed to initials or published anonymously, leaving historians

unable to learn demographic data about many of the writers. The racism, classism and xenophobia of many suffrage leaders during this period, including their Social Darwinist and imperialist ideology, has been well-documented by feminist historians (Newman 1999, Athey 2000). Due to the race politics of the women's rights movement during the 1890's, along with the upper-class status of suffrage press editors, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of contributors and readers of suffrage newspapers were white. Yet editors and reporters encouraged readers to share back issues with others and purchase subscriptions for women's clubs and organizations. Thus the potential exists to some extent for middle-class African-American women in reform and activist social circles to have read these newspapers. No suffrage newspapers during this period were free and many required a subscription (Vanderford 1991). Women who could not afford to buy the newspapers or did not have access to donated or shared issues were largely unable to engage in the suffrage press as a reader or contributor. Suffrage newspapers were entirely in English, which also excluded non-English speakers, especially immigrant women, from participation as well.

In 1883, Clara Bewick Colby was selected by fellow members of the Nebraska Woman Suffrage Association to create and edit a newspaper for their organization. Although the organization soon backed out because they were unable to secure funds, Colby decided to edit and publish *The Woman's Tribune* on her own (Jerry 1991). Colby wanted the newspaper to educate readers on all aspects of women's rights advocacy and reform and promote empowering images of women similar to that of other suffrage newspapers. But, she also paid particular attention to the unique issues of women in the

Midwest and frontier regions of the country and highlighted the activism of women's organizations beyond those in the Northeast (Jerry 1991).

Unlike Lucy Stone, Colby never aligned herself with any national-level suffrage organization. Due to this, *The Woman's Tribune* did not espouse a specific organization's rhetoric and policy platforms, but rather served to document the suffrage movement as a whole (Jerry 1991). This neutrality made Colby "caught in the middle: her newspaper attempted to speak to two audiences -- the activists within the movement as well as the potential suffragist converts among the women on the plains" during a period when "the suffrage movement was characterized by opposing, often vitriolic, factions" (Lomicky 2002, 102). Colby in fact republished articles from both *The Revolution* and *The Woman's Journal*, without showing a preference for either newspaper. Although Colby never held any leadership roles in national women's rights organizations, she was quite influential as a newspaper editor. She helped not only reunite factions of the movement, but presented the image of the national woman's movement as unified, organized and successful, making suffrage activism attractive and interesting to undecided women despite ongoing internal conflicts (Jerry 1991).

Building upon the success of *The Woman's Journal*, in 1883 Alice Stone Blackwell, with her mother Lucy Stone, established *The Woman's Column*. *The Woman's Column* was a supplement to *The Woman's Journal* and was in publication until 1904. It started as mailer and evolved into a four-page weekly newspaper with short articles, excerpts and editorials (Vanderford 1991). Because the paper was limited to four pages, *The Woman's Column* was much cheaper to print than most suffrage papers during this period. As such, it was the most affordable suffrage newspaper for customers (it cost

twenty-five to fifty cents when other suffrage papers cost up to three dollars) and was the most widely circulated (Vanderford 1991). When the American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Woman Suffrage Association united in 1890, Susan B. Anthony became an editor of *The Women's Column* as well. While *The Woman's Column* reflected the AWSA belief "that society can be improved substantially without violating traditional values or destroying established institutions" editors generally published a point of view that was more liberal than *The Woman's Journal* but less radical than *The Revolution* (Vanderford 1991, 130). But like *The Revolution*, *The Column* focused on political solutions, talking points and responses to anti-suffrage arguments that required direct confrontation with opposition groups instead of slow gains made by less confrontational methods. Yet unlike *The Revolution*, contributors to *The Woman's Column* aimed to expand women's opportunities in social and political institutions without causing significant changes to the institutions themselves (Vanderford 1991).

The suffrage press was not limited to American reformers; a number of pro-suffrage women's newspapers were published in Britain as well. British activist and reformer Florence Fenwick Miller, who had a successful journalism career that spanned forty years, was editor of *The Woman's Herald* and *The Woman's Signal*. In 1895, Miller took over a woman's newspaper that had been originally founded in 1875 as *The Woman's Gazette* and had been *The Woman's Penny Paper* since 1888 (Levine 1990). Miller reformatted this periodical into *The Woman's Herald*, which served primarily as a temperance newspaper. *The Woman's Herald* was in print for only eighteen months largely due limited readership (Levine 1990).

In 1895, Miller restructured the paper with a new name, *The Woman's Signal*, as well as a new focus. *The Woman's Signal* was not limited to temperance like the failed *Herald*, nor suffrage, like many other British newspapers of the time (i.e. *Woman's Suffrage Review*, *Englishwoman's Review*) (Van Arsel 1982). Instead, Miller "saw in *the Signal* an opportunity to organize the forces for the vote, and to educate British women on the issues of education, employment, legal rights, and the need for consistent and concentrated action to obtain these goals," thus creating a multi-issue "guidebook" for the mid- to upper-class modern woman (Van Arsel 1982, 110, 108). Lucy Stone, who was listed as an editor until 1897 disagreed with Miller about the coverage of temperance in *The Woman's Signal*. Stone wanted temperance and suffrage to be framed as joint issues and covered together, while Miller viewed them covered as separate issues and aimed for *The Signal* to report on all issues of importance to women, not simply temperance and suffrage. Due to ongoing financial problems (due in part to her conflicts with Stone), in 1899 Miller was forced to chose between turning the paper into a mainstream domestic magazine or ending publication altogether. Miller chose to end publication of *The Woman's Signal* to stay true to her political purposes for the paper (Van Arsel 1982).

During this period, suffrage newspapers were considered one of the most important strategies for women's reform and political rights activism (Solomon 1991). This is because the papers greatly eliminated many of the limitations of the early movement – they provided a national forum for idea exchange; they were an affordable, accessible way to expose women unfamiliar with women's rights and reform to their ideas; and, unlike in mainstream newspapers, the content was completely under their control, so they could provide only the most positive, useful arguments for their cause

(Solomon 1991). Given that the 1890's is often conceptualized as the 'doldrums' decade due to the lack of major legislative successes, the suffrage press was vital in "sustain[ing] hopes in a period with little progress. Suffrage journals provided ways to keep members informed, to offer them arguments to use in their own work, and to reinforce their sense of purpose and progress... The very publication of such works gave the movement an image of importance and endurance, which was vital to sustaining a long public campaign" (Solomon 1991, 15).

The suffrage press did not influence the fight for suffrage alone, but in fact was a forum for a multitude of issues facing women during the 1890's. Readers and writers of the suffrage press discussed all aspects of their lives frequently and framed it in political terms. This included personal or leisure activities, many of which were seen as feminist projects of the progressive woman, a perspective unique in media to the suffrage press. A major avenue for such discussion was cycling. As shown through reporting on issues pertaining to women cyclists, letters to the editor and testimonial articles, the suffrage press provided a particularly powerful forum for women, as cyclists, to engage in late first wave feminism.

“FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHER LEARNERS”:

ADVICE FOR WOMEN CYCLISTS

Throughout the nineteenth century, geographic isolation was a significant barrier for women reformers and activists. Women in rural areas often had few ways to become involved in political activities, stay informed on women’s rights issues and benefit from the social support of likeminded women. Women living in towns or cities typically gained most of their knowledge of the movement from local groups and within their own community-based social circles. One of the central purposes of the suffrage press was to create a network of information exchange and dialogue in which women throughout the country could engage (Solomon 1991).

A key example of the suffrage press functioning in this way is the wealth of cycling information and advice that was published. In the 1890’s, especially in early years of the decade, most women were taught to cycle by male relatives (Harrison 1898, “Cycling for Ladies” 1891, Aronson 1952). Few resources existed to educate women cyclists on the basic and fine points of riding, especially to those in rural areas without cycling clubs to join or bicycle shops to visit regularly. For example, in Carrie Harrison’s 1898 article describing her cycling experiences, she states that when she first became interested in cycling, she had great difficulty finding any information to guide her in

purchasing a ladies model and learning basic skills. Harrison describes how she asked her friends “to recommend some treatise, handbook or guidebook on wheels and wheeling. No one had heard of any, [and] did not believe there was one” (Harrison 1898, 80). If Harrison’s experience is common, one can imagine that the information available in the suffrage press was quite valuable for readers involved or interested in cycling.

Editors of suffrage newspapers published reports and letters to the editor in which women authors gave a variety of information on cycling specifically for women. This information and advice was frequently based on the authors’ personal experiences as cyclists, as women who were passionate about cycling and wanted to share their personal experiences were typically the authors of the articles. The central purpose of the articles was to encourage more women to start cycling and improve the skills of women readers who were already active cyclists. Contributors to the suffrage press saw this choice not only from the perspective of a consumer, but also through the lens of political action. Becoming a cyclist was viewed as an important decision that would impact women’s abilities to engage in many aspects of activism and reform work. As will be described, this included efforts to inspire empowering forms of dress, travel independently and challenge medical authority. Throughout their articles, suffrage press authors acknowledged the importance of cycling, and especially encouraging women to start cycling, as more than simply engaging in middle-class consumerism. They believed women’s cycling had a unique potential to improve the quality of readers’ individual lives as well as challenge and reimagine women’s roles in the public sphere. Suffrage press editors frequently published articles that served as guidebooks for women new to activism and reform, such as how to lobby for a referendum or organize a local suffrage

organization (Masel-Walters 1977). Publications on cycling provide a similar type of guidebook for women to begin and improve their cycling practice, because cycling was also seen as an important aspect of overall efforts to engage in women's rights activism. Annie Holdsworth, for example, summarized her philosophy about cycling journalism in an interview with Frances Willard: "[a]fter many trials the rider learned the secret of managing her iron horse; and gives her experience for the benefit of other learners" (Holdsworth 1895, 345). Holdsworth was one of many women's rights activists in the 1890's who chose to dispense her knowledge about cycling to a distinctly politicized group of women readers via the suffrage press.

Much of the advice published in the suffrage press was directed towards women new to cycling. This is understandable given that in the 1890's thousands of women throughout the country began cycling, without any previous experience on tricycles, due to the safety and affordability of the women's safety models (Smith 1972). One area of advice, of critical importance to the new cyclist and common among articles in the suffrage press, was how to choose a bicycle model to purchase. One of the major ways readers communicated with each other was through letters to the editor, in which a letter requesting more information or posing a question would be published and readers' responses would then be published in subsequent issues of the paper. One example is a letter to the editor written by Edith Ward in an 1892 issue of *The Woman's Herald*, which was written in response to another letter writer who "appeals for information on the subject of cycling" (Ward 1892, 10). Ward describes herself as "a cyclist of ten year's standing" who believes that women "proposing to take up one of the finest and most beneficial forms of exercise" need the "advantage of someone else's experience" to start

their cycling practice correctly (Ward 1892, 10). In her letter, Ward provides essential tips for new cyclists that many readers perhaps would have not known otherwise. She states that the choice of one's first bicycle is incredibly important because "a bad selection may result in disgust with the whole business" (Ward 1892, 10). Ward does not propose a specific model, but provides information women should use in deciding for themselves. She states that women should review bicycle catalogues and learn the "'points' of various makes... and note the advantages claimed for each type of machine" (Ward 1892, 10). Ward also identifies common misconceptions of ladies models: "extreme lightness is not always synonymous with durability and safety, nor low price with cheapness" (Ward 1892, 10). Ward states riders must be aware of their own "weight, age and muscular power" as well as the road conditions of their area (Ward 1892, 10). She also recognizes that not all women can afford new models, and believes a slightly used model "is often the best to buy" as long as it is "unstrained in essential parts" and the prospective buyer examines it thoroughly (Ward 1892, 10).

In the following issue of *The Woman's Herald*, another letter was published adding more advice to Ward's list. Author Carrie Ferris identifies herself as a reliable source of cycling information because "I am not only a bicyclist myself, but possess a brother who has had considerable experience of actual cycle building" (Ferris 1893, 10). Unlike Ward, Ferris recommends two specific models for women's first bicycle, the Starley Brothers' Ladies Psycho (the first mass produced women's safety) and the New Howe Safety by the New Howe Machine Company. While Ferris acknowledges "other firms make good machines, but these are the pick of ladies' machines, and can be relied on to give entire satisfaction" (Ferris 1893, 10). Weight is also a key concern for Ferris,

who advises that a safety model with all the necessary accessories, “break, mud-guards, and dress-guards, should be from 35 to 40 lbs in weight, and should not exceed 42 lbs” (Ferris 1893, 10). She also states that riders should purchase models with breaks even though “skilled riders use them rarely” (Ferris 1893, 10). Ferris goes on to list her preferred make and models of pneumatic tires, gears and cranks. One can imagine such detailed information specifically about women’s models would have been incredibly helpful to a reader new to cycling with no other women cyclists or supportive male cyclists to share such information.

Weight of the bicycle was one of the most important model features to an anonymous *Woman’s Signal* reporter as well. In a 1898 article titled “Hints on Cycling,” the author tells women leaders “[r]ide a light machine when you can get it” (“Hints on Cycling” 1898, 124). She also challenges double standards involving models made for women versus those for men: “[t]here is no reason why manufacturers should condemn a woman to ride a bicycle several pounds heavier than the one they give her physically stronger brother” (“Hints on Cycling” 1898, 124). This is a very accurate assessment, as most women’s models in the 1880’s and 1890’s were significantly heavier than models designed for men (Smith 1972).

Carrie Harrison uses a section of her article in *The Women’s Tribune* to provide purchasing advice for new cyclists as well. Harrison states that her bicycle is a Columbia, and describes in detail the criteria she used to decide her make and model. Perhaps written to make the purchase of a bicycle more understandable and approachable to readers, Harrison advises readers that in purchasing a bicycle one should use the same criteria as purchasing a horse. The bicycle should have a “well-tested pedigree, a high

grade record for strength under heavy strain, speed, endurance, and beauty” (Harrison 1898, 80). Unlike Edith Ward, Carrie Harrison does not recommend buying a used model, but for more sentimental than practical reasons: “if one is to love a wheel, then it must be one’s very own from the beginning” (Harrison 1898, 80). Harrison also educates readers on the difference between models with and without chains, and lets readers know that her Columbia is chainless. Her article also describes her visit to the Columbia factory in Washington, DC. She reports information she learned from this visit regarding rims, ball bearings, cogs, wheels and other parts and mechanics of the bicycle (Harrison 1898).

The transition from tricycle to bicycle was also an area of interest to reporters and letter writers in the suffrage press. In the first years of the safety, women riders had the option to buy either a tricycle or a bicycle before the tricycle eventually died out by the end of the century (Ritchie 1975). A number of articles advise women new to cycling which type of cycle they should buy. Paralleling the purchasing trend throughout the country, the majority of authors greatly favored the two-wheeled, safety bicycle models over the older tricycles. In her letter to the editor, Edyth Johnson stated that “[t]en years ago I rode a tricycle, but found that unless by a good maker the machine was apt to be heavy, and so two years ago I invested in a lady’s bicycle... which has given me some of the most enjoyable hours of my life” (Johnson 1893, 7).

Carrie Ferris acknowledged the benefits of the tricycle, mostly that “the machine will stand alone without any trouble” (a rider did not have to learn how to ride while balancing) and that “luggage can be more conveniently carried” (Ferris 1893, 10). Yet, she overwhelmingly believes that women are better off buying a bicycle, not a tricycle. Ferris sites a number of arguments for the safety model, including that it is cheaper,

lighter, “falls from a tricycle are more likely to be serious” and the bicycle is a “much easier machine to drive against the wind” compared to the tricycle (Ferris 1893, 10). Ferris ultimately ends this debate by leaving it up to each woman to decide for themselves, but using her own experiences, concludes by telling readers that she “never knew a girl who once acquired the art of bicycling, to return to the three-wheeler” (Ferris 1893, 10).

In a 1893 report in *The Woman's Herald*, the anonymous author also acknowledges that the significance of the tricycle versus bicycle debate: “[f]or the woman, young or old, who has never ridden, the first important question is whether to ride a bicycle or tricycle” (“Cycling for Women” 1893, 134). This author discusses the benefits of the tricycle quite similar to Carrie Ferris: the option of cycling with luggage and ease of mounting and dismounting compared to the safety models. While the author also states that this decision is a “matter of personal prejudice” and is up to each woman, she makes readers aware that “I myself greatly prefer the two-wheeled machine” (“Cycling for Women” 1893, 134). Florence Fenwick Miller, editor of *The Woman's Signal*, wrote a 1898 article titled “Cycling and Good Spirits.” This article is rare in that the author still promotes the tricycle, but only for middle age women. Miller argues that the technology of the tricycle has greatly improved: “[t]ime was when the three-wheeled machine was heavy and cumbersome... [and] the total weight was far in excess of the bicycle. All this is now amended” (Miller 1898, 459). Miller describes her positive experiences riding the Model K tricycle by Beaston Cycle Company, which includes new features such as pneumatic tires and improved steering without weighing more than forty pounds. Recognizing that “[t]here are many forms of exercise open to the young and slim

that are not available to the matronly and ‘settled’” Fenwick encourages older women, whose needs were often not included in promotion of safeties, to rethink their own limitations and become involved in cycling as well (“Cycling for Women” 1893, 134).

Along with advice for purchasing a bicycle, articles provide a wealth of information for cyclists to develop their riding skills. This advice is aimed specifically at women cyclists, acknowledging their unique needs (due to differences in ladies models, clothing, etc.). Much of this advice is for women new to cycling. A common riding tip involved speed – authors prized moderation over speed. (Notions of speed, including exact speeds that were too fast for women, were quite subjective). Authors generally believed that limiting speeding would decrease likelihood of injury and prevent new cyclists from feeling overwhelmed. They also advised moderation in speed of cycling to maintain respectability while riding, as speeding was not only viewed as dangerous but as undignified for white, middle class women (racing was associated with unruly men, often of working class backgrounds) (Simpson 2001). Along with limiting speed, authors advised new cyclists to begin with rides of minimal length and build from there.

In Annie Holdsworth’s 1895 interview of Frances Willard, Willard advised new riders to “‘fly high’ when once you have mastered it” (Holdsworth 1895, 345). In Edith Ward’s letter of advice, she recommends new cyclists show restraint in both speed and distance when starting out: “Never try too much at first. Begin by easy rides – a mile or two -- and lengthen them gradually... More women have been prohibited from cycling owing to having started too far and fast at first than from any other reason” (Ward 1892, 10). Dr. W.D. Hamaker, a male doctor trained at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote an 1895 article in *The Woman’s Journal* in which he listed similar tips for women cyclists

(Yoset n.d., Hamaker 1895). Most of these tips were limitations new riders should set when starting to cycle. He stated that women cyclists should never “ride long enough to become exhausted,” “engage in fast racing or riding,” “climb hills” or “ride longer than twenty or thirty minutes without getting off and resting for a short time” (Hamaker 1895, 271).

Authors provide advice on set-up and maintenance skills as well. In “Hints on Cycling,” the author makes specific recommendations to ensure women’s bicycles are properly fitted. She describes that in the “proper position” a rider should be able to “set up easily with the arms not quite at full stretch” and “put the foot under the pedal when the knee is straight” (“Hints on Cycling” 1898, 124). The author then make readers aware that “[t]he greatest pains should be taken to get the saddle and handles into the right position” and she gives inch by inch recommendations for saddle and handlebar height (“Hints on Cycling” 1898, 124). The author states that it is necessary for women “to learn something about the points of your machine” and riders should “[l]earn to repair a puncture before you go on long rides” (“Hints on Cycling” 1898, 124). The author also advises women on how to clean bicycles and tricycles. She states that riders must insure no rust gets on their machine, and this can be done not by washing it but ensuring it is “well brushed when dry, and rubbed with a paraffin cloth.” Identifying her upper class status, the author adds, “I never find servants clean them satisfactorily, so I generally have to fall back on my own services, and really the exercise does one good” (“Hints on Cycling” 1898, 404). The author fails to consider where her servants would learn proper cleaning techniques for bicycles and tricycles.

Articles in suffrage press newspapers also published advice on riding skills. During the 1890's, it was common for bicycle shops to give free or reduced cost riding lessons to customers (Smith 1972). In Edith Ward's letter, she advises women interested in both tricycling and bicycling on the option of taking riding lessons. She states that lessons are less useful for tricycle riding because few male instructors have any experience riding tricycles. She predicts even though the instructors are often "expert bicyclists," the reader's lesson will consist of watching them "make most awkward attempts at riding a tricycle" and ultimately be of little use (Ward 1892, 10). Ward does believe that bicyclists are more likely to benefit from lessons and advises women to seek out the "wife or daughters" of bicycle shop owners "who instruct lady customers" (Ward 1892, 10). Both Dr. Hamaker and Dr. Benjamin Ward advised women cyclists to avoid 'bicycle slouch' by making sure they "sit perfectly upright" on an "easy-riding wheel" ("Editorial Notes" 1893; Hamaker 1895, 271). An article in *The Woman's Signal* also recommends "[b]ack-peddalling should be practiced early" to ensure safe braking (many women's safety models had brakes on the pedals instead of the handlebars) ("Hints on Cycling" 1898, 124). Florence Fenwick Miller also advises new riders to practice on a "level road, as free from traffic as possible" (Miller 1898, 459).

One of the main concerns of women cyclists was having some sort of accident, including falling off their bicycle. This was not an unreasonable concern, as many of the first women to cycle who were limited to tricycles often experienced falls due to muddy roads, the heavy weight of their machine, and long dresses becoming lodged in the wheels (Smith 1972). In her visit to a bicycle shop, a woman unknown to Harrison warned her "[n]o bucking pony or mettled [sic] sorrel ever played you the tricks that a

bicycle can” (Harrison 1898, 80). In the 1880’s and 1890’s, women cyclists also faced the stereotype that they were simply less capable of cycling than men. In popular periodicals, especially in the 1880’s and early 1890’s, women cyclists were construed as unable to ride properly or control their machine and were often blamed for holding men back in the few co-ed group rides in which they were invited (Griffin 2006, Smith 1972). The double standards women cyclists faced, such as having to ride models much heavier than men’s while wearing incredibly restricting, heavy and loose clothing, as well as social pressures to limit their athleticism, were rarely considered in cartoons and articles that ridiculed them.

In the suffrage press, women cyclists responded to the issue of falling and the perception of women’s higher likelihood to experience accidents while riding in a number of ways. Authors challenged stereotypes of women riders and argued that their falls were due to the double standards placed on women cyclists and not women’s inherent inability to ride. Some authors also documented their personal experiences of falls, which would provide tips for cyclists and destigmatize falls when they did occur; authors framed them as a normal part of women’s cycling that was not worth dwelling on. In one woman’s anonymous narrative of learning to ride a tricycle and then a safety, she describes that her first attempt on a tricycle resulted in “myself in the ditch, with the tricycle on top of me and a nice bed of needles underneath” (“Cycling for Ladies” 1891, 404). After this first ride, she reports that her accidents and falls were “few, far between, and unimportant” with the most significant fall the result of her dress caught in the chain (“Cycling for Ladies” 1891, 404). Upon giving up her tricycle and transitioning to bicycle riding, the author “only had about three spills: once when I was learning, again on

the greasy streets near town... [and] the last time was over a little stone on an incline which threw me off my balance” (“Cycling for Ladies” 1891, 404). The author reassures readers that the last accident “was the worst spill of all” but she “only slightly grazed my knee” (“Cycling for Ladies” 1891, 404). In this article, the author frames her accidents as rare and resulting from problems that would impede any cyclist, as learning how to ride and poor road conditions are experiences shared by all cyclists regardless of gender.

Authors that did not describe their personal experiences with accidents often provided readers with words of support and encouragement. In Annie Holdsworth’s interview of Frances Willard, published in part to promote Willard’s new cycling book *A Wheel within a Wheel*, the issue of falling is addressed. Willard tells Holdsworth that upon writing about her experiences as a cyclist, “I finally concluded that all failure was from a wobbling will rather than a wobbling wheel” (Holdsworth 1895, 345). Willard advises women cyclists that one’s mental state is far more important than perfecting riding skills or bicycle maintenance, because from her experience, “[w]hen the wheel of the mind went well, then the rubber wheel hummed merrily” (Holdsworth 1895, 345).

In an anonymous report from *The Woman’s Herald*, the author reassures new cyclists that the struggles of starting the practice, including possible falls, will translate into improved physical health: “You began by getting very hot and uncomfortable... [but] in a few weeks time you find your things have become very loose, or rather you yourself have become very much thinner” (“Cycling for Ladies” 1891, 404). She also highlights the changes in confidence that will also occur after a few weeks practice. She predicts new cyclists will find “your spirits uncontrollable, and you will say to yourself, ‘I never could have believed cycling would have brought such a change in the better for

me. Why did I never think of trying it before? I must recommend it to all my friends” (“Cycling for Ladies” 1891, 404).

Ultimately, the suffrage press was an important forum for reform-minded women who were cyclists of all levels of experience. While women cyclists had limited resources and texts to learn and improve their riding, suffrage newspapers provided detailed advice and tips written by women cyclists for the specific benefit of their peers. Cyclists used their own personal experiences to create a women-centered body of knowledge on purchasing a bicycle, riding skills and responding to accidents. One of the central goals of suffrage press editors was to document all aspect of women’s rights activism on local, state and national levels; advice covered in women’s magazines aimed at the nonpolitical housewife (running a household, relationship and parenting advice, etc.) was not considered worthy of publication in suffrage papers (Solomon 1991). In publishing a wealth of practical riding advice to readers, editors clearly viewed women’s cycling as not simply depoliticalized recreation, but an important aspect of a multi-issue platform for women’s rights.

“THE DELICIOUS FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT”:

WOMEN CYCLISTS AND DRESS REFORM

By the 1890's, the debate over whether or not women should cycle had virtually ended; few voices remained which aimed to stop women from cycling all together. Yet, the subject of women and cycling reminded a highly discussed topic in many types of periodicals. The 'wheelwoman' became an image of scorn or praise depending on one's politics and gender ideology (Marks 1990). In the 1890's, this debate of women and cycling became a key aspect of a multifaceted discourse that aimed to reestablish the boundaries of socially sanctioned gender practices, boundaries that had recently been destabilized due to a variety of social changes. The most contested and commonly discussed issue of women and cycling during this period was not how the wheelwoman should ride or where she should go, but in fact what she should wear while riding (Ritchie 1975).

The role of cycling in women's dress reform was a popular topic among both male and female cyclists and in popular discourse overall. During the 1890's, the woman cyclist became synonymous with the 'New Woman,' the modern, emancipated woman who was financially independent, free thinking and no longer limited to home and other confines of Victorian womanhood (Marks 1990). The New Woman's new gender

performance and ideology was visibly marked by her choices in clothing, which prioritized function over fashion and typically included a shortened skirt (sometimes with bifurcated pants), simpler patterns, a less restricting corset and less material overall for freer movement (Fischer 2001). In popular culture of the 1890's, the dress of women cyclists became directly associated with overall dress reform and cultural changes during the end of the Victorian era.

Yet, dress reform did not begin with the 1890's 'bicycle boom,' but in fact had been a reform issue throughout the later half the of the nineteenth century. Dress reform, as a social issue tied to women's rights, emerged in the 1850's. In 1851, temperance activist Elizabeth Smith Miller introduced Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Amelia Jenkins Bloomer, two well-known women's rights activists, to 'Turkish trousers.' Said to be modeled off of Middle Eastern clothing, the Turkish trousers were a combination of baggy pants worn under a skirt that was longer than the knee but above the ankle (Fischer 2001). Bloomer took to Turkish trousers instantly and wrote many articles promoting the outfit, which she referred to as 'freedom dress,' to readers of her temperance and suffrage paper, the *Lily* (Fischer 2001). Bloomer's articles gave her notoriety in the popular press and Turkish trousers soon were known as simply 'bloomers.' In the 1850's and early 1860's, bloomers were an accepted form of dress only in very limited circles, such as radical reformers, frontierswomen, artist communities and specific groups of religious separatists (Fischer 2001).

In the popular press, bloomers and other dress reform ideas were ridiculed and viewed as a threat to the boundaries between men and women, which in social Darwinist Victorian gender ideology were viewed as natural and necessary for optimal evolution of

the species (Marks 1990). In an 1854 letter to Susan B. Anthony, an early wearer of the bloomer outfit, Elizabeth Cady Stanton advised her friend to return to traditional dress because “[t]he cup of ridicule is greater than you can bear” (Stanton as quoted in Riegel 1963, 394). Bloomer herself gave up her ‘freedom dress’ as well, urged by fellow activists that such negative attention would stall larger reform efforts, especially temperance and suffrage (Sims 1991). The National Dress Reform Association, in which Bloomer held a leadership position, similarly disbanded in 1865 (Fischer 2001).

While dress reform was not a central organizing issue for feminists from the late 1860’s to the 1880’s, certain individuals and groups continued to challenge women’s traditional dress. Dr. Mary Walker, a head surgeon during the Civil War, wore a Union army uniform that included pants and a short skirt. Religious communities, such as the Oneida Community, also promoted dress reform among women (Fischer 2001). As women’s athletic programs grew in colleges, uniforms were developed for student athletes (Hargreaves 1994). In the 1880’s, a few tricyclists questioned traditional dress. One designer even developed a dress specifically for tricycling, but it never became popular nor was it seriously considered as an alternative to traditional dress of the period (Sims 1991).

Throughout the mid- to late- nineteenth century, women who did wear bifurcated dress in public were severely harassed and socially ostracized, and in some regions, were violating sex-specific dress laws (Sims 1991, Smith 1972). It was also common for women cycling in bifurcated dress to be arrested under disorderly conduct laws as well (Smith 1972). Local police often shut down bicycle-themed social functions, especially co-ed dances, if women wore cycling outfits that included pants at the event. In a classic

historical work on American cycling, author Robert A. Smith treats harassment of women cyclists during this period in a disempowering, almost jovial way:

In Missouri a young bicyclist, dressed in the height of fashion, mounted her machine and rode off to visit her grandparents, who responded sharply to the immorality of the bloomer ensemble. According the papers, the young lady was greeted with no kiss of kinship, but her grandparents tore off her bloomers, put her in a dress, smashed her bicycle, and then sent her home. They knew how to handle wantons in Missouri! (Smith 1972, 102)

His sarcasm minimizes what must have been for this Missouri woman an incredibly frustrating and saddening experience; the loss of her bicycle and outfit along with the violent and shame-based reaction of her family members could affect any cyclist, both male and female, in many negative ways. Smith's approach also illustrates the need for a feminist analysis on this issue. Harassment of women cyclists should not be viewed as a harmless act of the period but the use of power to limit women's engagement in a practice that was meaningful to them.

It was not until the invention of the women's safety model and the resulting 'boom' in women cyclists that dress reform became a mainstream political issue that seriously changed women's clothing. While women had been involved in cycling since the earliest years of the practice, it was in the 1890's that women began bicycling by the thousands and women also began more frequently cycling in public (Marks 1990). For women cyclists in the 1890's, especially for those in the middle and upper classes, their ability to start cycling meant challenging Victorian gender practices in very noticeable ways. It had not been many years ago, in the lifetime of most adult women that venturing out on one's own in the city, especially without a male chaperon, could mean one's respectably plummeted to that of a sex worker (Clement 2006). Cyclists' involvement not only in vigorous exercise, but exercise that occurred in the public sphere, was an affront

to long held beliefs about women's health. Women were not only considered naturally weak and unfit for exercise, but it was a widely held belief that many forms of exercise could cause sexual dysfunction and impact women's reproductive abilities (Vertinsky 1990).

Women cyclists of the 1890's faced a daunting task. Wanting to enjoy cycling without compromising social status or acceptance (as well as curb the ongoing problem of street harassment), women had to find ways to transform women's cycling from a rarity or a spectacle into a socially sanctioned practice of the middle class. The Victorian public was simply unsure what to make of the woman cyclist. In her excellent study of late nineteenth century cycling, historian Clare Simpson states that the woman cyclist "presented to onlookers a most ambiguous message, neither falling neatly into the 'respectable' nor 'disrespectable' classification of female so conveniently dichotomized by nineteenth century social commentators" (Simpson 2001, 57). As such, the woman cyclist in the early 1890's was poised to create a new message about gender and cycling.

Central to this message was respectability. Overall women cyclists, especially those involved in suffrage, temperance and other middle-class reform movements, did not purposefully focus their cycling advocacy and practice to challenge conventions of Victorian respectability. Instead, they constructed a specific gender performance as a cyclist to fit into those conventions. While this performance had individual variations for each woman, all of these performances used feminine respectability and "impeccable personal conduct" as the boundaries of acceptable cycling behavior (Sims 1991, 129). Cycling practices that involved a gender performance too closely associated with masculinity were viewed as 'unsexing' women (such as 'scorching,' a term originally

associated with male Ordinary riders, who would purposely ride fast regardless of surroundings or possible injuries). Blurring the lines between men and women was considered a detriment to the reform ideals of the time, central to which was the gender ideology that women were naturally different than men and were uniquely positioned, by their moral, feminine nature, to improve society as a whole (Simpson 2001).

This process of creating a new way to be read and conceptualized in the public sphere can best be understood as the creation of the “inconspicuous [female] cyclist” (Hargreaves 1994, 95). First, women had to fit their cycling practice into preexisting constructions of femininity. This affected all aspects of their cycling practices, such as how fast they rode (steady but not ‘scorching’), posture (always upright, not bent over in a racing posture) and the models they purchased (always a women’s model with feminine accessories). Secondly, when aspects of their cycling could simply not fit into these confines or when public onlookers refused to treat their cycling as respectable, women had to continue to perform respectability in other ways even if they were involved in an activity deemed unrespectable in that specific social moment. A common example was a dignified response to street harassment, in which women would ignore, not confront, their harasser but still continue to cycle (Simpson 2001).

A central way women cyclists were able to perform within the confines of Victorian respectability, and thus blend into the activity of the public streets, was through their clothing choices. Upon the invention of the women’s safety bicycle, thousands of women throughout the country were both drawn to cycling but also had virtually no existing conceptualization of what to wear. Naturally, this was a major obstacle women wishing to bicycle were forced to address. Most middle class women who began

bicycling in the 1890's had never tricycled due to the high cost, so they had no experiences to inspire ideas for riding outfits. Wealthy women who did tricycle in the 1880's repeatedly stated that it was not their riding skills, but their clothing that was the major cause of cycling accidents. Their long dresses would often get caught in the wheels or breaks, causing frequent falls and collisions (Smith 1972). Many women tricyclists transitioned to the bicycle in the 1890's, but did so without a set type of riding costume. Women involved in other sports, such those organized in colleges, participated in these activities away from the public eye, making those clothing options unfit for bicycling on the city streets (Hargreaves 1994). As such, women who began cycling in the early 1890's were left to create riding clothing largely from scratch.

Women cyclists took this up this task with great seriousness and passion. Women began to design and create their own outfits, share these ideas with friends and weigh the pros and cons of various options (Somers 1967). Some women patented and sold their specific dress designs to cycle shops, and by the middle of the decade, sewing patterns for a variety of cycling outfits were common in women's magazines (Gray and Peteu 2005). While women designed and wore a wide variety of cycling costumes during the 1890's, clothing options were chosen with the specific purpose of gaining respectability for the woman cyclist to assist her in becoming inconspicuous in the city streets. It is important to acknowledge that while the discourse of respectability and cycling did provide distinct markers of acceptable and unacceptable clothing, women were far from unified on the subject. Women cyclists had not only a wide array of opinions on the most suitable cycling outfit, but also disagreed on the precise definition of respectability itself: both dress reform and respectability were not singular visions held by women cyclists but

a spectrum of loosely connected, individual performances. Women cyclists, both in person and in print, argued that their specific mode of dress best addressed the needs of the woman cyclist while adhering to their individual definition of feminine respectability (which they would also promote).

In the 1890's there were some women cyclists who reclaimed the long forgotten and quite radical Turkish trouser, bloomer and other forms of bifurcated dress (Fischer 2001). Yet, due to the project of gaining respectability as well as the diversity of women's ideas, what occurred was not an unequivocal acceptance of the radical dress reform but a "flood of more moderate suggestions" (Riegel 1963, 398). Women designed, made and wore a variety of cycling costumes that were purposely meant to be "perhaps unconventional but not deliberately meant to offend" (Sims 1991, 129). This included short skirts of various lengths (typically no shorter than one foot above the ground); shorter shoes instead of high boots; flexible, less restricting corsets (including options not made of whalebone); less fabric overall (typically weighed in pounds, women cyclists would advocate for the total dress weight to be under a specific poundage); elastic inlets to keep the dress from catching in the wheel; use of a belt for accessories; and for more radical women, some sort of knickerbockers or divided skirt underneath a shortened dress (Hargreaves 1994, Riegel 1963, Fischer 2001). A minority of women did propose and in fact wore cycling costumes with only a bifurcated skirt and no dress covering it. Those women typically did not garner the support of average women cyclists nor men overall and were most likely to face street harassment and discrimination (Simpson 2001, Marks 1990).

Under the guise of respectability, most women cyclists did not advocate for the most radical dress reforms (typically referred to as 'rational dress'). Yet it would be incorrect to assume that women who wore moderate riding outfits made no lasting impact on dress reform. Women cyclists "significantly challenged and rewrote the social conventions governing middle-class feminine propriety" by refusing to accept conventional attitudes that middle class women could not bicycle in public because there was no way to maintain their respectability and social status (Simpson 2001, 57). Women instead created new, gender-specific ways to engage in the public practice of cycling. This specifically occurred via the creation of cycling costumes, as traditional Victorian garb simply did not allow a woman enough freedom of movement to cycle. Changes that may seem insignificant to the contemporary reader, such as a skirt that provided a public view of a woman's ankles, were in fact a direct challenge to Victorian gender ideology (Sims 1991). In Sidney Aronson's classic essay on nineteenth century cycling, he states "[t]he effect of the bicycle on women's clothing was truly revolutionary -- within a period of two or three years the bicycle gave the American woman the liberty of dress which reformers had been seeking for generations" (Aronson 1952, 308). While I agree that cycling rejuvenated dress reform and provided a concrete reason for moderate, middle class women to engage in dress reform efforts, it is problematic to frame the bicycle, an object, as the site of women's emancipation from restrictive, unhealthy Victorian dress. Women were in fact inspired by cycling and were willing to engage in reform and face the associated social risks. One of the major sites of this engagement was the suffrage press.

One of the most popular topics regarding cycling in the suffrage press was cycling outfits and the overall connection between women's cycling and dress reform. The cyclist's costume was framed as an issue of importance not only for the woman cyclists but also for the readership of progressive, reform-minded women as a whole. As such, newspaper editors frequently published variety of reports, editorials and letters to the editor on the subject. Cycling provided a forum for women to engage in the debates regarding dress reform in both ideological and material ways – both the political consequences of how one dressed and its consequence for reform movements as well as the usefulness and practicality of specific costumes while actually riding. Different groups of women riders within various social and reform circles shared some beliefs about the proper and most efficient cycling costume. Yet as previously described, dress reform and cycling in the suffrage press can best be described as a spectrum of individuals' ideas and performances without a single, unified conceptualization.

The suffrage press was a key forum for women to exchange their perspectives on both the politics of dress and cycling along with their specific tips and ideas for actual clothing options. As such, the suffrage press newspapers showcase the diverse range of ideas and opinions held by women cyclists during the 1890's. One 1893 letter to the editor, cyclist Edytha Johnson states she “made many experiments with dresses, and have at least found my ideal” which describes in detail including measurements and fabric (Johnson 1893, 7). Her pattern includes canvas in the front of the dress to prevent the skirt from billowing up while riding, and is conservative in length (Johnson 1893). The suffrage press created a national forum for idea exchange, as shown by Johnson's

conclusion, in which she urges readers throughout the country to write her for further advice on cycling.

In a 1895 report in *The Woman's Journal* written by W.D. Hamaker, M.D, the author outlines a list of cycling tips, with costume-specific recommendations of loose clothing, “no corsets, stays or bonds to obstruct the freest movement... and do not use garters to support the stockings” (Hamaker 1895, 271). This author was typical of medical professionals during this period who advised women to stop wearing corsets due to the physical damages they caused. In “Physical Effects of Cycling,” the anonymous author argued that it was not women’s bodies that limited their physical abilities, but their choices of “fatiguing and dangerous” dress, which “heavily handicaps them” in both cycling and their overall health (Physical Effects of Cycling 1896, 240). Many doctors through the country found that women began to take their clothing recommendations seriously when they learned that limiting their use of corsets and other restrictive dress would improve their cycling practices (Marks 1990).

In a more radical letter to the editor in *The Woman's Herald*, the writer strongly advocates for a bifurcated costume. Framing her ideas as a shared experience, the author states that she “has never met a woman cyclist who did not find [the skirt] more or less a difficulty” and challenges a previous letter writer who stated that one can cycle in a skirt with ease (“A Woman Cyclist” 1893, 570). This approach validates her ideas beyond her individual experience by creating a communal understanding of cycling that she is representing. This strengthens her argument, gives voice to the difficulties other women cyclists have experienced and conceptualizes the issue as a problem that women cyclists share despite differences in geography. The author describes common experiences of the

danger of wearing traditional clothing while cycling, which are well documented in the historical literature of women's cycling during the 1880's and 1890's (Smith 1972, Griffin 2006). The skirt blowing up in front of the rider was a frequent cause of accidents, and common remedies such as attaching weights to the bottom of the skirt or attaching the skirt to the rider's shoes with elastic, both of which this author tried, not only made it more difficult to pedal but did not make riding any safer (Griffin 2006, "A Woman Cyclist" 1893).

The author describes her empowering experience wearing "gymnasium costume for bicycling on private grounds" which gave her the opportunity to try riding in a bifurcated outfit designed for athletics, unhampered by the limits and social customs of cycling in public (570). Fully supportive of rational dress, the most radical end of the dress reform ideology, the author states she looks forward to day when women will do "away with the skirt at all costs" (570). Using humor to provide a final talking point for readers in agreement, she concludes "I am fundamentally incapable of understanding why a woman should not clothe her two legs separately, since she is fortunately allowed to clothe her arms separately" ("A Woman Cyclist" 1893, 570).

Established by Lucy Stone in response to the radicalism of Stanton and Anthony's *The Revolution*, *The Woman's Journal* provided the most conservative rhetoric of women's rights and reform in the 1890's. This was especially true for the paper's stance on cycling and dress reform, in which the most radical and unconventional clothing options, the clothing that blurred the boundaries between men and women, were viewed as unrespectable and unnecessary for the modern wheelwoman. Instead, *The Woman's Journal* documented, highlighted and promoted the dress reform options best aligned

with the ideology of the paper itself – the perspective of the moderate, reform-minded professional woman (Masel-Walters 1977). This fear of blurring the boundaries between men and women was neither limited to reform circles nor the suffrage press. In the 1890's, the central theme of cartoons about women cyclists in popular periodicals was no longer her inability to ride (the most common theme in the 1880's), but rather her appropriation of masculine dress and men's privileges. This typically included cartoons of unattractive women in suits and trousers who were engaged in activities traditionally limited to men (especially voting and other activities of citizenship in the public sphere). Because they were no longer in the home, these cartoonish feminists were accompanied by men who were forced to take over parenting and domestic responsibilities (Marks 1990). Along with crying, unhappy children, men were viewed as victims of unreasonable and unstoppable women reformers.

Well into the 1890's, women's bifurcated outfits were directly associated with working-class women in the sex and theatre trades. Women cyclists who wore bifurcated costumes, typically referred to as a form of 'rational dress' where thought, by more conservative women, to be putting their respectability at risk with the direct result of declining marriage offers (Sims 1991). They believed that this would not only ruin an individual woman's life by forcing her into the immorality of lower classes, but also would decrease women's influence as a whole if fewer women were able to marry husbands who were policy and business leaders. Conservative middle and upper class women cyclists were typically not invested in challenging these associations but rather performed a cycling practice to fit into pre-existing class ideology (Simpson 2001). These

tended to be the cyclist who supported shortened skirts instead of bloomers, Turkish trousers or other forms of pants for women cyclists.

In one 1895 article titled “Bicycling for Women,” an anonymous *Journal* reporter describes in detail clothing trends of women cyclists in England, France and metropolitan areas of the United States, where the bloomer has become a popular option for the woman cyclist. The author denounces this trend as women trading “a slight gain of convenience” for an “enormous loss of gracefulness” and feminine respectability (271). The author uses the rest of the column space to promote “a moderate suggestion of costume” in which women can continue to bicycle safely and fashionably without resorting to the “fantastic and daring dresses” of radicals (“Bicycling for Women” 1895, 271). The confines of ‘moderation’ were frequently evoked throughout *The Woman’s Journal* to locate women’s cycling within established middle-class gender norms and not the ‘unsexing’ politics of radical reformers. The author goes on to describe a specific combination of knickerbockers over a ‘walking length’ skirt, which fell slightly above the ankle to minimize the risk of the dress getting caught in the wheel while maintaining modesty. The author suggests a “particularly becoming and artistic” combination of a cutaway jacket in specific patterns and colors with boots and a simple hat to complete the outfit (“Bicycling for Women” 1895, 271).

An 1893 letter to the editor in *The Woman’s Herald* provided a similar viewpoint. Like many letters, this letter was written in support of a previous reader’s letter and published to continue a conversation of shared ideas and approved rhetoric that mirrored the editor’s ideology. Titled “No Trousers at any Point,” this letter writer also had serious concerns about cycling costume trends in Europe, where women cyclists “seem to take

delight in copying masculine attire down to the smallest detail, appearing to think it necessary to adopt the costume with the bicycle” (F.F. 1893, 570). F.F. described a recent trip to France in which women cyclists’ choice of knickerbockers, straw hats, belts and ties left them “literally impossible to distinguish” from male riders (570). This writer spoke to a central fear of conservative women reformers – that dress reform, if taken too far, would lead to women being overtaken by masculinity, a social force that was seen as uncivilized, dangerous and immoral. The writer concludes her letter by stating, “it is perfectly easy to have a graceful and *womanly* costume, combined with perfect ease and freedom” of cycling (F.F. 1893, 570 italics in text). She refuses to believe that women cyclists must give up their feminine respectably in their clothing choices, and she frames radical dress, especially including bifurcated outfits, as “indelicate and unnecessary” given the variety of respectable cycling costumes available (570).

Yet, not all readers were concerned with the supposed threat of bifurcated cycling outfits. *The Woman’s Tribune*, one of the few suffrage papers not aligned with a specific reform organization, typically showcased a more diverse array of opinions among reform-minded women. One report provides a less conservative take on dress reform. After providing tips on the optimal shirt and corset for riding, she then takes on the debate of skirts versus bifurcated dress. I.E.F. first acknowledges the seriousness of this debate has become among reform and cycling circles: “bifurcated or not bifurcated, ah! there’s the rub. Seriously pondering, the subject weighs down our spirits” (I.E.F. 1895, 116). The author then makes her stance quite clear – she argues for bloomers that fall at the knee and have less excess material than the Turkish trouser. She argues that the “shorter, narrower bloomer” outfit is more attractive and safer than the baggy Turkish

style, which can lead to accidents (116). Aware of the anti-bloomer sentiment within reform circles, I.E.F. argues that women riders “will not believe in bloomers” until they “defy the conservatives” by personally cycling in them and experience “the delicious freedom of movement, the immunity of danger from catching skirts” that bloomers uniquely allow (I.E.F. 1895, 116). This reporter directly challenges the notion that only the most conservative options of reformed dress can maintain a rider’s femininity. She argues that a bloomer-wearing cyclist in soft materials and “really pretty” dark colors “with a short coat to match, trim little cap, leggings presents a very charming appearance” (116). I.E.F. concluded her report by utilizing notions of the natural and biological – dress reform is acceptable because it best suits the make-up of women’s bodies: “don bifurcated garments and ride with free use, for the first time in your lives, of those members that Mother Nature has given you” (116). I.E.F. was one of many suffrage press writers to use ‘mother nature’ and similar notions of what is natural for women’s bodies as a challenge to Victorian dress norms. They argue instead that dress reform, which at the time seemed to violate biology, in fact best addresses the needs of women’s bodies.

Historians have proposed a variety of relationships between women’s cycling and dress reform in the 1890’s. A minority of historians have argued that larger changes, such as the role of women’s clubs, changes in employment patterns and women’s overall engagement in exercise fueled changes in women’s dress more than cycling (Rush 1983, Fischer 2001). But overall, women’s cycling is framed as an unique catalyst that reinvigorated the latent dress reform movement: “the bicycle conveniently acted as a moving advertisement in which all the advantages of rational dress, including bifurcation,

were most clearly and readily portrayed” (Simpson 2001, 61). Located within the discourse of respectability, middle class women found a way to don less than traditional clothes without losing social status – an advantage never gained in during dress reform efforts of the 1850’s.

Typical of the utilization of the rhetoric of success through suffrage newspapers, the papers provided a positive, forwarding-looking view of the successes of dress reform and cycling despite ongoing challenges of harassment and ridicule in the popular press. While contributors to suffrage press newspapers did not agree on a specific cycling outfit, there was one area generally of agreement – the revolutionary impact of women’s cycling on dress reform efforts as a whole. Many contributors to suffrage press newspapers recognized that they were witnessing a significant social change that was largely positive. One anonymous reporter of in *the Woman’s Journal* declared, “the release of the bondage of feminine garb, which the bicycle is expected to bring about, appears to be close at hand” (“The Wheel and Dress Reform” 1896, 239). In another article documenting the rise of girls bicycling and the resulting adapting of rational dress for riding, another anonymous *Journal* reporter states “the often derided dress reformer has had her way” (“Bicycling for Girls” 1891, 243). In a report promoting women’s cycling as an important reform effort, the author argues that “[w]ithin two years [bicycling] has given to all American womankind the liberty of dress for which the reformers have been sighing for generations... it has given all women practical liberty to wear trousers if they want to, and, indeed, to get themselves into any sort of decent garment which they find convenient for whatever enterprise they have in hand” (“Women and the Bicycle” 1896,

305). Women's cycling is overwhelmingly viewed having fueled as a practical and sustainable victory for the dress reform movement.

This reporter addresses another significant issue regarding women's cycling dress and overall dress reform efforts – what happened when women cyclists, outfitted in a rational or reform-minded cycling outfit, wore their outfit off of the bicycle. While this reporter does not go into specifics regarding incidents in which women actually dismounted off of their bicycle and engaged in other activities while in cycling garb, this was a significant consequence of the cycling costume. By the early 1890's, women were increasingly involved in cycling in public spaces, no longer limited to the private gardens of the tricycle era (Simpson 2001). It was common for women to bicycle to run errands, visit friends or as a social function in of itself (Norcliffe 2001). Given these sorts of activities, it makes sense that women would need to be prepared to be visible in multiple public spaces in whatever cycling costume they chose.

Cycling was one of the few socially acceptable reasons that middle-class women could wear rational dress and other reform outfits. It was not assumed to be a natural next step to transition this practice to other activities. It was widely discussed within suffrage papers what sort of situations, other than cycling, could be acceptable for a respectable, middle-class woman to wear cycling clothing. Contributors to suffrage papers advocated women would be more productive if they wore some type of reform dress for their household and work duties. In a letter to the editor in *The Woman's Tribune* quotes another letter from Lucy L. Flower, a professor at Illinois State University. Flower argues that professional women who choose to wear traditional clothing are “not more womanly, only less sensible” (“Health, Beauty and Dress” 1895, 100). She describes in detail the

difficulties of wearing long dresses in muddy urban streets when commuting to work and carrying all of one's belongings (books, umbrella, etc.) while wearing clothing that significantly restricts one's movement. Flowers states that "suitability" is the deciding factor for cycling and thus should be for other areas of women's lives as well (100). She recommends a bloomer outfit for "teachers, nurses, stenographers" because "to reap the full benefit and enjoyment" from professional employment, women must "wear a costume adapted to it" ("Health, Beauty and Dress" 1895, 100). Articles also advocated for women to wear bifurcated outfits to complete their domestic tasks in a more timely and productive manner ("Health, Beauty and Dress" 1895). Others provided tips about the usefulness of cycling clothing and accessories for other tasks. One reporter describes a newly designed belt for cyclists, so women can carry cycling accessories (small tools, new tube for a flat tire) hidden in their outfit. The author is sure that "the non-cycling woman will doubtless adopt the new belt and wear it just as freely as her sister cyclist" because it is so helpful for any woman on errands in the city ("Women and the Bicycle" 1896, 305).

Writers for suffrage papers also argued that women would get much more enjoyment out of leisure activities if they could wear cycling outfits for them as well. Many cyclists argued that going for walks was a leisure activity in which less traditional, more practical clothing choices should be the standard. This was argued because women cyclists often wanted to walk around the area they had cycled too and that, as Professor Flower argues, the urban streets were incredibly difficult to maneuver in long, heavy, cumbersome dresses. In a report of the meeting of the Brooklyn Health Culture Club, one of many women's clubs in New York City that promoted women's cycling and dress

reform, voted on specific outfits for walking. The members “agreed that the mud-gathering, microbe-agitating, and feet-shackling long skirts must go” and stated that they would wear skirts that were at least three inches above the ground (“The Wheel and Dress Reform” 1896, 239). For rainy days, the club agreed to wear “a costume consisting of bloomers or knickerbockers” which was directly inspired by their cycling outfits (The Wheel and Dress Reform 1896, 239). The reporter paraphrases an interview with Mrs. E. Christine Lumsdom, the described “leader of the movement” in Brooklyn who “was first attracted to the reformation of woman’s dress when she began to ride the wheel” (239). Mrs. Lumsdom describes her experience using cycling clothes for leisurely walks: “Often I’ve left my wheel and strolled through the parks... [with an] exquisite sense of comfort and freedom of movement” (239). This report was one of many that argued for women to be able to wear reform dress during inclement weather. In fact, in the 1890’s there was a cycling club in Boston called the ‘Rainy Day Club.’ Women members advocated for the use of cycling costumes for other activities after one member dared to wear her cycling costume during a particularly bad rainstorm (Sims 1991).

In the suffrage press, women not only promoted the transition of cycling costumes to other activities, but actively followed incidents in which women actually did it. Social activities in which women cyclists wore cycling costumes and public events in which women were spotted were often newsworthy. For example, a number of suffrage papers printed supportive letters to the editor and editorials when women were spotted walking through exhibits in the 1893 World’s Fair wearing bifurcated cycling outfits (“Health, Beauty and Dress” 1895). The most notorious and widely discussed incident was the 1898 Dorking Hotel case in Ockham, Surrey, a region of Britain. Well known cyclist,

dress reform advocate and aristocrat Florence Wallace Pomeroy, typically referred to as Lady Harberton, rode her bicycle to the Dorking Hotel wearing a cycling costume which included bloomers. When she entered the hotel, the woman coordinating food service refused to serve her in the coffee room due to her clothing. She was offered to be served in a bar parlor, which was typically allocated for working class men who ordered alcohol. Lady Harberton filed suit against the hotel and the specific employee who refused to serve her. After a lengthy and expensive trial, an all-male jury acquitted both the hotel and employee under the grounds that hotel operators have the right to refuse service to any person and for any reason (Woodforde 1971).

For both women cyclists and dress reform advocates in both the United States and Britain, this was seen as a significant loss and a possible precedent that would limit future suits. Letters and reports of support for Harberton flooded suffrage papers. Writers were concerned with the implicit sexism of the trial, that the jury “probably looked upon the whole thing as a farce” because the cyclist was a woman in rational dress, and “had the question raised at the trial been one of reasonable and proper accommodation being offered to the [male] cyclist... the determination of the issue might have been different” (Mosely 1899, 483). Another letter writer argued that reform-minded women should begin establishing their own hotels and restaurants for the woman cyclist, both to take away business from discriminating owners and out of fear that laws would not protect them (Tour 1898).

The role of dress reform was a central issue to women cyclists and a key way for them to contest and reimagine middle-class respectability. The relationship between efforts to reform women’s dress and women’s experiences as cyclists was multifaceted

and hotly contested among readers and writers in suffrage newspapers. Cyclists used the suffrage press not to support a unified vision of dress reform, but to promote their individual perspective and ideology, both political and practical, on the most optimal dress for women cyclists. Women debated the use of bifurcated costumes, provided detailed accounts of their own cycling outfits, and discussed the possibilities of wearing cycling costumes for non-cycling tasks. Despite this debate, contributors to suffrage newspapers were in agreement on one crucial point: women's cycling had reinvigorated dress reform in fresh, unexpected ways and provided a practical selling point that women's rights activists successfully used to further their political aims.

“THEIR CHARACTERISTIC CAPACITY FOR ORGANIZING”:

WOMEN’S CYCLING CLUBS

Clubs have been central to the cycling experience since the late 1860’s. The process of riders organizing themselves into clubs first gained popularity among upper class British riders who modeled their velocipede clubs after popular fox hunting clubs of which they were also members (Griffin 2006). The first cycling clubs on record were founded in 1869, such as the Amateur Velocipede Club and Pickwick Bicycle Club (Griffin 2006, Herlihy 2004). The primary objectives of clubs in the late 1860’s and 1870’s were promoting cycling as a leisurely pursuit among upper class men (membership was granted by invitation only and limited within aristocratic social circles) and organizing social activities which were typically tours of the countryside and picnics (Herlihy 2004). By the mid 1870’s, most European cities had velocipede clubs, races were a popular entertainment event and many universities had their own clubs as well. Less popular in the United States, clubs during this time period were limited to upper class men in New York and other metropolitan areas (Herlihy 2004).

Most popular in the late 1870’s and 1880’s, the invention of the Ordinary introduced cycling to working class, immigrant and African-American men who were typically young and living in urban areas. The Ordinary drastically changed not only the

demographics of cyclists but the function and membership of cycling clubs as well.

While country tours continued to be a popular activity, clubs also began serving as the central organizing forum for races, centuries and other competitive events for the public. Clubs would compete against one another for rewards, bragging rights and medals to attach to their club uniforms (Norcliffe 2001). The majority of Ordinary clubs did not admit African-American men, immigrant men or women of any racial or ethnic background. Those that did were typically forced to disband by larger cycling associations (most notably the League of American Wheelman) well into the 1890's (Somers 1967). Cycling tracks that allowed African-Americans or women to race were often cited for violation of municipal, state or national laws which limited participation in public sporting events to white men (Costa and Guthrie 1994). Due to these discriminatory practices, African-American Ordinary riders established their own clubs in many cities across the country (Goodman 2010). In the 1880's, the women who were cycling were normally riding a tricycle, not an Ordinary. Women began forming tricycle clubs in response to the continued refusal of men's clubs to grant women full membership. One of the first women's cycling clubs was the Nenagh Ladies Cycling Club, which was founded in 1888 by British tricyclists and soon became open to safety riders as well (Griffin 2006).

In 1889, the Starley Brothers bicycle company introduced the Psycho Ladies model, the first mass-produced safety designed specifically for women. Compared to tricycle models, the Psycho was revolutionary for both affordability and safety. Women began purchasing the Psycho in record numbers. Starley Brothers' competitors quickly took notice and began producing ladies models as well (Petty 1996). Women's bicycles,

clothing and accessories soon flooded bicycle shops nationwide. When the safety model brought cycling to mainstream popular culture, the idea of the cycling club also became incredibly popular beyond the ranks of urban young men. The number of cycling clubs in urban areas grew rapidly in the late 1880's and 1890's, and cyclists living in mid-size cities founded clubs as well. Yet, these clubs "were not much different from most other Victorian social organizations" in replicating gender hierarchies which placed women in subordinate positions (Norcliffe 2001, 192). In the late 1880's and early 1890's, women were typically barred from cycling clubs. Some clubs would allow women for specific rides or social functions (such as club picnics in which male riders would bring a date), and the most progressive clubs would grant women limited membership only if they were related to a male member, usually a brother (Griffen 2006, Norcliffe 2001). Despite the fact that the rates of women cycling were significantly increasing, the practices and structures of clubs did not represent this change and club leaders overwhelmingly did not welcome women cyclists as equals.

In the 1890's, women's cycle clubs became incredibly popular in response to the continued refusal of men's clubs to grant women membership. Established in 1889, the Ladies Cycling Club is generally credited with being the first American cycling club founded by and for women (Petty 1996). This club was located in Washington, DC, one of the first American cities in which women took to the bicycle en masse (Petty 1996). Women soon began forming cycling clubs through the United States. Clubs were designed to be small in membership; many had membership maximums of 50 riders. Clubs were formed not only based on the race, ethnicity and neighborhood of riders but also multiple clubs would represent a specific demographic in larger cities (Petty 1996).

New York City, for example, had cycling clubs in many boroughs as well as clubs established by both African-American and white women. There is no evidence of multi-racial membership in men's or women's clubs (Goodman 2010).

Many women continued to advocate for more equitable membership practices among men's clubs and formed co-ed clubs as well. Yet, men's clubs were slow to incorporate women into their ranks (Griffin 2006). For example, by 1893 the national-level League of American Wheelman had only 1,162 registered women members out of a total membership of approximately 35,000 (Petty 1996). By the middle of the decade, many cycling clubs became co-ed in various forms. Some allowed women's full membership, while other groups designed ladies nights for group rides (Somers 1967). It was also a common practice for men's clubs to create a separate women's auxiliary club that would have its own by-laws, membership and events but be housed under (and thus ultimately ruled by) the men's club. This was often done to promote the sport among women without having to alter the riding practices or club membership rules like a co-ed team. For example, the Crescent City Cycle Club of New Orleans created the Olympia Club for women in 1895 in efforts to further interest in cycling city-wide (Somers 1967). By the end of the decade, clubs existed for a number of functions: racing (limited to men), co-ed socializing, and clubs for and by women only. By the late 1890's, many clubs were co-ed and activities were typically social in nature, such as group rides to social events and rural tours in the countryside (Norcliffe 2001). Most riders were young adults and club rides were a popular date activity, one of the first activities young couples to do without a chaperone (Ritchie 1975). Yet, women's clubs also thrived as men's clubs became co-ed during this period.

Women's cycling clubs of the 1890's are a vastly under-researched area. Cycling historians have overwhelmingly focused on the social activities of co-ed cycling clubs and athletic pursuits of men's racing clubs during this period (Norcliffe 2001). The limited research on women's clubs primarily documents the clubs' social functions. The role of women's cycling clubs in social movements of the period, including suffrage, temperance, reform and the women's club movement has received no attention by feminist scholars. Yet, there is significant evidence that members of women's cycling clubs viewed the purpose of their club as much more than mere socializing. In fact, as shown in the suffrage press, women's cycling clubs were highly politicized. Women cyclists during this period framed cycling clubs as another forum for women's rights activism just like other political organizations of the period.

Because cycling clubs were so central to many riders' practice, women who wrote about cycling in suffrage newspapers often discussed cycling clubs. These reports and letters highlighted issues of concern to cycle club members, cyclists and the readers as a whole. The most consistent theme throughout these articles was that cycling clubs were viewed as one part of macro-level political efforts. Cycling clubs were not seen as only social groups but an important forum for women to raise awareness of women's rights efforts and pursue their political interests. One of the central goals of the suffrage press was to document the activities of the women's rights movement. Articles about running a household, fashion tips and romantic fiction stories, the most common topics in mainstream women's magazines of the period, were not published in the suffrage press – the focus was on political matters alone (Solomon 1991). Events, news and issues

involving cycling clubs were frequently documented in suffrage papers because they were viewed as a specific type of woman's political organization that was part of a diverse national movement for social change.

The suffrage press served as a gateway of information for news about cycling clubs. For example, editors often published reports about newly forming clubs, furthering awareness of the clubs and applauding women who established them. These reports began soon after the safety model revolutionized women's cycling. As early as January of 1890, *The Woman's Herald* reported that reform-minded women "with their characteristic capacity for organizing, [sic] have started a number of clubs among those engaged in out-door sports" ("Our Sisters Across the Seas" 1890, 137). The author highlighted the Women's Wheel and Athletic Club of Buffalo, New York, "an institution of some year's standing," and the Ladies' Athletic Club of Lakewood, New Jersey in which incorporated cycling as one of my many outdoor activities of group members (Our Sisters Across the Seas 1890, 137). When a female British cyclist was in the process of forming a national-level cycling organization in 1893, information about the club, including the goals and future activities, were reported in *The Woman's Herald* with contact information for those interested in membership or forming a local chapter ("Cycling for Women" 1893).

A key function of suffrage papers overall was to promote empowering images of women and highlight the efforts of reform leaders to serve as role models. This was especially meant for women readers geographically isolated from women's rights groups, who lacked much needed peer support of other like-minded women (Solomon 1991). The women members of cycling clubs were frequently portrayed as strong, independent

women and their achievements were often the focal point of articles. Reporters framed the formation and popularity of cycling clubs as evidence of women's overarching potential for success. For example, one author attributed the growth of women's cycling clubs as a direct result of women's strength and resolve: "If a woman wants anything she generally gets it... [women] are, therefore, likely to have a successful bicycle club because they want one" ("Cycling for Women" 1893, 134).

Leaders of cycling clubs were often singled out for their achievements. In an 1890 column of *The Woman's Herald* states "bicycling amongst ladies is increasing" and describes the athletic achievement of Mrs. Vickers, a member of the Potternewton Bicycle Club ("Bicycling" 1890, 9). Mrs. Vickers not only led her club to victory in a nineteen-mile race, but also out rode all of the members of a local men's cycling club as well (Bicycling 1890). Another article in *The Woman's Herald* celebrated the achievements of a woman cyclist who writes under the pen name Violet Lorne for being a "one of the recognised [sic] authorities on feminine Cycling [sic] by the English, American and Continental papers" ("Cycling for Women" 1893, 134). The author describes that Lorne is "pioneering the way for her less experienced sisters" in promoting cycling via teaching, leadership and publications ("Cycling for Women" 1893, 134). The article concludes by describing a cycling club Lorne is forming and the author urges women to join.

In an 1894 issue of *The Woman's Signal*, well-known suffrage journalist Sarah Tooley interviewed Miss N. G. Bacon, secretary of the Mowbray House Cycling Association. In this in-depth interview which took up three full columns, Bacon is celebrated as a vibrant, health conscious and adventurous New Woman; an up and

coming leader who is part of a new generation of women necessary to both women's cycling and women's reform movements overall. Tooley introduces Miss Bacon to the readers by celebrating that "even the most fastidious critics would acknowledge that Miss Bacon forms an agreeable contrast to the simpering, sampler-making maiden of a bygone era" (Tooley 1894, 168). Like many women cyclists of the late nineteenth century, Bacon describes in her interview that she originally began cycling by borrowing her brother's bicycle and then purchased a ladies safety model. Upon getting her own bicycle, she soon became active in the Mowbray House Cycling Association as well as taking multiple day tours of the countryside and various cities. While sometimes with club members, these tours typically were a "solitary journey" in which Bacon would coordinate her lodging, fix her bicycle and create and navigate her route on her own (Tooley 1894, 168). Bacon also spoke about the daily rides she takes to maintain her fitness and to enjoy the sport when she does not have time for a full tour. Tooley concludes the interview by highlighting Bacon's temperance ideals, as the temperance movement was highly regarding in most suffrage newspapers during this period. Bacon describes her work with prominent cyclist and WCTU president Frances Willard (who at this time was vice president of the Mowbray club), self-identifies as a "life-abstainer" and states that she requires no stimulates for her athletic activities (Tooley 1894, 168). Bacon's achievements and independence were celebrated throughout the article, and Tooley framed her as an excellent role model for young women as well as evidence of the vibrancy of the women's movement.

As part of locating cycling clubs within a larger discourse of political activism and social reform, a number of reports about women's cycling clubs discussed the role of

clubs and specific activist issues. Men's cycling clubs, led by the national-level League of American Wheelman, organized the national Good Roads Movement to improve city streets and build more roads to connect rural and urban areas. This highly influential political movement is frequently credited for starting efforts to modernize transportation that were solidified by the invention of the automobile years later (Smith 1972). The interactions between men's and women's clubs for such political campaigns has yet to be explored by historians.

In 1896 *The Woman's Journal* published a report illustrating a specific example of women cyclists' overtly political relationship with men's clubs and their specific political efforts. The article reports that in San Francisco during this time there were approximately 3,000 women cyclists and many were organized into clubs ("Women and the Bicycle" 1896). Typical of men's clubs throughout the country, the main San Francisco cycling club for men, the Wheelman's Municipal League of San Francisco, was actively involved in efforts to improve San Francisco's roads via the passage of legislation that would fund road improvements and expansion.

This article documents that in 1896, the Wheelman's Municipal League passed a resolution in support of the constitutional amendment for women's suffrage. *The Woman's Journal* reporter applauds this resolution as not based on "sentiment" but "practicality" and "good politics" ("Women and the Bicycle" 1896, 305). The author then describes in detail that the Wheelman's Municipal League passed this resolution specifically because they believed, if given the right to vote, women cyclists would increase the likelihood of pro-cycling candidates' election to office. The author states that women cyclists "desire good, clean streets" as do men cyclists, but are limited in how

effective they can be in such efforts because “[t]hese ladies, of course, have no votes, so all they can do is lend their moral influence to the campaign for better roadways” (“Women and the Bicycle” 1896, 305). Typical of suffrage press journalists, the anonymous author challenges the anti-suffrage argument, widespread in Victoria era politics, that women did not need the right to vote themselves because they could persuade their male relatives in how they vote. The author concludes her analysis of the Wheelman’s resolution by declaring, “truth compels the admission that votes are more effective than moral influence when politics is being done” (“Women and the Bicycle” 1896, 305). For this author as well as the Wheelman’s Municipal League, women cyclists and their clubs are clearly viewed in political terms, in fact as a future voting block with significant potential for social movements beyond women’s rights.

One of the most widely documented cycling clubs in the suffrage press was the Mowbray House Cycling Association (also known as the Mowbray Club). One can assume this was in part due to the club’s celebrity directors: Lady Henry Somerset (first name Isabel), president of the British Women’s Temperance Association served as president of the club and Frances Willard, president of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union served as vice president. Both women were highly regarded leaders of suffrage and temperance activism in their respective countries and their writings, activities and political stances were often the subject of suffrage press reports.

While the leaders of the club were upper-class women, and one can imagine many of the members were as well, class issues were not completely ignored. While prices for the bicycle dropped steadily in the 1890’s, many women did not have the money to purchase their own model as soon as they became interested in becoming trying it.

Women often borrowed bicycles from male relatives before purchasing their own (Norcliffe 2001). Yet the women who became interested in cycling this way had not only to have a male relative who already owned a bicycle but also one who was supportive of the idea of women's cycling in general. Women without such relatives who could not buy a bicycle on their own (especially early in the 1890's when there were less used models for sale) were often unable to start cycling.

A 1893 article in *The Woman's Herald* described how the Mowbray Club was responding to this very issue by starting a women-own bicycle co-op. Women who were new to cycling or could not afford their own model could buy affordable memberships and rent bicycles owned by the co-op ("Cycling for Young Women" 1893). In the reporter's summary of the meeting in which the co-op was formed, club president Lady Somerset described her target audience for the membership as young women who wanted to cycle but faced barriers. She stated that she wanted to provide opportunities for women "who cannot even afford the ten shilings to pay for the use of the learner's machine" (learner's machines were cheap floor models used by manufacturers and retailers to teach potential customers riding skills) ("Cycling for Young Women" 1893, 266). Yet in creating the co-op, Somerset and others did not assume that it was only economically disadvantaged young women who could not afford bicycles. Many girls had families that refused to support their wish to cycle no matter the price of a ladies model. Somerset situates the bias of families against girls' desire to own a bicycle as a distinctly political issue rooted in unchallenged sexism:

This has awakened me to the fact that women and men go through life from an exactly opposite standpoint. In this way I find lads, whose parents are in very lowly positions of life, possess bicycles, whereas the girls of the same family have not one-tenth of the advantages extended to the boys. Boys seem to be more

dominant and selfish. They must have their luxuries, their enjoyments, and their privileges. But the girls are taught to sacrifice themselves. And this even in the better-class families (“Cycling for Young Women” 1893, 266).

The article concludes with outlining further plans for the co-op, including renting a cottage for tours and riding lessons. For Somerset, the cycling club was a strategic and overtly political response to the double standard facing women cyclists.

A central political issue for women’s cycling clubs was dress reform. As described in the previous chapter, women cyclists viewed dress as central to their cycling practice and were actively engaged in a variety of dress reform projects with differing stances on the issue. A key site of dress reform was the cycling club itself. Most cycling clubs (for both women and men) had some sort of standard dress or uniform discussed and agreed upon by members (Norcliffe 2001). Due to the overtly political nature of women’s cycling clubs and the clubs’ distinct connection to women’s rights and reform movements, a club’s uniform was a publicly visible political statement about the members’ stance on dress reform. As such, a club’s decisions about dress, and especially the stances of club leaders, were often documented in suffrage press newspapers.

Somerset and Willard of the Mowbray Club were staunch advocates of both women’s cycling and not just dress reform, but the most radical and controversial contingent of that reform – rational dress. As such, the Mowbray Club’s activities involving dress reform were often considered newsworthy by editors and reporters of suffrage papers. For example, 1893 article from *The Woman’s Herald* documented and discussed a meeting that was held by the club to discuss issues of dress reform. The article lists the members who attended the meeting in rational dress by name and the reporter states that the women’s cycling outfits “were much admired by those present” (“Cycling and Dress Reform” 1893, 702). While all suffrage press reporters did not

support rational dress, and specifically bifurcated cycling costumes, this anonymous reporter's support of more radical outfits is quite clear. As previously described, there was no standardized vision of women's cycling outfits. Women often designed and sewed their own versions which mirrored with their practical cycling needs and political stances on dress reform. The author describes how the members engaged in "much discussion, and inspection of the various costumes" ("Cycling and Dress Reform" 1893, 702). Highlights included "tailor-made three-quarter coats and knickerbockers, graceful and well-fitting tunics and loose knickerbockers" ("Cycling and Dress Reform" 1893, 702). The author also discusses Mrs. Smith's outfit, a "short but graceful skirt, which is easily drawn up for riding" which is "the most conventional" outfit among members but still useful for certain occasions ("Cycling and Dress Reform" 1893, 702). Mrs. Smith was one of many women cyclists in the 1890's who not only designed but patented her cycling outfit ("Cycling and Dress Reform" 1893).

The author then lists and discusses the central resolution made by the club during this meeting, in which the club took the official stance that "the skirted dress of women is unfit for all cycling and outdoor pursuits and that a dual [bifurcated] costume... should be adopted in its place" ("Cycling and Dress Reform" 1893, 702). Acknowledging the struggles and social ostracization many women cyclists and dress reformers experienced, Somerset ended the meeting with a supportive, future-orientated conclusion, stating that the cycling costumes worn by members at the meeting were "the best and wisest thing for women" and that "the world will come to see it so after a while" ("Cycling and Dress Reform" 1893, 702).

In a 1895 column titled “Health, Beauty and Dress,” the anonymous author reports on dress reform activities of two specific women’s cycling clubs. First, the author discusses Mrs. C. B. Fairchild, leader of the Woman’s Cycling Club (location of club not identified). Common among women cyclists, Mrs. Fairchild “had several accidents with skirts” and the author reminds readers “it has been proven that the skirt is a fertile cause of accidents” (“Health, Beauty and Dress” 1895, 100). The author then describes how Mrs. Fairchild purchased bloomers two years ago and has found her riding so much improved that she “has never since mounted her wheel clad in skirts” again (“Health, Beauty and Dress” 1895, 100). The author applauds Mrs. Fairchild’s decision to wear a bifurcated cycling costume and frames Mrs. Fairchild as a leader in the movement that readers should model because many women currently “fear the innovations” of dress reform more than losing “life and limb” in their skirts, which ultimately “need to retire from the field” (“Health, Beauty and Dress” 1895, 100).

The author also reports a meeting of 125 women cyclists in Grand Rapids, Michigan in which issues of dress were debated. The meeting focused the women adopting a resolution in response to the “bloomer question” or whether bifurcated cycling outfits should be worn by members (“Health, Beauty and Dress” 1895, 100). Typical of women’s clubs during the period, the adoption of a resolution was the way to formalize the group’s position on an issue. During this meeting, issues of safety while riding were addressed similar to the concerns of Mrs. Fairchild. Members argued that “the skirt was an actual hindrance in many cases” for cycling (“Health, Beauty and Dress” 1895, 100). They also challenged notions of modesty which were often deployed to limit women’s use of pants: members argued “the truly modest dress is that which

clothes each leg in separate coverings” (“Health, Beauty and Dress” 1895, 100).

Members also challenged the widespread belief during this period that that skirts were more natural for women. They argued that bifurcated outfits were more natural than skirts for women because “the Heavenly Father had made them bipeds” (“Health, Beauty and Dress” 1895, 100). The social pressures to wear traditional dress, no doubt experienced by many women in attendance, were also acknowledged and members hoped more women would have “the moral courage to drop their prejudices, and adopt other costumes in place of the regulation skirt” (“Health, Beauty and Dress” 1895, 100). The meeting ultimately resulted in a resolution in support of bloomers, which was fully supported by *The Woman’s Journal* reporter as well.

Clubs were a primary way women engaged in cycling in the 1890’s, and this engagement is greatly reflected in the suffrage press. Contributors to suffrage press newspaper provided information on clubs and celebrated both women’s cycling clubs and club leaders. Articles also directly highlighted the role of cycling clubs and political efforts, notably suffrage and dress reform. In the suffrage press, clubs were not framed as a non-political clubs for mere recreation, but one type of women’s clubs that aimed to further reform and activist work and promote images of strong, independent and politically engaged women.

“THE MODERN REMEDY”:
HEALTH, MEDICINE AND WOMEN’S CYCLING

During the late nineteenth century, medical discourse dominated both popular and scholarly conceptualizations of women. Victorian notions of women’s bodies as naturally weak, diseased or damaged were often used to counter feminist gains that increased women’s political rights, access to public spaces, economic independence and other feminist projects that ushered in modernity. Women’s rights activists and reformers used medical discourse as well in their arguments for suffrage and various reform causes. One key example of such a strategy during this period is women’s cycling practices. Suffrage press periodicals provided a supportive, politically conscious forum for women to frame their enjoyment of cycling as a feminist health practice, disrupting long held Victorian beliefs and practices regarding women’s health and bodies. As both readers and writers of testimonials, reports, and letters about cycling, the suffrage press contributors used cycling to successfully destabilize Victorian notions of women’s health and conceptualize women as strong, healthy and empowered agents that made informed, purposeful health care choices.

Articles about women’s health and bicycling in the suffrage press promoted women’s bicycling as a modern, progressive practice that would greatly improve the

reader's health. Scholars of women and cycling often argue that women's practices did not challenge medical professionals' authority because riders so often began, continued, and promoted cycling because their doctors had recommended it (i.e. Garvey 1995, Mackintosh and Norcliffe 2007). Yet, as shown through the suffrage press, suffrage writers directly put the authority of the medical establishment into question. Writers challenged and provided evidence from their lived experience to counter medical discourse that framed women's riding as dangerous or irrelevant to women's health. Writers constructed bicycling as a meaningful, feminist health practice that individual women designed for themselves to meet their health needs. Avid bicyclists used the suffrage press as a forum to encourage readers to take up the practice so that they too could enjoy the positive health effects of bicycling. These articles had implications far beyond cycling. By advocating for and describing their lives as women cyclists, writers in the suffrage press challenged Victorian notions of women as naturally ill, politicized their health, and conceptualized women as strong, healthy and empowered.

Because the papers were run exclusively by women's rights organizations, the only challenges their articles would face would be internally within the movement, which would usually be regarding details or finer points from the article. Writers did not have to merely respond to anti-feminist ideas, but were provided the space to create their own arguments and conceptualizations of issues (Huxman 1991). Such articles were quite successful in promoting feminist rhetoric among social circles because they provided the reader with the confidence to discuss the issues, backed by information from a paper of which they demanded "high standards of journalistic excellence precisely because they viewed the paper as a reflection of their new-found selves; ...a symbol of progressive

womanhood” (Huxman 1991, 90). Given that many newspapers had subscribers throughout the country, reports helped feminist leaders shape and direct national conversations about health that were centered on the same unified feminist principles (Vanderfod 1991).

One major aspect of reports of women’s bicycling and health was to counter common arguments that bicycling was too dangerous for women. This was a critical undertaking, because it was a commonly held belief among medical professionals, especially in the first half of the 1890’s, that cycling could harm women in a variety of ways (Smith 1972). Many medical professionals argued that the speed, repetitive motion, cycling posture and exertion of cycling would increase women’s susceptibility to a number of existing ailments, such as spine, bone and muscle deformities, internal organ malfunctions, heart irregularities, gout, kidney stones and mental illnesses (Smith 1972, Garvey 1995). Bicycle-specific diseases were also highly discussed, most notably kypohsis bicyclistarum, a spinal deformity due to an aggressive riding posture, in which a number of tonics were also sold for treatment (Smith 1972). The potential for accidents was also used as an argument against bicycling. This was not entirely unfounded. Although the safety bicycle decreased accidents greatly, accidents were still common due to hazardous city streets, carriage drivers and pedestrians not used to having cyclists on the roads, and cyclists unprepared for the speed of bicycling (Norcliffe 2001, McCally, *Bloomers & Bicycles: Health and Fitness in Victorian Rochester* 2008). By the early 1890’s, some mainstream newspapers even had obituary sections specifically for cyclists – although they were primarily young men, there were enough deaths to have a separate listing (Fee and Brown 2003, McCally 2008). The fear of women dying in similar ways

was quite powerful due to Victorian notions of women as innocent and frail compared to men.

Yet, most of the medical arguments against women cycling centered on reproduction. The safety bicycle forced nineteenth century society to confront their fear and repulsion of women straddling an object. A straddling position was assumed to cause great physical problems for women's reproductive organs, and the vibrations from cycling were commonly thought to only increase this risk for women (Gravey 1995). Also, a woman straddling any object was thought to promote masturbation. Both of these concerns threatened women's sexual innocence and reproductive potential, key aspects of Victorian notions of womanhood (Garvey 1995). Due to these concerns, social practices were designed to not allow women to straddle anything, such as women being taught to ride horses sidesaddle (Gray and Peteu, "Invention, the Angel of the Nineteenth Century": Patents for Women's Cycling Attire in the 1890's 2005). Straddling was impossible to avoid for cyclists, even though there were some failed models that attempted a sidesaddle position (Smith 1972). Women had to directly confront the issue of straddling as well as general concerns about the potential health risks of cycling.

In suffrage press articles, it was common for riders to argue that cycling was no more dangerous than other sports or exercise regimens that had met their doctors' approval ("Cycling for Ladies" 1891). Framing cycling as similar to other sports that their doctors had no medical objections to framed the opinions of doctors as inconsistent and showcased possible examples of medical biases against cycling. This destabilized the authority of medical professionals and opened the possibility to question the supposed neutrality of professional medical opinions. Letters to the editor also spoke to the shared

experiences and beliefs of the writer's social circles. Frances Russell, novelist, journalist and officer of the National Woman Suffrage Association, wrote that among her friends, "I personally do not know of a single case where a woman has suffered in health from bicycle exercise" (Gordon 2000; Russell 1896, 67). She not only dismissed anti-cycling arguments because that simply did not reflect her experience, but she also situated herself as having a more legitimate authority on her health than medical professionals.

A striking example of a challenge to medical professionals occurred in a report from *Today's Woman*, where the author takes on the commonly discussed bicycle-induced illnesses of 'bicycle face' and 'bicycle jaw.' These ailments were thought to be characterized by severe gum, teeth, mouth and throat erosion from the wind going through a rider's mouth while cycling and were frequently discussed in both popular and medical periodicals (Smith 1972). The author dismisses this argument as outdated and not relevant to the modern woman cyclist, saying that it belongs to "the pathology of the cyclic museum" ("Bicycling for Women" 1895, 2). The author then humorously prescribes her antidote to these diseases: "[t]he best safeguard against this novel disorder we opine to be – constant attention to the well-known advice 'keep your mouth shut'" ("Bicycling for Women" 1895, 2). This frames the anti-cycling argument as ludicrous and provides a clear, conversational response for readers to use if confronted with this commonly used argument against women's cycling.

Writers did not respond only with rebuttals, but also argued that cycling would not simply do no harm to women, but in fact would greatly improve their health. In fact, much of the text of suffrage articles was used to promote the positive effects of bicycling. One way this was done was to frame cycling as a practice that would relieve existing

physical health problems. One author in *The Woman's Journal* states bicycling “acts like a charm for gout, rheumatism and indigestion,” cures varicose veins and “and all those petty miseries for which the ‘liver’ is so often made scapegoat” (“Physical Effects of Cycling” 1896, 240). Another article in *The Woman's Signal* states bicycling will clear women's skin, cure wrinkles and concludes “all chronic complaints will be benefited by this form of exercise” (Miller 1898, 423). In her letter describing her bicycling practice, an author states that cycling helps weak women gain strength and achieve a healthy weight (Harrison 1898). In another detailed report in *The Woman's Signal*, the author depicts bicycling as “[t]he modern remedy.... [for] dyspepsia, torpid liver, incipient consumption, nervous exhaustion, rheumatism, and melancholia” (Holdsworth 1895, 345).

Writers also argued the benefits of cycling for women who had existing mental health problems. Bicycling was described as “nerve and health restorative... [creating] a clearer brain & an altogether happy sense of life” and that it “gets to the root of... nervous troubles” which greatly improves the overall wellbeing of the woman cyclist (L.A.M.P. 1895, 16; Holdsworth 1895, 345). In response to a letter inquiring about women cycling, one subscriber wrote a detailed letter describing how her passion for bicycling greatly improved her mental health. She described “[h]owever great may be the mental strain I am suffering from, I have only to mount my steed... when I find my weariness and headache disappearing” (Johnson 1892, 7). Another letter described that due to the “charms of the wheel” the author was now “sincerely enjoying life with a renewed zest and energy” (Hygiea 1896, 18). The mental benefits of women's cycling were in fact lauded by some of the most important feminist leaders of the day. In *The*

Woman's Tribune, Elizabeth Cady Stanton described the bicycling generation as “vigorous of mind” because they dared to prioritize exercise when gender norms attempted to keep them indoors and inactive (Stanton 1895, 112).

These arguments disrupted sexist norms that framed women's bodies as naturally ill and provided evidence from women's lives of possible cures or treatments. Health problems were not viewed as an essential part of womanhood, but in fact a transitory state. Suffrage press authors saw women, via their daily choices, as having the ability to disrupt the power of quite disabling conditions in their lives, which framed women as having the agency to cure themselves, and not as dependant on the medical profession. For example, one author described her choice to take up bicycling as “a tonic better than all the patent medicines in the world” which provided a direct challenge to the medical profession's domination of her health care choices (“Cycling for Women” 1893, 134). With this agency, women writers in the suffrage press often went on to frame their illness experiences in political terms. One anonymous reporter described this sentiment clearly: “[t]he diseases of women take a front place in our social life; but, if looked into, 90 per cent of them are functional ailments, begotten of ennui and lack of opportunity of some means of working off their superfluous muscular, nervous and organic energy... [and] so-called ‘nerves’” (“Physical Effects of Cycling” 1896, 240). This reporter politicized women's health problems as a result of their socio-political status which limited opportunities for free recreation and movement, and in particular her use of ‘so-called’ directly questioned the power of the medical profession to define and regulate women's health. She argued that bicycling was an affordable and enjoyable solution to health problems, which women are taking on for themselves.

Women's cycling was not only framed as a hopeful cure for cyclists' existing health problems, but as a choice women could take to prevent health problems. Women writers directly challenged the notion that women were naturally prone to be weak and ill and instead constructed images of women as healthy, active and not burdened or limited by illness or disease. Letter writers frequently attributed their sustained good health to cycling (Hermitage 1896, Russell 1896). One woman for example stated that bicycling provides "easy and ready means of gaining that exercise necessary and essential to retain perfect health," and she went on to say that she bicycles frequently for that precise purpose (Hygieia 1896, 18). Writers believed that the stress-relieving exercise of cycling would prolong many of the health problems associated with age and reported cases they knew of many women who were on the verge of "invalidism... [that] have been rescued by cycling" ("Physical Effects of Cycling" 1896, 240). Another report urged mothers to promote cycling among their daughters to help teach them to have a healthy lifestyle, which would decrease their susceptibility to certain illnesses (Holdsworth 1895).

In one woman's testimonial of how cycling became a major passion in her life, she described the improvements she saw in her overall wellness as she started to ride regularly, such as losing excess weight and increasing her strength ("Cycling for Ladies" 1891). After describing her success in mastering her new safety model, she goes onto give examples from her daily life of men who discouraged her to ride and harassed her while riding. She addresses not just these individual men, but the patriarchal medical establishment and Victorian notions of gendered embodiment by demanding to know "why is it unladylike for a woman to have muscles?... I'm a lady, and I ride" a bicycle ("Cycling for Ladies" 1891, 404). This writer directly challenged Victorian gender norms

of health and rewrote the identity of ‘lady’ as healthy and strong to reflect her newfound agency to control and improve her wellness.

Articles in the suffrage press also addressed one of the most powerful arguments against women’s cycling – that it would impede their reproductive abilities. In one particularly striking letter, an avid cyclist describes how not only did she not have problems conceiving and giving birth, but in fact attributes her healthy pregnancy, easy childbirth and strong baby to her cycling practice (Russell 1896). She states how she had no morning sickness, was able to be active throughout her pregnancy, and delivered a healthy, ten and a half pound boy with no complications. What even makes this feat more noteworthy, she argues, is that she is a small woman, only 100 pounds, and was still able to give birth to such a large baby without any medical intervention. The author depicts the surprise of her doctor, who described the successful birth of her boy as “very remarkable... the doctor said that in his practice he had never seen such a case which was not attended with great suffering” (Russell 1896, 67).

Yet, she showed no surprise in her success, but framed it as a result of viewing her health, including her pregnancy, as in her control by self-prescribing empowering daily practices to maintain her wellness. She advises women to take on a schedule similar to hers – a daily four to five mile ride at 5am until the eighth month of pregnancy, and then decrease the ride to only one mile per day until giving birth. She concludes her letter by declaring, “[b]less the bicycle! ...it is the greatest blessing that ever came to us. It is not necessary to return to the savage state in order to bear children painlessly. Correct dress, sensible diet and systemic exercise will do it” (Russell 1896, 67). In this powerful letter, the author destabilized the common belief of this period that pregnant women were

weak and needed to be bedridden. She framed domination of medical professionals as a negative, in fact, a 'savage state,' and individual doctors as largely unknowledgeable about women's health needs. She then provided a meaningful way for women to prevent pregnancy complications, a serious health matter that was frequently deadly or permanently disabling for women, by viewing her lived experience as the most trustworthy authority on her health. She constructed the pregnant woman as strong, sensible and in control of her body and health, key aspects of progressive womanhood.

The enormous popularity of cycling among women in the 1890's mirrored medical professional's great interest in studying and writing about the impact of cycling and women's health. As sport historian James C. Whorton noted, "[a]s women took to the roads, physicians took to their desks" (Whorton 1982, 273). Although they often stressed moderation and limited riding styles, by the mid to late 1890's there was a growing minority of doctors that were supportive of women's bicycling practices (Smith 1972, Strange and Brown 2002). Historians who have explored women's cycling have viewed the relationship of women cyclists and medical professionals as one of unquestioned obedience. The doctor is generally characterized as a "key figure, monitoring and regulating the doses of riding" like any other prescription under his control and supervision (Garvey 1995, 80). This proposed internalization of the medical profession's legitimacy is said to explain why professional medical discourse was so common among feminist, pro-cycling arguments.

Yet in the suffrage press, reporters strategically used this medical discourse to their own advantage and not to indiscriminately promote the profession's authority nor to view their cycling practices as only within the physician's domain. They frequently cited

specific doctors or expressed vague statements of support from the medical profession to add to their arguments, arguments that were often highly controversial and did not reflect the opinion of most doctors of the time. For example, in one report from *The Woman's Journal*, the author admits that the medical profession overall is split on whether to promote cycling, but then spends the rest of the text describing a medical article from one pro-cycling doctor. The author sums up this individual doctor's finding as "far from being dangerous to health, cycling has done more to improve the health of women than almost anything that has ever been invented" ("Physical Effects of Cycling" 1896, 240). This is a purposeful strategy on behalf of the newspaper. The author does not spend time weighing the pros and cons of the medical profession's stances on cycling to provide the most unbiased account. Instead, she included only one doctor's opinion, the option that was the most supportive of her pro-cycling position.

Authors similarly framed pro-cycling doctors as more reputable than doctors against women cycling simply due to their opinion on the matter. For example, one report from *The Woman's Signal* published an interview of a woman that advocated bicycling touring as a healthy vacation. The interviewee dismisses arguments that cycling is too medically dangerous for her by stating, "I cannot think of a healthier recreation for women. You know how strongly Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson [a prominent British physician] advocates cycling for women. We need no higher authority" (Tooley 1894, 168). Richardson is cited frequently in the suffrage press with high regard despite the fact that only one individual publication he wrote that promotes bicycling for women. The merits of this doctor or his publication are irrelevant, the newspaper does not provide a thorough look at his medical practice and research. Instead, this report successfully uses

the powerful image of medical professionals to add to this woman's narrative, not to simply promote Richardson's authority.

A similar use of medical discourse was to take specific, limited medical texts that often only marginally supported women's cycling and use them to frame women's individual stories within larger narratives of success and admiration. For example, one reporter from *Today's Woman* discusses a medical publication that researched the attitudes of cycling among a large sample of physicians ("Bicycling for Women" 1895). The reporter briefly describes the results of the research, that they are somewhat mixed and only partially supportive of cycling. Many doctors urged women to use a great deal of moderation, to the point of significantly limiting women's bicycling practice, and others discussed injuries they have seen among women patients from cycling. Yet, the author glosses over this and keeps the readers focused on the positive – most of the doctors believed riding, theoretically, did not cause harm, and a few voiced the possibility of it improving chronic conditions. The author concludes the findings by declaring, "[t]he benefits of bicycle exercise are now everywhere unquestioned" and recommend "use of the cycle by the lady readers" of the paper with the confidence of support from the medical establishment ("Bicycling for Women" 1895, 2). Similar to the use of Richardson's article, this reporter strategically used medical discourse to add to their own pro-cycling arguments.

Another example of such use was in *The Woman's Signal*, in which the author again cites Benjamin Ward Richardson's pro-cycling stance. Even though Richardson's work advises great moderation and warns women that too much excursion can lead to dangerous health problems, the author takes the doctor's basic ideas and uses them to

construct a sweeping narrative of the woman cyclist as now living in a modern, progressive era in which her practice attracts great admiration. She describes that “[t]he days are gone, happily for mankind, when it was thought unfeminine for a woman to cultivate general health... in the same manner as a man” and that even men now realize that “health is a condition of beauty” and treat the woman cyclist with both respect and desire (Miller 1898, 423).

Throughout these examples, the reporters use a strategy common throughout the suffrage press. These newspapers served specifically to keep progressive women hopeful and motivated by “emphasiz[ing] success... [and] continuing inspiration along with the news” during a decade when many concrete feminist goals were not being met (Solomon 1991, 15). The papers not only acknowledged the struggles of women cyclists (i.e. difficulties connecting with fellow riders, street harassment, sexism from doctors, etc.), but provided a way to conceptualize success in concrete, empowering ways realistic and attainable in their daily lives. On report of *The Women’s Signal* exemplifies this strategy quite eloquently: “it is only within the last decade that woman has begun to dream of an unfettered body... She dreamed and woke a bicyclist” (Holdsworth 1895, 345). Here, not only have women achieved their desire of liberation, but did so by their own actions, which are also available to women readers – cycling.

The suffrage press created a narrative of achievable success for many issues of women’s rights and reform, especially cycling, during a decade that many socio-political institutions served to repress feminist advancements (Carver 2008). As described, there was no widespread, mainstream acceptance of women’s cycling in the 1890’s, but instead isolated pockets of progressive support. Articles in the suffrage press frequently framed

the pro-cycling opinions unique to the newspaper as commonplace. This created a reciprocal relationship of influence between the portrayal of women cyclists in the suffrage press and the influence of progressive, feminist ideals on how they viewed themselves. Articles frequently discussed the empowering effect reading about cycling had on subscribers. Women cyclists increased their confidence by reading about other women who loved cycling and felt more connected to riders throughout the country. Women also improved their riding from tips published in the periodicals as well as their ability to respond to individuals they encountered against women's cycling with arguments from feminist writers. Often the writer's individual experience or what she witnessed among her social circles were the major sources of evidence to support these claims. This confident image directly influenced women's increasing cycling rates as the decade progressed, thus the image of success in the newspapers began to increasingly mirror women's daily lives (Mackintosh and Norcliffe 2007).

The suffrage press of the 1890's provided ample evidence of the empowering effects of women's cycling practices on their health. Writers used the newspapers as forum to challenge Victorian notions of health by reports, letters and testimonials about cycling. Their lived experience was lauded as evidence to question commonly held beliefs about cycling's dangerousness and to describe the profound benefits of cycling to their health. This disrupted the power of the medical discourse, as writers conceptualized themselves as having the agency to improve and control their health instead of leaving their health care choices under the jurisdiction of medical professionals. Cycling provided a unique avenue to construct a new identity of the progressive, healthy woman, a key project of women's rights activism in the late nineteenth century. Conceptualizing

women in such an empowering way worked not only to celebrate the woman cyclist, but also to provide the audience of suffrage press newspapers a new way to rethink their bodies not as a limitation, but as tool of empowerment.

“TO MOUNT MY STEED AND SET OFF WITH A MAP”:

TRAVEL, TOURING AND WOMEN’S CYCLING

While cycling disrupted and transformed many social practices and institutions in the 1890’s, historians credit cycling as completely revolutionizing travel and ushering in the modern tourism industry (Harmond 1971-1972). Cycling changed not only how people traveled, but also created unprecedented possibilities for tourism itself. Until the end of the nineteenth century, regular travel was greatly limited to the upper class and most people rarely left their region of birth (Aronson 1952). For those able to travel, trips were long in duration, planned months (if not years) in advance and transportation typically occurred via carriages or on horseback, which were notoriously undependable and expensive (Tobin 1973). While the railroad introduced more affordable travel and opened up huge areas of the country for travelers, railroad travelers were completely dependent on railroad timetables and routes for their travel (Aronson 1952). As such, travelers had limited flexibility and choice in destination or travel times. Railroad travelers often complained of overcrowding, lack of choice in traveling companions and unbearable heat in railroad cars as well (Tobin 1973).

The invention and resulting popularity of the safety bicycle provided a completely new way for individuals to travel. Bicycle touring and traveling created the modern,

independent traveler. A number of significant technological advances occurred in the 1890's, and many were concerned that Western societies' dependence on technology, and not the skills of individuals, was growing much too rapidly. The independent cycling tourist was framed in popular culture as both modern but refreshingly in control and in charge of his or her technology: "[a]s one article in a cyclists' journal put it, on a bicycle, you were your 'own master'" (Ebert 2004, 352). For the first time, the traveler was in control of the duration of the trip, route, number of stops and travel companions. Bicycle touring soon became incredibly popular among middle- and upper-class cyclists. Touring took many forms, including day trips to the countryside, overnight tours and routes that included multiple overnight stops (Ebert 2004). Many cycling clubs organized tours, although cyclists often traveled alone or in small groups as well (Griffin 2006).

Because travelers were no longer limited to railroad routes, new geographic areas became open to travelers for the first time throughout the United States, Canada and Europe (Norcliffe 2001, Smith 1972). Many of the areas cyclists were now able to explore were rural routes that lacked railroad stations or stops, leading to a "new discovery of the rural landscape" by city dwellers (Ebert 2004, 351). Bicycle travelers for the first time could easily explore the countryside that railroads would typically pass through and their travel plans were completely dependent on their own cycling abilities, interest and time (Holt 1985). In a memoir of cycling in the turn of the century, the author fondly remembered how "[o]n the bicycle you could go where you pleased, fixing your own schedule. This was *living*. Our horizons were broadening" (Kelly 1956, 70 italics in text).

Middle- and upper-class travelers' ability to explore rural areas fueled already changing conceptualizations of urban and rural spaces during this period. Due to the processes of urbanization and industrialization, by the late nineteenth century the city was increasingly seen as a "the picture of endless work, economic insecurity and boredom" with overcrowding, congestion and pollution steadily decreasing residents' quality of life (Holt 1985, 135). Individuals who worked in offices, factories and/or in many of the growing professions began to associate travel to rural areas with relaxation, rejuvenation and an escape from the pressures and mental strains of urban work and life (Harmond 1971-1972). This included everything from taking rides after work to month-long country tours in the summer. Bicycle advertisements in the 1890's often urged professionals to relieve themselves of the stress of office work via cycling. Advertisements frequently showed pictures of men and women cycling not in urban spaces but on lush country roads with rivers and mountains in the background (Harmond 1971-1972, Smith 1972). An 1893 article in the *Wheel and Cycling Trade Review* proposed this to potential customers: "to flee away for a few hours from the serious business of life, but there is no escape. But suppose you own a wheel. There is your escape... The time for the duties of the day is over" (Wheel and Cycling Trade Review 1893, 30 as quoted in Harmond 1971-1972).

While the bicycle was frequently viewed as "a vehicle of flight" for urban workers and professionals, it would be incorrect to argue that bicycle tourists of the 1890's left the comforts of urban living at home (Harmond 1971-1972, 241). While bicycle tourists typically navigated their own routes and made repairs on their bicycles by themselves, they were more likely to stay at hotels and eat in restaurants than camp and cook their own food. Bicycle tourists were ultimately able to "mingle with nature without

suffering from it” (Tobin 1973, 845). This led to the creation of an entire tourism industry centered on the specific needs and wants of bicycle tourists. Hotels, restaurants and shops targeted bicycle-based travelers, such as ‘The Bicycler’s Retreat’ and ‘The Wheelman’s Rest,’ and many locals developed fee-based activities for travelers during the day, such as tours of farms or sight seeing excursions (Tobin 1973). Many cycling clubs with upper-class members established their own rural cottages and would organize club rides to the cottages for vacations, including the Mowbray Club directed by Isabel Somerset (“Cycling for Young Women” 1893). The portable camera was another technological innovation incredibly popular among the middle class, and many cyclists would plan cycling tours specifically to take pictures of popular landscapes (Holt 1985, McCally 2008). The League of American Wheelman published maps, local guidebooks and reviews of hotels, restaurants and bicycle shops which were very popular among cyclists, a practice that would be copied later on by the American Automobile Association in the early twentieth century (Harmond 1971-1972). Many cycling organizations and magazines, as well as local newspapers, published bicycle routes with information on hills, mileage and local sight seeing (Tobin 1973). In Ireland, cycle touring became so popular that horse dealers repeatedly complained of lost revenue as customers increasingly traveled from rural towns to cities on bicycles instead of horses (Griffin 2006).

While bicycle tourism changed the mobility and leisure patterns of cyclists throughout North America and Europe, women were particularly impacted by the opportunities of bicycle touring. Women experienced many more social constraints than men in terms of which public spaces they could enter and still maintain their

respectability (Simpson 2001). As travelers, women were often barred from traveling, or at best could travel with a male guardian who set up and controlled the trip. Women's ability to travel on their own, even for day trips, was quite limited. Cycling tourism was one of the first times women could control their own travel and make their own decisions about trips. Although respectability required specific types of dress and travel decorum, women were able to explore public spaces in drastically new ways in the 1890's.

Women's ability to travel independently was a direct challenge to Victorian era assumptions about women's physical weakness, submissiveness and complicity regarding her place in the domestic sphere. Many women's rights reformers and activists during this period, including cyclist and temperance leader Frances Willard, placed "the bicycle – and the mobility it provided – at the center of feminism" and viewed it as "a no-nonsense way to advance the woman question" by highlighting women's capabilities (Hanson 2010, 5-6). Cycling in the 1890's has been referred to as the death of the chaperone, in which for the first time women (including young women) could travel in both urban and rural public spaces without a male escort (Vertinsky 1990). For example, in 1895 Louis Jeye declared, "[t]here is a new dawn, a dawn of emancipation, and it is brought about by the cycle. [Women are] [f]ree to spin out into the glorious country, unhampered by chaperon or even more dispiriting male admirer, the young girl of today can feel the real independence of herself" (Jeye 1895, 224 as cited in Vertinsky 1990, 77). Traveling independently meant women were not only responsible for being physically strong enough to reach their destination and intelligent enough to navigate the route, but also had the ability to repair their bicycle when needed on the road. In her

excellent analysis of images of women cyclists in popular periodicals, Patricia Marks argues that:

the proposition that a woman should care for her own machine (and as all bicycle riders know, tire inflation and oiling can become personal manifestos) meant a radical reinterpretation of the division of labor. The woman who traveled on her own wheels, then, whether she did so for a lark or for serious transportation, expanded her boundaries well beyond the home circle. She became a citizen of the world (Marks 1990, 409).

The strength, intelligence and skills bicycle touring required provide ample, concrete evidence of women's abilities to engage in cycling as proficiently and passionately as men.

In writing about their cycling practice, many contributors to the suffrage press included ideas and experiences about bicycle touring in their articles. In many of the articles, women cyclists stated that touring was one of the most enjoyable aspects of their cycling practice and encouraged readers to begin touring as well. In an anonymous 1893 article "Cycling for Women," the author begins her column by stating, "[g]iven a good machine, a fair road, and a fine day, no outdoor sport can complete with Cycling [sic]" and she goes on to specify her favorite part of cycling: "when all is said, the chief pleasure of Cycling [sic] is only to be had in touring" ("Cycling for Women" 1893, 134). The author then lists her opinion of the major benefits of traveling by bicycle, reasons that were common among many cyclists in the 1890's. She argues bicycle touring is better than traveling by railroad: "[t]he traveller by train knows nothing of the delight of journeying on the open road, or the beauty of the country through which he passes" ("Cycling for Women" 1893, 134). She regards the experience of rural travel quite highly, as she argues that a railroad traveler "may see the large towns, but he misses little

villages by the way, the old farmhouses... all these advantages are the cyclist's” (“Cycling for Women” 1893, 134). In her letter to *The Woman's Herald*, Edyth Johnson describes the positive effort touring had on her life: “[h]owever great the strain I am suffering from, I only have to mount my steed and set off with a map... and I find my weariness and headache disappearing” (Johnson 1893, 7). An article in *The Woman's Column* also documents the growing trend of couples traveling by bicycle instead of train for their honeymoons. The author reports this trend originated in Australia, but bicycle-based “wedding parties have been [spotted] in Europe... and are now on their way to the United States” (“Bicycle Costume” 1894, 2).

Some authors also used their reports and letters to describe cycling trips. In an 1896 report, an author identified as E.C. documents her recent bicycle tour through New Hampshire, which include a combination ride and hike up Mt. Washington (E.C. 1896). E.C. openly described the challenges she and her party faced during this difficult tour. She stated the road conditions were far from optimal. She was worried about “taking a header” (falling head first over the handlebars), as the muddy roads were littered with stones and sand (E.C. 1896, 220). In response to the challenging hills, E.C. admits “[w]e had expected to walk a great many of them – and were not disappointed” (E.C. 1896, 220). Despite “these discouraging conditions,” E.C. described her trip in overwhelmingly positive terms (E.C. 1896, 220). E.C. identified herself as “a city rider” who found the experience of “whizzing along” in the small mountain towns as a “triumphant joy” (E.C. 1896, 220). E.C. was particularly inspired by nature, including “the sweet mountain air, and the bird songs” of New Hampshire (E.C. 1896, 220). She goes on to express her admiration for the local cyclists she met on her trip who learned to cycle in such difficult

conditions. In the final paragraph of her article, E.C. encouraged readers to begin bicycle touring as well. Now that people have the option to cycle, she states that we all must “seize this opportunity and make the most of it” (E.C. 1896, 220). E.C. concluded that the possibility to experience such inspiring rural spaces should “summon us to take our wheel, good roads or bad, and sally forth rejoicing” (E.C. 1896, 220).

In her 1894 interview, Miss N.G. Bacon, secretary of the Mowbray House Cycling Association, described her experiences touring as well. When she first began cycling, Bacon states that she worked up to taking forty mile day trips. She soon experienced “the longing to fly through the air on wheels” became “determined to try a long journey alone” (Tooley 1894, 168). Her first cycling tour was “from London to Hastings, riding at the rate of seventy miles per day, allowing two hours interval for lunch” (Tooley 1894, 168). Touring helped create communities of cyclists and build social networks beyond riders’ own town or city. Ideas and tips were often shared (Tobin 1973). Bacon, for example, had been unaware of bifurcated cycling outfits until her stay at a YWCA during a three-week cycling tour. During this visit she met a woman named Miss Reynolds, who was wearing rational dress and convinced Bacon that “it was the coming thing” (Tooley 1894, 168). Frustrated with riding in heavy skirts, on the last leg of the tour, she vowed to “try to rid the wheel-women of... dangerous garment[s]” including long skirts (Tooley 1894, 168). Bacon soon became active in the dress reform movement with Frances Willard, Isabel Somerset and other members of the Mowbray club. The interview concludes with Bacon discussing her most recent solo cycling tour, in which she rode 1,200 miles throughout Britain, taking in many sight seeing tours along

the way. Despite rain and having to fix a broken handlebar, Bacon described this “adventurous ride” as “one of the most delightful rides I ever had” (Tooley 1894, 168).

Along with documenting their experiences as bicycle tourists, authors of articles in the suffrage press also celebrated women who traveled on their own and encouraged women to disregard social pressures to limit their bicycle-based travel. Annie Holdsworth acknowledges to readers of *The Woman's Signal* that “we are all unconsciously the slaves of public opinion,” but many of the benefits women take for granted only exist because of individual women’s actions in the past to challenge sexist conventions (Holdsworth 1895, 345). In terms of bicycle tours, Holdsworth states that it was not long ago when “no woman having regard to her social state and standing would have dreamed... [of cycling] unless accompanied by a gentleman as her escort” (Holdsworth 1895, 345). But because “a few women, of stronger individuality than average, ventured to go unattended... the traditions which said that women must not go alone” eventually dissolved and “now none but an imbecile would hold herself to any such observance” (Holdsworth 1895, 345). Throughout her article, Holdsworth encourages readers to model the strength of previous activists and reformers in both their cycling practices and overall efforts for women’s rights and reform.

While perhaps helpful to focus on the positive changes regarding social acceptance of women’s bicycle touring, Holdsworth’s image of complete acceptance was far from accurate. Cycling historians have documented the extensive and brutal harassment women faced while riding, which including verbal harassment, purposeful attempts to make the woman fall off her bicycle (pushing her off, letting dogs loose to chase her, inserting sticks into the wheels) as well as arresting women cyclists in rational

dress for disorderly conduct simply due to their clothing (Griffin 2006, Rubinstein 1977, Smith 1972). It was common for women to practice a number of defensive skills, including carrying carry pepper spray with them when riding alone, avoiding certain neighborhoods or areas known for harassment, and riding in groups for protection and witnesses (Simpson 2001, Ebert 2004).

Surprisingly, harassment was not an issue confronted by suffrage press authors. The only documentation of an experience of harassment is in an 1893 article in *The Woman's Herald*, in which the author describes an incident she faced while touring. She frames this incident as unthreatening and provides a smart retort to the comment, both to give readers a potential response if they experience harassment and as a communicative strategy to summarize her cycling ideals. The author describes that once while touring in rural Britain "a man remarked, 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself'" when she rode by him ("Cycling for Young Women" 1893, 404). The author states she "proceeded on my journey with a nonchalant air, thinking to myself, 'What matter what others say or think of us if our consciences are clear? Let us choose our own way in life, and take no notice of the world's comments'" ("Cycling for Young Women" 1893, 404). The author spends little time in her article discussing the incident, focusing on detail accounts of her successes while touring.

In the 1890's, cycling completely transformed the possibilities for travel and fueled the creation of the independent, modern traveler. Women were particularly affected by the opportunities afforded by bicycle-based travel, and this was often documented and described in the suffrage press. In the suffrage newspapers, articles about cycle touring were most often in the form of a personal narrative, documenting the

author's experience as a cyclist and traveler. Bicycle travelers were framed as women fully capable of the intellectual, physical and practical skills which touring required. This served to exemplify the image of the independent, adventurous and confident modern woman, which was a key project of suffrage newspapers and women's rights activism overall.

**“THE IDEAL OUT-DOOR SPORT”:
WOMEN’S CYCLING AND ANTI-SUFFRAGE RHETORIC**

Women who contributed to the suffrage press discussed cycling frequently and passionately, whether they were readers who wrote letters to the editors or presidents of national women’s rights organizations who composed policy platforms. Suffrage press authors framed cycling as a distinctly political practice. Cycling was located as part activist efforts to challenge Victorian conventions of women’s dress, health as well as increase women’s opportunities to engage in public spaces traditionally dominated by men. While suffrage newspaper editors published articles on a variety of political and social issues relating to women, these papers were funded either by organizations or individuals who viewed suffrage as the central issue to make women full citizens (Solomon 1991). Many women’s rights leaders in the 1890’s believed that suffrage would alleviate all of the other the social ills women experienced because women would be able to vote for candidates and referendums that reflected their desire for social change (Solomon 1991). Achieving suffrage was the highest priority even though women’s rights leaders during the 1890’s did not uniformly agree on strategies and ideology (Masel-Walters 1977).

Yet not all women's reformers and activists supported efforts to extend suffrage to women. Feminist historians rarely study women who opposed suffrage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, yet groups existed throughout the country and many leaders published texts, gave public speeches and even congressional testimony (Thurner 1993). In one of the few thorough investigations of anti-suffrage women activists, Maunela Thurner argues that contemporary feminist historians have stereotyped this group quite similarly as pro-suffrage activists did during this period; anti-suffrage activists are framed as selfish, upper class women who stalled suffrage gains because they did not want to lose their class status and refused to challenge Victorian gender ideology, especially that of separate spheres (Thurner 1993). Thurner challenges this assumption, stating that anti-suffrage women "ideologically ventured considerably beyond the domestic sphere in their efforts to forestall women's enfranchisement, portraying themselves as very much in line with and in favor of turn-of-the-century progressive reform" (Thurner 1993, 35). In her analysis of the texts and strategies of anti-suffrage women, Thurner argues that these women were active in the public sphere, ran organizations without support from men (unlike many pro-suffrage activists), and also that anti-suffrage theory and ideology was created entirely by women. Thurner also challenges the assumption that anti-suffrage women were remarkably different from women who supported suffrage. Many suffrage activists also came from upper class families and aligned themselves with ideology that served to solidify, not disrupt, notions of motherhood and the domestic sphere as women's natural place. Both pro- and anti-suffrage activists promoted and identified with the New Woman image of independence, education and employment, and perhaps most importantly "both groups declared

themselves to be deeply committed to women's public activism and social reform" and viewed women's organizations as central to this process (Turner 1993, 36).

Like suffrage activists, anti-suffrage activists also published their own periodicals to support their efforts. In publication from 1889 to 1896, *The American Woman's Journal* (*AWJ*) documented a variety of women's reform efforts and ideas from the viewpoint of the politically active, anti-suffrage woman. National leaders of the anti-suffrage movement edited the *AWJ*, which in some issues was also called *The American Woman's Magazine* and *The Business Woman's Journal* depending on the editor of the issue. The primary editor was Helen Kendrick Johnson, author of *Why Women Do Not Want the Ballet* and *Woman and the Republic*, the two most influential anti-suffrage texts written by a nineteenth-century woman (McHenry 1980, Turner 1993). Mary F. Seymour, a well-known journalist, businesswoman and educator, was also active in establishing and editing the periodical as well (Willard and Livermore 1893).

Not only is it incorrect to assume that all women activists in the 1890's supported suffrage, but also that pro-suffrage women were the only women writing about cycling within the context of social and political change. In fact, many women who opposed efforts for their own suffrage documented, discussed and engaged in cycling as actively as their pro-suffrage opponents. This can be clearly seen in *The American Woman's Journal*, in which articles about cycling were often published. Interestingly, the cycling articles in the *AWJ* covered women's cycling in ways similar to suffrage newspapers and only some issues reflected a more conservative viewpoint. The specific issues of concern to women cyclists, as well as the authors' stances on these issues, often mirrored those published in the suffrage press.

One of the most common cycling-related topics in *The American Woman's Journal* was women's cycling clubs. Reports for the *AWJ* celebrated the growth of women's cycling clubs. In Mary Barton Lamberton's report of cycling among young women, she describes the young cyclist as "whirling along to her favorite nook in the Park [sic], or to her club meet. Clubs? Oh yes. The modern woman is essentially 'clubbable'" (Lamberton 1891, 176). Another anonymous reporter agreed: "no sooner do we engage in a pleasant occupation than we desire to have others enjoy it with us... So the bicycle club develops" ("Out of Door Sports for Girls: Bicycle Clubs" 1893, 90).

Similar to suffrage newspapers, many reports celebrated the efforts of bicycle club leaders and interviewed them as authorities on cycling to further the education of readers. An anonymous reporter in an 1893 article interviewed Mrs. Madlen Newcome and Miss Hattie Smith, women living in New York City who were experienced in both establishing and maintaining successful cycling clubs. The author lists a wealth of advice from Newcome and Smith for women interested in forming their clubs. Newcome reports that the key to a successful bicycle club is "to have really interested riders... [who] will not lose interest and give it up in a few weeks" and she recommends sending out notices to potential members ("Out of Door Sports for Girls: Bicycle Clubs" 1893, 90). Upon having a solid membership, Newcome reports that one must manage "all kinds of red tape" including "officers... a name, emblem and colors," decision on whether or not to have dues ("Out of Door Sports for Girls: Bicycle Clubs" 1893, 90). Alternatively, Smith advises new club leaders to forgo membership fees as well as uniforms as long as every rider cycles in club colors and wears a visible emblem. In Newcome's club, members wear group colors their handlebars as well. Smith recommends "[o]ccasional social

meetings at members' houses" as well as group rides "arranged so that all may join them perhaps once a week, morning, afternoon or evening" ("Out of Door Sports for Girls: Bicycle Clubs" 1893, 90).

In Mary Taft's 1893 report on cycling clubs, she interviews Mrs. W.E. Martin who is "an expert cyclist" and "is familiar with all the ins and outs, joys and discouragements, which must be passed through in the solicitous care required to rear a bicycle club" (Taft 1893, 139). Martin estimates that it takes "a year or more" before a club is "in good running order" and after the first year the leader "must be constantly putting in fuel" (Taft 1893, 139). Martin goes on to describe the duties of women in leadership positions, which include "prompt attention to all letters" and "notifying members of meetings and club runs" (Taft 1893, 139). Martin also identifies what she believes to be "the chief secrets of building up a club" which is "keeping local papers posted" regarding club activities and functions (Taft 1893, 139). Martin believes this serves to critical functions: notices "interest outsiders to join" and spur "beneficial club pride among the members" (Taft 1893, 139).

AMJ reporters supported cycling clubs, focused on leaders and provided tips for club members as did reporters in suffrage papers. Yet one noticeable difference remains – the authors' treatment of co-ed and auxiliary cycling clubs. In the suffrage press, the cycling clubs that receive attention are clubs run by women with only women members. Clubs with both men and women members, as well as ladies' auxiliary clubs (which were a separate group affiliated with and under the governance of a larger men's club), were not discussed in the articles. Authors in suffrage press papers did not report on those clubs, and if they interviewed women who were members in a co-ed club, authors never

identified their club as co-ed in the article. Also, suffrage authors did not address whether clubs with men had any advantages or disadvantages compared to women's clubs. If one read only suffrage newspapers, one could easily assume co-ed clubs were by in large non-existent.

In *The American Woman's Journal*, authors not only acknowledged co-ed and auxiliary clubs but actually promoted their benefits compared to clubs limited to women. In Mary Taft's 1893 interview of cyclist Mrs. W.E. Martin, she specifically asked Martin to discuss her opinion on co-ed cycling clubs. Martin describes many reasons why she favors co-ed clubs, and Taft documents them in detail. While Taft acknowledges that there should be some "unmanned" clubs for "jolly little spinsters," her article focuses on the benefits of co-ed groups (Taft 1893, 140). Martin states that men "possess more of that desirable commodity, money" which increases the club's budget for entertaining (Taft 1893, 140). While women benefit from men's economic privileges, Martin states that women improve men's clubs by adding a "refining influence" and that "club runs are more enjoyable" because women cyclists ensure "there is no racing and 'scorching'" (Taft 1893, 140). Martin's opinion on women's influence reflects a common belief of the time. Many women, including reformers and cyclists, argued that women should be in public spaces to uplift and civilize what was viewed as unruly, immoral masculinity (Simpson 2001). Many women, including Frances Willard, viewed cycling with men as a key way to enact this ideology for the betterment of society (Norcliffe 2001).

In an 1892 article also by Mary Taft, in which a step-by-step outline is given in how to establish a bicycle club, the final step is "join[ing] the League of American Wheelman in a body" (Taft 1892, 90). This would structure the club as governed by the

national LAW, which as previously described, was notorious for excluding women, immigrants and African-Americans from full or partial membership. This issue is not addressed, and it assumed that the proper clubs are not independently run by women but are under men's clubs. The *AWJ*'s stance on clubs greatly reflects anti-suffrage ideology of limiting women's public roles in governance (Thurner 1993). Suffrage activists promoted the exact opposite ideology, that women should govern along side men as equals; thus, it is not surprising that suffrage newspapers focused on women's own cycling clubs.

Another area of cycling addressed in *The American Woman's Journal* was health. Similarly to suffrage newspapers, authors celebrated the health possibilities available by cycling and framed cycling as an exercise fully supported by the medical profession, even though many doctors wanted to limit women's cycling throughout the 1890's. For example, in an 1892 report the author states "[t]he opinion of physicians seems to be that only good can result from use, by women" of the bicycle ("Bicycling Riding" 1894, 315). The author also argues that bicycling is safer than horseback riding, and thus should be promoted for girls as well ("Bicycling Riding" 1894). Mary Taft documented the healthy effects of rural bicycle touring, stating that it "brings the health-giving properties of the country and seaside within the reach of the cyclist" (Taft 1893, 240). In one of two interviews with Mrs. W.E. Martin, Taft quotes Martin at length regarding her own beliefs about the health benefits of cycling. Martin states that cycling "is now acknowledged by leading physicians and athletes to be one of the best exercises. In propelling, balancing and steering, every muscle is brought into play... send[ing] the blood tingling through every vein" (Taft 1892, 91). Taft also highlights Martin's own health and athletic ability,

as Martin “is said to have taken more long distance runs than any woman in New Jersey” including multiple century rides as well as treacherous mountain tours (Taft 1892, 91). A short article by Frances Willard is also reprinted in *The American Woman’s Journal*, in which she states she is forgoing her plans to visit a summer resort this year, and instead “will obtain my exercise by riding pneumatic bicycle” (Willard 1893, 140). Mary Barton Lamberton concluded her article by encouraging women to begin cycling, as it has “passed beyond the stage of experiment, and become a recognized factor in athletics... very nearly approaching the ideal out-door [sic] sport for women” (Lamberton 1891, 177).

Dress reform was a topic of central importance to women cyclists, and as previously described, suffrage press editors published a variety of stances regarding what women should wear while cycling. In *The American Woman’s Journal*, reporters did not directly confront this debate nor provide the diversity of dress options as suffrage press editors had done. Reflecting their more conservative political ideology and unwillingness to engage in any practice that blurred the boundaries between men and women, authors provided a single vision of cycling attire: the conservative skirt. There was no mention of wearing bifurcated outfits without skirts nor were the benefits of different types of clothing discussed. For example, Mary Barton Lamberton reports that the proper woman cyclist rides “entirely unnoticed, and religiously avoids any article of wear that might seem conspicuous” (Lamberton 1891, 176). Lamberton reports that central to the respectable outfit is a “round, ungored skirt” made out of neatly trimmed dark flannel (Lamberton 1891, 176). The option of bloomers is not even mentioned. Mary Taft similarly reports that Mrs. Martin wears a skirt that falls six inches above the ground that made out of cloth approved by the League of American Wheelman (Taft 1892).

A column of various cycling news included the winner of a contest for best bicycle costume held by the *New York Herald* (“Cycling Notes” 1894). The winner, Mrs. Marie A. Reidselle, designed and created a cycling skirt “which is sloped out, divided and gathered on bands to fastened below the knee, giving the appearance of loose, full knickerbockers” (“Cycling Notes” 1894, 178). The outfit also includes an attachable, additional skirt “to be worn off the wheel” (“Cycling Notes” 1894, 178). It is clear that the author, as well as the *New York Herald*, only accepts the appearance of bifurcated outfits, not the actual outfits themselves.

A few articles in *The American Woman’s Journal* also provide riding tips and advice to new cyclists outside of clothing options. These tips are similar to those given in suffrage papers. In “Cycling Notes,” the anonymous author provides specific riding tips to “a world of beginners” including proper saddle and handlebar placement as well as how to place your foot on the peddle (“Cycling Notes” 1894, 178). While the author warns novice cyclists that “[y]ou can cripple yourself for life on a bicycle if you do not keep your wits about you,” she ultimately eases these worries by concluding that “[w]ith care, there is no danger in riding a bicycle” (“Cycling Notes” 1894, 178). Mary Lamberton provides similar tips regarding pedaling. Similar to suffrage press authors, she also advises new riders to start slow and gradually build up their skills. She urges readers “[u]nless you pine to be temporarily crippled, don’t attempt long runs at first, and avoid an over quick pace at any time” and that “the wise woman turns homeward when she is just *half* tired to death” (Lamberton 1891, 177 italics in text). Lamberton also recommends riding lessons for new cyclists.

Cycling was an inherently political practice by many women activists in the 1890's. As showcased in *The American Woman's Journal*, a pro-suffrage stance was not always necessary to support women's cycling and locate it in the context of women's activism and reform. While not all women working to impede suffrage efforts supported women's cycling, *The American Woman's Journal* illustrates that there were some anti-suffrage women who not only supported cycling, but also believed it to be a worthy topic of their political newspaper. Mirroring themes in the suffrage press, *The American Woman's Journal* discussed important issues of concern to cyclists including riding advice, dress, clubs, health and touring. While authors of the *AMJ* took a more conservative view of specific cycling issues, notably dress reform and association with men's cycling clubs, cycling was still framed as a political practice that was part of a larger effort to advocate for their specific women's rights platform.

CONCLUSION

As illustrated by authors of articles in suffrage newspapers, cycling was an important feminist project for women's rights activists and reformers in the 1890's. Cycling was not simply a hobby or sport, but complex, meaningful and highly political practice for women. When contributing to suffrage newspapers, women cyclists wrote powerful testimonials, reports and interviews to encourage women to start cycling and to commend women already involved in the practice. Authors used the suffrage press to provide much needed resources to women cyclists, by providing advice and riding tips that previously had been inaccessible to many women. Women cyclists challenged stereotypes of women's inability to ride and denounced the double standards women faced in the cycling world. Women's cycling reinvigorated stagnant efforts to reform women's dress. Suffrage press contributors actively documented and promoted their specific solution to the challenges of developing a woman's cycling costume, and ultimately provided completely new ways for all women, whether or not they were cyclists, to dress in empowering ways. The suffrage press provided a particularly powerful forum for women, as cyclists, to challenge and rewrite the cultural norms of health, reframe women's bodies as sources of empowerment and disrupt the authority of the medical profession. Women also used cycling to completely transform notions of

travel and to actively enter public spaces, and especially rural spaces, on their own accord. Even women activists who worked to limit their own suffrage still argued that cycling had an empowering impact on women's reform efforts.

My research clearly illustrates that to contributors of the suffrage press newspapers, cycling can best be understood in political terms and within the context of multi-issue platforms, strategies and ideologies to advance women's rights. While not all women contributed or even read suffrage newspapers, it is evident that those involved in the suffrage press utilized feminist ideology to inspire, promote and shape their cycling practice and their cycling directly informed their activist work for women's rights. Cycling did not simply liberate women, nor did it only reinscribe existing gender, race and class patterns of the late nineteenth century; both arguments simplify the complexities of women's experiences as cyclists. As shown in the suffrage press, cycling provided a unique avenue for women to imagine and promote many new visions of modern womanhood, all located in within a spectrum of gender constructions which outlined the progressive, healthy, politically active and independent suffrage press reader and author. Conceptualizing women in such an empowering way worked not only to celebrate the woman cyclist, but also to provide the audience of suffrage press newspapers a new way to rethink their bodies not as a limitation, but as an important vehicle to inspire and enact women's rights ideology in their everyday lives.

My research aims to continue, not conclude, the scholarly conversation on cycling and women's rights activism in the nineteenth century. In my thesis, I recognize the political importance of women's cycling in the nineteenth century and I provide a framework in which women's cycling and activism can be studied as a joint political

project. This leaves a number of implications for further research. My thesis directly challenges the scholarship of feminist and women's historians, as they have failed to either consider cycling an area worthy of study or challenge the male-normative narrative constructed by cycling historians. My research illustrates the possibility of studying these two bodies of knowledge together, thus furthering research in both cycling and women's history. Studying women's cycling and activism in the nineteenth century as a joint political project provides many more possibilities for future research. This includes, but is not limited to, scholarly investigations of women's cycling clubs in specific political campaigns; African-American women's cycling and political activism; and comparative research exploring women's activism and cycling in a transnational context. The historiography on the women's rights movement in the nineteenth century is neither static nor complete, and it still has the profound potential to inspire fresh, innovative approaches by scholars. Yet this can only occur if historians are willing to challenge and reimagine what is viewed as worthy of study. Conceptualizing cycling and women's rights as a joint political practice can inspire new scholarship that reflects the complexities of women's lives during this period and the many ways women engaged in political activism and social reform in their everyday lives. But, such important scholarship can only occur if women's cycling is first acknowledged as a political project.

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EDUCATION

University of Louisville, College of Arts and Sciences, Louisville, KY
Master of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies, May 2011
Concentration: Women's History
Thesis: "Cycling, Women's Rights and the Suffrage Press"
Advisor: Nancy M. Theriot, Ph.D.

University of Vermont, College of Education and Social Service, Burlington, VT
Master of Social Work, May 2006
Concentration: Health and Mental Health
Thesis: "Narrative Approaches with Domestic Violence Survivors Experiencing Mental Illness"
Advisor: Susan E. Roche, Ph.D.

American University, College of Arts and Sciences, Washington, DC
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Women's and Gender Studies, May 2004

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Graduate Student Mentor, August 2010 to present

Department of Women's and Gender Studies, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

- Provided academic, professional and personal support to first year graduate students.
- Served as speaker for department panel during new student orientation.

Graduate Teaching Assistant, August 2010 to present

Department of Women's and Gender Studies, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

- Participated in syllabus development, graded assignments and presented lectures for two undergraduate courses.
- Counseled students on assignments, readings and writing skills.
- Assisted professors in research related to coursework.

Graduate Assistant, Ideas to Action Quality Enhancement Plan, January 2010 to present

Department of Women's and Gender Studies, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

- Represented students in working group to implement university-wide critical thinking protocol.
- Assisted professors in assembling, analyzing and redesigning in-class exercises, exams and assignments for introductory undergraduate courses

Graduate Teaching Fellow, August 2004 to May 2006

Department of Social Work, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

- Participated in syllabus development, graded assignment and presented lectures.
- Counseled students on assignments.
- Coordinated community-wide service-learning groups for students.

Teaching Assistant, January 2003 to May 2003

Department of Women's and Gender Studies, American University, Washington, DC

- Participated in syllabus development, graded assignments and presented lectures.
- Counseled students on assignments and study methods.

Coordinator, Rainbow Speakers Bureau, August 2000 to May 2004

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Ally Resource Center, American University, Washington, DC

- Coordinated peer education program on GLBTA issues.
- Designed and administered statistic system of program evaluation and website.
- Delegated speaking engagements among panelists and spoke at programs.
- Developed new trainings and facilitated trainings every semester.
- Conducted media relations to university, local and national press.

PRESENTATIONS

"To be taught by your 'own kind': Power, Desire and Identity Politics in Women's Studies." *Gender Matters Conference, Governors State University*. University Park, IL. April 2011.

"'The bicycle equaled myself plus the world': Cycling, Space and Frances Willard's Usable Past." *Precarious Spaces: (Dis-)Locating Gender, 18th Annual Gender and Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Conference, Susan B. Anthony Institute, University of Rochester*. Rochester, NY. March 2011.

"Women's Studies, Students and the Discourse of Crisis." *2011 Thinking Gender Conference, Center for the Study of Women, University of California, Los Angeles*. Los Angeles, California. February 2011.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Youth Counselor, October 2008 to June 2010

Maryhurst, Inc., Louisville, KY

- Provided counseling and direct residential services in a psychiatric facility for teenage girls in state's custody.

- Coordinated crisis management with team of law enforcement, medical and social service agencies.
- Completed certification in Safe Crisis Management protocol.

Outpatient Clinician, June 2006 to June 2008

Howard Center, Burlington, VT

- Provided counseling, crisis management and case management services to high caseload of clients with severe mental illness.
- Coordinated care with inpatient and outpatient facilitates, law enforcement, state protective services and housing agencies.
- Developed and facilitated group programs for clients and represented agency in statewide trainings.

Graduate Intern, August 2005 to May 2006

Inpatient Psychiatry, Fletcher Allen Health Care, Burlington, VT

- Worked within interdisciplinary medical team on secure inpatient psychiatry unit.
- Facilitated sessions, assessments and discharge plans with individual patients, families and outpatient providers.
- Successfully designed and facilitated narrative therapy program for patients.

Shelter Staff, June 2005 to May 2006

Committee on Temporary Shelter, Burlington, VT

- Worked day, evening and overnight shifts at two shelters for homeless families.
- Provided crisis management with team of law enforcement, medical and social service agencies.
- Administered intake and referral systems for new clients and trained new staff.

Graduate Intern, August 2004 to May 2005

Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Montpelier, VT

- Developed and facilitated statewide trainings for anti-violence advocates.
- Lobbied Vermont lawmakers on specific policy initiatives to support violence survivors.

Overnight Supervisor, August 2003 to May 2004

Calvary Women's Services, Washington, DC

- Supervised 25 bed women's shelter during evening, night and morning shifts.
- Provided crisis management with team of law enforcement, medical and social service agencies.
- Conducted training for new volunteers and intake services for new clients.

Resident Assistant, January 2003 to May 2004

American University, Washington, DC

- Directed and supervised over 60 residents in an international residence hall.
- Enforced and documented policy violations for over 500 residents during weekly duty shifts.
- Provided counseling to residents and facilitated floor programs.

- Participated in staff recruitment, hiring and training.

Facilitator, Common Ground Support Group, August 2001 to January 2004

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Ally Resource Center, American University

- Facilitated confidential support group for GLBTQ and questioning students.
- Designed discussion topics, provided crisis management and individual support.

AWARDS

Carolyn Krause Maddox Prize, University of Louisville (2011)

Graduate Teaching Academy, University of Louisville (2010)

Member, Golden Key International Honor Society (2010)

Graduate Teaching Assistantship, University of Louisville (2010 to 2011)

Mary K. Bonsteel Tachau Scholarship, University of Louisville (2009 to 2011)

Mary Craik Scholarship, University of Louisville (2009 to 2011)

Graduate Teaching Fellowship, University of Vermont (2004 to 2006)

Academic Scholarship, University of Vermont (2004 to 2006)

President's Award for Outstanding Leadership, American University (2004)

Academic Scholarship, American University (2000 to 2004)