Advice on dress and grooming for business women in selected women's periodicals, 1920-1940

by

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INTRODUCTION

Justification

Several factors contributed to the large number of women entering the work force, especially as office workers, during the years from 1920 to 1940. In 1920 only 20 percent of the women in the population were employed outside the home; by 1940, the number had risen to almost 25 percent (Hooks, 1947, p. 3).

At the beginning of the 20th century, most women worked as household servants, farm laborers, factory operatives, seamstresses, and teachers. During the early decades of the century, a change occurred in the types of fields that employed women. The agricultural and manufacturing jobs showed a steep decline, while business and clerical occupations increased (Wandersee, 1981, p. 84). Jobs in business had a high social status among women, because salaries were higher and these jobs did not require physical labor (Baxandall, Gordon, & Reverby, 1976, p. 234).

The period between 1920 and 1940 was unusual because it was largely a time of peace when women were entering the work force by choice. Women's suffrage, the emergence of the new independent woman, and economic need may all have contributed to the increasing number of women in business (Marsh, 1924, p. 122). Unlike their unemployed peers, business women needed advice about professional dress and

behavior. Marsh (1924) stated, "Executives are on the lookout for a girl who knows how to meet people, who does not chew gum, who dresses properly, who can phrase a letter gracefully, who has judgment--in short the type of girl who has good standards of living and behavior" (p. 122).

Popular writers of 1920-1940 discussed ways for women to advance in business. Proper business attire was important to both employers and employees. Some companies created strict dress codes to enforce company standards. The Chicago Rail Company set rules for women employees in the summer of 1921. A New York Times writer reported that "styles of dress worn by young women are becoming embarrassing to the morale of the office. General appearance of girls should be such as is becoming to the office service" (Skirts vex office morale, 1921, June 25).

Purpose

I have found no published research on advice available to business women on dress and behavior in business for the period 1920 to 1940. Mitchell (1982) and deMarly (1986) both discussed types of work clothing worn for manual labor occupations, such as coal mining and agriculture, but do not mention white-collar women. This research is intended to provide insight into the types of advice available to working women on dress and behavior for the office. I propose to investigate working women's dress, concentrating

on the period from 1920 to 1940. Using primary sources of information geared to the working woman, I will examine advice on dress, behavior, and professional advancement available to business women during a period of changing social roles. Primary sources will emphasize magazines, supplemented by books and newspapers of the period.

Research questions

The following research questions are answered as part of this research:

1. How did the number of working women change during the years from 1920 to 1940?
2. Which women were working? What did it mean for women to work?
3. Which types of advice on dress and behavior were available to women office workers?
4. Were there changes in advice about dress in periodicals at any time between 1920 and 1940?
5. Was there a relationship between the writer's advice and his or her attitude toward women?
6. Which other sources offered advice to business women?

Definitions

1. business--the work or activities that satisfy human needs and wants by providing goods and services for private profit (Selden & Nanassy, 1984, p. 22).

2. dress--encompasses any form of bodily decoration or alteration (Kaiser, 1985, p. 6).
3. business etiquette--the rules of matters that are customarily observed in the relationships of business activities, such as pertaining to speech, dress, introductions (Selden & Nanassy, 1984, p. 23).

Limitations

1. I will study advice about women's clothing only, not men's wear.
2. I will analyze advice given only for the years 1920-1940.
3. I will focus on the content of the advice itself, not on the degree of adoption of advice.

Assumptions

1. Printed sources influenced women office workers.
2. Sufficient sources exist for this investigation.

Procedures

1. Identify primary sources, for the period from 1920 to 1940, that included advice on fashions for women in business.
2. Review early 20th-century literature relating to women's fashions, occupations, and societal attitudes toward women.

3. Analyze data and answer research questions using information gained through analysis of data.
4. Propose generalizations or hypotheses about advice and practices in office wear.

GENERAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE 1920s AND 1930s

The 1920s and 1930s were decades of change--politically, economically, socially, and technologically. Certain events that occurred in the 1920s proved to have a direct effect on the events of the following decade. To appreciate the effects of these events, it is necessary to understand some of the essential features of the period.

Business and industry

There were many changes in business and industry during the years from 1920 to 1940. According to Chandler (1969), during most of the 19th century, American manufacturing dealt largely with the processing of natural products, with small-scale production of metals, chemicals, stone, and glass products. It was not until after the completion of the "merger movement" that began in the 1890s and continued until 1903, that the modern structure of American industry began to appear (p. 269).

For the successful mergers completed at the beginning of the 20th century, the growth pattern continued with vertical integration until the 1920s (Chandler, 1969, p. 269). Vertical integration is the ownership of all services needed to produce a product by one company (p. 269).

The 1920s brought the development of the large, diversified, multidivisional firm in the United States. This diversification of companies was stimulated in part by an increase in research and development of new products. The multidivisional organization was exemplified by companies such as DuPont and General Motors, whose strategies were soon adopted by others in the automobile, chemical, and electrical industries (Didrichson, 1972, p. 204).

According to Blackford and Kerr (1986) during the 19th century, Americans built factories to make industrial products, and during the 20th century those factories began to diversify the products they manufactured. This development and manufacture of an increased diversity of products was prompted by important discoveries in the chemical and electrical fields. One of the largest technological breakthroughs was the adoption of electricity in manufacturing. By 1939, electric motors accounted for 90 percent of the power used in the manufacturing of goods (p. 272).

Kirkland (1969) suggested that the automobile and petroleum industries were two of the fastest-growing industries because of their increased productivity. The switch by industry from coal to gasoline and natural gas had spurred the growth and development of these two industries

(p. 457). Because connections with Europe were severed during World War I, American chemical companies had begun to develop and manufacture new products. During the 1920s, Congress protected the chemical companies, and placed very few restrictions on their research. For example, laboratories were refining or developing fibers such as rayon and nylon, which would provide the consumer and manufacturer with textile options other than natural fibers (p. 458).

Economic changes during the first part of the 20th century also encouraged the growth of the leisure industries. According to Blackford and Kerr (1986) Henry Ford's development of the moving assembly line to produce the Model T drastically lowered the cost of automobiles, making them affordable to many middle-class Americans. In 1915 there were 2.3 million cars registered in the United States; by 1929, the number had multiplied tenfold. The growth of the automobile industry spurred the growth of a number of related industries such as steel, petroleum, glass, and rubber (p. 271).

The popularity and the increased affordability of the automobile stimulated travel and the development of allied services. A standard work week shortened to 48 hours and positions that included paid vacations increased the amount of leisure time available to people (Kirkland, 1969, p.

460). By bringing a new mobility to Americans, cars linked the farm with the city. The differences between urban and rural living became more blurred (Blackford & Kerr, 1986, p. 273).

Radios and talking movies were both introduced to the American public in the 1920s. In 1927 the Federal Trade Commission was established to provide guidelines for radio frequencies, wave lengths, and programming. By 1940 more than 2000 stations were in operation across the country (Kirkland, 1969, p. 463). Moving pictures had been in use for several years, but the "talking pictures," introduced in the 1920s, became so popular that paid admissions to movie palaces reached more than 100,000,000 people per week, providing actors, producers, and studio owners with salaries that even people working on Wall Street could not achieve (p. 463).

The tobacco industry began to expand quickly when cigarettes gained popularity with men during World War I. Within a few years, it had become acceptable for women to smoke cigarettes in public, too. Eighteen times as many cigarettes were consumed in 1945 as in 1925 (Kirkland, 1969, p. 463).

Just as newly-available inventions such as the radio, movies, and cigarettes were being enjoyed by the public, people were able to exercise buying power without the

necessary cash through the use of credit. Allen (1931) asserted that the increased use of credit and profits from stock market speculations kept the factories running at high speed (p. 105). The development of consumer credit accompanied the evolution of marketing and advertising. Paying for goods in monthly installments became more and more common as Americans increased their use of credit buying. By 1929, installment buying accounted for 90 percent of sewing machine and washing machine sales, and about 80 percent of all radio, refrigerator, and vacuum cleaner sales (Blackford & Kerr, 1986, p. 276).

This expansion and increased efficiency, in combination with the evolution of giant corporations, dramatically altered the employer-employee relationship. These large corporations demonstrated a hierarchical form of administration. Such companies used salaried professional managers, who were career executives and who used their administrative talents to make most of the important decisions (Pusateri, 1984, p. 232).

Reich (1984) suggested that businesses who standardized and coordinated their work achieved greater efficiency. Management hierarchies that used sophisticated techniques to supervise and monitor subordinates gained a cost advantage over their competitors. Firms that invested heavily in machine production proved superior to those that did not,

while those that developed sophisticated managerial systems outpaced more traditional firms that relied on a system of less-defined communication and delegation of tasks (p. 48).

Pusateri (1984) observed that as the number of managers in large businesses multiplied, a large degree of specialization developed. Accounting, finance, and marketing offered career opportunities to those people who could gain expertise in those areas (p. 233).

Although industrialism remained a consistent force in American society in the early decades of the 20th century, the economy transferred its emphasis from heavy industry to production of consumer goods and services. This resulted in a shift in the types of employment that were available (Wandersee, 1981, p. 1). Rotella (1981) noted that the clerical force increased rapidly, so that the share of clerical workers in the labor force increased from 1 percent in 1870 to 10 percent in 1930. There was also an increase in the number of women employed as clerical workers (p. 61). Clerical work underwent dramatic changes during the early 20th century, in the types of work performed and the types of tools used. Offices became larger and began to resemble factories in the ways that the work was organized (p. 69).

Because of technological advances, the unit cost of producing clerical output was lowered. Mechanized, repetitive clerical work allowed cheaper labor to be

substituted for the more expensive time of managers. Much of the business communication that previously had been conducted in person could be done through the use of letters and memos (Rotella, 1981, p. 73).

The depression

On October 24, 1929, the stock market crashed. Allen, writing at this period, suggested that as the price structure of the stocks crumbled there was a movement to liquidate assets before they totally collapsed (1931, p. 326). Large investors tried to stabilize prices by pouring large amounts of money into the market, but they were unsuccessful (p. 338).

Allen (1931) asserted that although nearly three billion dollars of brokers' loans were liquidated, and the reserve banks lowered their discount rate, this did not stop the slide of the American economy into a depression. At first, the fact that there had not been a single failure of any large banks or corporations provided real encouragement to the American public, but all of the "poisons" were already present in the American economic system (p. 338).

The government and private business united to help identify the best actions to stop the economic crisis. As private investment declined, so did employment. By 1931, weaknesses in the American economy had contributed to a similarly depressed economy in Europe (p. 314).

People in the United States watched their savings disappear because of banks that failed. Millions of workers lost their jobs and business firms either went bankrupt or had to make severe cutbacks to meet payrolls and to keep their inventories stocked (Blackford & Kerr, 1986, p. 320).

The Banking Act of 1933 eased the fears of bank customers by creating the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, which guaranteed deposits up to $2,500.00 (Pusateri, 1984, p. 255).

Industrial production had declined to about 40 percent by 1933. Civilian employment dropped by almost 20 percent. Conservatively, one-quarter of the work force was unemployed. Extensive part-time employment may have meant that one-third of the population was without full-time employment (Walston & Robertson, 1983, p. 508).

By 1934, one year after the inauguration of Roosevelt, the number of commercial and industrial failures had declined and the amounts of exports had increased. This may have been partially due to the implementation of the Recovery Bill, which centered on better labor practices through fair trade, production, and fair wages (Pusateri, 1984, p. 225). However, the depression continued until American industry began to prepare for entry into World War II.

Incidents related to dress

Several articles on the topic of correct dress for the office appeared in The New York Times during the 1920s. Although these stories contain an Eastern slant in terms of location, they illustrate some of the problems that developed because of the large number of women working in offices.

Women employed in the Trenton, New Jersey, State House almost engaged in a revolt because the division chief had publicly requested that women refrain from wearing powder and rouge to work. The next day a new stenographer appeared in bobbed hair, long earrings, and sheer stockings. This led the chief of the department to issue such severe orders on proper dress that some of the women cried (1922, April 18, p. 18). Another article entitled "Denies flapperism exists in the state house" had the State Commissioner defending the actions taken by the department head. "It is indeed deplorable that a little friendly advice given to a girl or two out of a total of thirty leads people to think that the New Jersey State House is suffering from an epidemic of flapperism" (1922, April 9, p. 7).

S. W. Strauss issued an in-office memo hinting that girls would be well advised to eliminate heavy make-up and bizarre earrings. The bulletin entitled "What is a fine appearance?" stated that the "frump" in the office had been

eliminated. The best positions were earned by women whose ability was reflected in their dignified and business-like appearance. They recognized the need for neatness and simplicity in appearance (Firm censures flappers, 1923, p. 8).

The New York stock exchange firm of J. P. Blankard dressed both male and female employees in smocks. This was done for utility and neatness and to give employees a uniform appearance. The smocks were found to be economical and popular with customers (Wall St. firm dresses, 1925, p. 1).

During the 1920s older, more experienced women were publicly advocating sensible dress and behavior for women entering business. Mrs. Lake Forrest, President of Professional and Business Women suggested in a speech to association members, that they begin a national movement on behalf of simple and proper dress for the business girl. She hoped that some day women would prefer simple clothes for all occasions. Mrs. Forrest also suggested that business women eat three hearty meals per day, rather than lunching on tea and cakes. These fast, inexpensive lunches would result in bad health (Simpler dress advised, 1920, p. 12).

In a graduation speech given at the Ballard Secretarial College, Mrs. Lambeer, a business woman, advised graduates

to show deference to men and not irritate them with obnoxious behavior. Men and women had their places in the business world, different but equally important. "Charm of manner, a quick smile, a pleasing personality and amiability will take you far, but not unless backed by brains and ambition" (Mrs. Lambeer tells, 1925, p. 1).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on the role of women clerical workers in business has been reported by historians, including specialists in women's history, and labor history. However, I have been unable to find published research on the advice available to business women on dress and deportment for the office.

Women enter business

Several factors contributed to the emergence of women as predominant among office clerical workers. According to Jensen (1986) until the development of the commercial typewriter in 1873, "secretary" was a term used to describe a clerical position for a young man interested in business as a career. This position was generally considered to be an entry level job with a direct path to promotion and more responsibility. The adoption of the typewriter into the office and the use of stenography changed the role and gender of a "secretary" to a feminine one that did not imply advancement. "The doors of business life opened into newly-created enclosed rooms" (p. 47).

Modernization of the business enterprise system in the United States brought women into offices. Davies (1982) suggested the expansion and development of large corporations caused a rapid increase in the amount of

correspondence and record-keeping throughout the first half of the 20th century. This created a need for clerical workers and secretaries (p. 55). Clerical jobs paid more than other positions available to women, and were considered desirable (Baxandall, Gordon, & Reverby, 1976, p. 234).

There was a distinct increase over time in the number of women employed in the clerical fields. According to Rotella (1981) this increase was closely related to the development of advances in clerical technology. Two decades, 1880-1890 and 1910-1920, saw the greatest increase of women in the clerical field. The increase of the 1880s was related to the adoption of the typewriter and the revolution of office practice that accompanied it. The 1910-1920 decade was distinct because of labor shortages of men due to war and increased mechanization of office machinery and routine. Both the labor shortage and mechanization stimulated the application of scientific office management techniques (p. 168).

The mechanization contributed to a sexual division of labor in the office. Men held most of the managerial positions and women were employed in lower-level clerical jobs. This division was representative of the position men and women held outside the office, with men holding a leadership role in family relationships as well as work relationships (Baxandall et al., 1976, p. 234).

Not all women clerical workers were personal secretaries. Many worked as file clerks and stenographers. Business people believed that women excelled at these jobs because of their superior dexterity in manipulating office machines (Baxandall et al., 1976, p. 234).

Davies (1982) felt that because women were not entering industry in the large numbers they once had, a pool of female workers became available to meet the increasing demand of corporate America for clerical workers and secretaries (p. 59). Until the late 19th century the only jobs available to women with a limited education had been in industry. Clerical positions required a minimum of an elementary education and a business or typing course (Wandersee, 1981, p. 59).

Prior to 1900, most vocational business education was taught outside of the public schools. In the 1870s and 1880s a network of private business schools grew up in American cities to provide training for women seeking an entrance into the world of business. These schools developed the first courses in typing and stenography. The three decades following 1890 witnessed a rapid increase in enrollment in commercial business courses in public schools (Rury, 1988, p. 242).

By 1928 one out of every six high school students in the United States was enrolled in a business course. High

school courses were generally longer than those in commercial business schools; high schools also had the advantage of offering a wide range of other courses as electives and had the benefit of being free to students. The business schools came to be viewed as an alternative to the public schools, providing students who wanted to quit high school with another method of acquiring business skills before entering the job market (Rury, 1988, p. 243). Clerical work was one of the few occupations available to literate women because literacy was actually a prerequisite to obtaining office employment (Davies, 1982, p. 59). The need for office workers grew so rapidly during the 20th century, that the jobs could not have been filled unless companies were willing to hire women (Wandersee, 1981, p. 86).

Dress and the working woman

According to Yellis (1969) the large number of better-educated women entering the work force created a growing and profitable market for clothing retailers and manufacturers. Employed women were shrewd consumers, had more money to spend than housewives, and had greater need for a proper wardrobe. The economic power wielded by working women meant that they became the "trend setters" in women's fashions (p. 51).

Most of the available research on women of the early

20th century has emphasized women's struggle for independence and the changing image of women as they have fought for equality; the suffragette and the flapper exemplified the changes that occurred over a short period of time. In a study of early 20th-century periodicals, Smith (1974) focused on popular magazines for women and concluded that appearance was of great importance for the woman who worked in an office. Office discipline required women to minimize their natural shape, to take daily baths, and to wear conservative clothes (p. 9). My research expands on Smith because I am studying specific advice available to business women in popular literature of the 1920s and 1930s on dress and behavior for the office. I am also relating dress and appearance of women to office roles and the perception of women in society during the period.

Occupational dress was defined by deMarly (1986, p. 7) as "anything which anyone wears to work in." Both Mitchell (1982) and deMarly discussed clothing worn by women doing physical labor. deMarly (p. 143) used a picture of early 20th-century telephone operators with a description that mentions the development of new jobs for women in offices and stores. She pointed out that women of the time wore white blouses and dark skirts. Four-in-hand and bow ties like those worn by men became the fashion of the new, "independent" woman of the 1900s.

FASHION FOR WOMEN IN THE 1920s AND 1930s

The fashions of the 1920s and 1930s are very different from each other, and reflect the social events and beliefs of their respective decades. According to Laver (1969), there was a basic difference between male and female fashion. Male fashion followed the "Hierarchical Principle" and women's fashions followed the "Seduction Principle." Women's clothes reflected her relationship to men, or did, until women became "emancipated" and "entered politics" (p. 173). Women's fashions of these decades suggested women's changing role in society.

Batterbury and Batterbury (1977) suggested that the flat and angular silhouette that is associated with the 1920s was developed over the decade, rather than instantaneously appearing. Laces, feathers, and flowers were no longer popular as trimmings on clothing, but the emergence of the new "casual" style did not mean wearing businesslike costumes all of the time. An "aesthetic" of the casual look was needed, and a renewed interest of abstract values in art may have provided inspirations for simple practical designs (p. 294).

Slip-on frocks and chemises had a minimum of decoration. Pleats and gathers were used to concentrate fullness on the hips and the waistline was lowered to the hipline. Hems were at the mid-calf or longer. By 1922, short, bobbed hair

was the most fashionable hair style for women of all ages (Mulvagh, 1988, p. 70). The cloche hat, which resembled an army helmet, covered the forehead to the eyebrows and made the short, waved hair a necessity (Batterbury & Batterbury, 1977, p. 294).

By 1924, fashion magazines such as Vogue and Harper's Baza[a]r were showing dresses that hung from the shoulder in a straight line, deemphasizing the bust and hips. Many of the dresses featured decoration or interest at the sides in the form of pleats or gathers. Vogue (Six selections, 1924, p. 60) described the need of the modern woman for clothing that is appropriate for both day and dinner wear. This dress was to be a simple design and made of wool or silk (p. 60).

According to Hollander (1978) although women's dresses were designed to look simple, they still continued to be complex in cut and construction. Uncomfortable design characteristics of earlier eras such as long trains and whalebone corsets, were replaced with the problem of looking relaxed and simply dressed while being "exposed." Bad legs or a less-than-perfect figure could not be hidden (p. 339).

Corsets, which were famous for constricting the female body into a fashionable but unnatural shape, were not discarded underneath the simplified and apparently-relaxed styles of the 1920s. They were simply remodeled to

accomplish the flat-chested and hipless look of the times. Vogue (Mainstays, 1924, p. 76) described the goal of the modern corset to be a "slim uncorseted appearance." This statement would seem to be incongruous, but women were discovering that usually the ease and comfort of going without a corset resulted in rolls of flesh which somehow had to be eliminated. "Women of today must sit for long periods at a desk, and they must be able to purchase a corset that prevents sagging without discomfort."

According to Batterbury and Batterbury (1977) the hemlines of 1926 and 1927 were the shortest of the decade. They stopped just below the knee. Pleats, flounces, gores from the hip, and handkerchief points distracted from the amount of leg shown. Strings of long pearls were worn around the neck. Women covered their legs with flesh-colored silk stockings (p. 296).

Mulvagh (1988) suggested that most of the clothes featured in Vogue were inappropriate to the busy life of a working woman. The chic business woman was warned that sleeveless dressed were vulgar as were very short or tight dresses. The magazine also passed sentence on the "drab" shirt and serge skirt, traditionally associated with the suffragette or war worker, and recommended the one-piece black dress because women could easily use accessories to change the look of the outfit (p. 76).

By 1928, the hemline length for day dresses was gradually becoming longer. Harper's Baza[a]r (New York clothes, Feb., 1928, p. 76) stated that "the many-tiered arrangement with the irregular hemline has penetrated even to the daytime mode, while last season it was confined entirely to evening frocks." According to Winakor (1986) usually the 1920s are characterized as the decade of the knee-length skirt, which is a misconception because hemlines were below the knee from 1925-1929 (p. 7).

Batterbury and Batterbury (1977) wrote that by the end of the 20s, hats were folded back to expose the eyes. There was a return to the natural waistline and the use of drapery. The straight silhouette of the flapper "although inspired by profound social change, had died a natural death, the revolution that was its impetus having been accomplished." The "youth cult" of the 1920s had disappeared and the adult problems of the 30s were faced by a more adult image in fashion (p. 308).

Winakor (1986) suggested that during the early years of the 1930s the fashion illustrations had a sophisticated look that was lean and healthy. Manufacturers tried to copy the bias cut effect originated by the French designer, Madeleine Vionnet, but were only able to accomplish this task through "piecing" (p. 13). Many of the designs featured in Vogue and Harper's Bazaar featured this pieced effect.

The big news for the early 30s was the availability of a large array of hat styles. Vogue (March 1, 1932, p. 73) declared "whatever type of hat you choose, to start off the spring season--and whatever your age--let it tilt far over the right eye and rise up behind the left ear."

According to Bigelow (1979) the 30s provided designers with a challenge different from the appetite for innovations demanded during the 20s. Caught between the Depression and World War II, even the wealthy were often plunged into financial hardship. Hemlines dropped, waistlines assumed their "normal level", and detailing returned to "symmetrically organized embellishments" (p. 285).

As a reaction to the depression, the fashion world adapted with a certain amount of humor (Batterbury & Batterbury, 1977). Cotton evening dresses appeared and costume jewelry by designers such as Chanel featured crystal and colored glass beads. African- and Cubist-inspired accessories took the place of more expensive jewelry (p. 319).

An article in Harper's Bazaar (Adrian, 1934, p. 37) by the designer Gilbert Adrian discussed his thoughts on the attitude of American women to fashion. Women wanted to look attractive, but did not wish to spend a large amount of time or energy in the process. An American woman did not have the time to concentrate on being a visual object all day as

women of some European countries did. She wanted to be able to "jump into a little dress and look charming without contributing anything herself but slim hips and a pretty face." Fashion magazines were not the only instrument of fashion inspiration available to women. Movies had an effect on fashion ideas of the public, although indirectly. A film that featured contemporary dress might appear a year after its costumes had been designed and then the film was expected to run several years in the theaters around the country. Fashions featured were unique, and were usually classically designed to remain in style for a period of years (Batterbury & Batterbury, 1977, p. 324).

By the '30s, no man or woman in America lived in a location so remote that they lacked the opportunity to buy the available consumer goods of modern industry (Kidwell & Christman, 1974). In cities and towns, department and specialty stores featured the latest fashions. Mail-order catalogs were available to people who did not have access to the stores. Because of the improved production and distribution methods most people had the ability to dress well at a moderate price (p. 165).

PROCEDURES

The idea for this thesis topic developed during the second semester of my M.S. studies. My adviser had found an article on clothing for the working woman in a 1924 Vogue magazine and suggested this as an interesting area of exploration. In searching the literature, I found almost no published research on the advice available to business women in the areas of dress and behavior. Magazines had published articles giving women working advice about dress and behavior; these features were cited in The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature.

Although the number of women in the labor force began to increase during the late 19th century, I chose the time span from 1920 to 1940 because of changes in business and society. Even though these two decades were continuous chronologically, the major events that represent each decade historically are quite different from each other.

A preliminary search and suggestions by faculty helped me to define my research questions. The questions covered reasons why women worked, changes in advice about dress and behavior, and the relationship between certain types of advice and society's attitudes toward women.

Articles for and about working women were available in many types of magazines during the early 20th century. Magazines such as The Delineator, Mademoiselle, Woman's Home

Companion, Good Housekeeping, Ladies' Home Journal, Harper's Bazaar, Collier's, and Vogue carried articles on subjects of interest to working women on a sporadic basis. These magazines were labeled as "women's magazines" and were directed toward an adult female audience. All of the issues of each magazine were examined for each year (Table 1). I did not sample among issues.

The Delineator was published by the Butterick Publishing Company and featured fashion advice, illustrations, and patterns for clothing styles for women and children. Other articles covered domestic areas, such as budgeting and child care. Each issue featured a large number of advertisements for mail-order products. This publication was designed for a national audience because the same patterns were available in most areas and the advertised products could be purchased through the mail or retail outlets across the nation.

Harper's Baza[a]r addressed a cosmopolitan and sophisticated audience. A large number of advertisements featured New York City stores. Department stores in other metropolitan areas, such as Chicago, were also mentioned. Fashion news emphasized French and designer styles. Romantic fiction was also a standard aspect of each issue. Other articles dealt with such subjects as interior decorating and news of the East Coast social scene. Each issue of the magazine did provide a shopping directory of

Table 1. Table of periodicals consulted

Periodicals	Years Consulted
Collier's	1920-1940
The Delineator	1924-1937
Fortune	1920-1940
Good Housekeeping	1920-1940
Harper's	1920-1940
Harper's Baza[a]r	1920-1940
Ladies' Home Journal	1920-1940
Mademoiselle	1939-1940
Vogue	1920-1940
Woman's Home Companion	1920-1940

those stores across the country that carried the fashions shown.

There were articles for business women in the magazine, although not on a regular basis. For some women the articles featured in Harper's Baza[a]r would have been representative of a way of life and an attitude, but I suspect that many women would have read the magazine to gain ideas and advice for use in lifestyles that were quite different from those portrayed. Also, this publication provided a glimpse into how "the other half lived."

Vogue, like Harper's Baza[a]r, featured advertisements for New York City stores or products made in New York and available at stores nationwide. Most of the articles were about fashion and personal interests of women. Each issue also offered a buyer's guide, giving information about where to purchase pictured fashions. A regular feature included illustrations of sewing patterns that could be used to make the latest fashions. There was usually an article on how to dress fashionably on a limited budget. Cultural and society news for New York City was available in each issue, but it was not the major focus.

A unique idea used by Vogue was a shopper's service for women who wanted the fashions presented in the ads of New York department stores. For a small fee, plus the cost of the garment, Vogue service staff would purchase clothing for its readers. This service was only available for a limited number of garments in each issue, but it provided readers with an opportunity to obtain fashionable clothing not available through other mail order catalogs.

Good Housekeeping was a women's magazine that focused on domestic issues involved in running an economical and efficient home. Each issue concentrated most of its articles on the decoration and running of the home, fashions, beauty, and entertainment. I would suggest that this publication was designed for a wider audience.

Articles were not directed to either rural or metropolitan areas specifically. The advertising featured products available nationwide. Good Housekeeping carried some features for working women, based on the belief that these women would also be responsible for home management.

Unlike the other women's magazines which were designed for adult women of all ages, Mademoiselle was listed as the "magazine for smart young women." Each issue was developed around a theme of interest to younger women such as college, career, or wedding. Advertisements featured fashions that served multiple purposes, which were important to women on a limited budget. Editorial copy included advice on career, purchasing furs, and entertainment. The focus of articles changed according to the theme of the issue.

Interpretation of periodicals

In looking at the distribution of years among the periodicals used, I found that the dates of articles directed to business women were spread out within the period 1920 to 1940 (Table 2). Vogue had more of these articles during the 1920s than the other magazines. This would suggest that during this period there was an interest by both the editors and the readers in dress for women who worked in offices. As more women entered business, writers may have assumed that knowledge on correct dress and office manners was not more commonly understood. Therefore, items

Table 2. Table of periodicals cited

Periodicals	Date Articles Found
Collier's	1930, 1935
The Delineator	1930, 1936
Fortune	1935
Good Housekeeping	1924
Harper's	1926
Harper's Baza[a]r	1920, 1934
Ladies' Home Journal	1926, 1934
Mademoiselle	1939, 1940
Vogue	1924, 1926, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1932
Woman's Home Companion	1933, 1934

about correct dress for the office appeared less frequently in the 1930s.

Mademoiselle was the magazine most geared to the young working woman in both articles and advertisements. None of the periodicals carried articles specifically for the more mature, experienced working woman. This group must not have been seen as a large consumer audience. More mature women may have had families to support and, therefore, not had the extra money to spend on themselves.

Although I found data in other primary sources, these magazines provided a large proportion of my information. Each of these publications was available on a national level and each published articles specifically written for working women. I have also found very informative primary sources published by the Women's Labor Bureau, Fortune, and scholarly journals such as American Economic Review and The American Academy of Political and Social Science.

Because my topic investigates advice on dress and behavior available to working women, whether or not women followed the advice is only speculation. Information gathered from the literature was examined for content as well as context. The research questions were answered for each decade if possible, and then compared across the two decades. Data were examined for consistency and inconsistencies in the published advice. Originally I had proposed interviewing women who had worked during the period from 1920 to 1940, but this idea was abandoned due to the inability to find a representative sample. A question was added to examine business advice available in books.

FINDINGS FROM WRITTEN ADVICE

Question 1: How did the number of working women change during the years from 1920 to 1940?

The total number of women entering the work force rose steadily between 1920 and 1930, then leveled off slightly in 1940. Single women constituted the largest proportion of the women who were working, although the number of married women going to work also expanded during this period.

Census data for 1920 divided the number of working women into two categories--married and single. The single category included those women who were listed as never married, widowed, and divorced. By 1930, the categories had been changed so that "single" referred only to those women who had never been married and a third grouping, including both divorced and widowed females, was added.

The addition of the third group provides a much clearer picture of distribution of employed women by marital status (see Figure 1). Single women were the largest group of women working outside of their homes during these two decades. Although the total number of working women increased, the number of single, widowed, and divorced women who were employed in the labor force dropped, while the number of married, employed women continued to rise during this 20-year period.

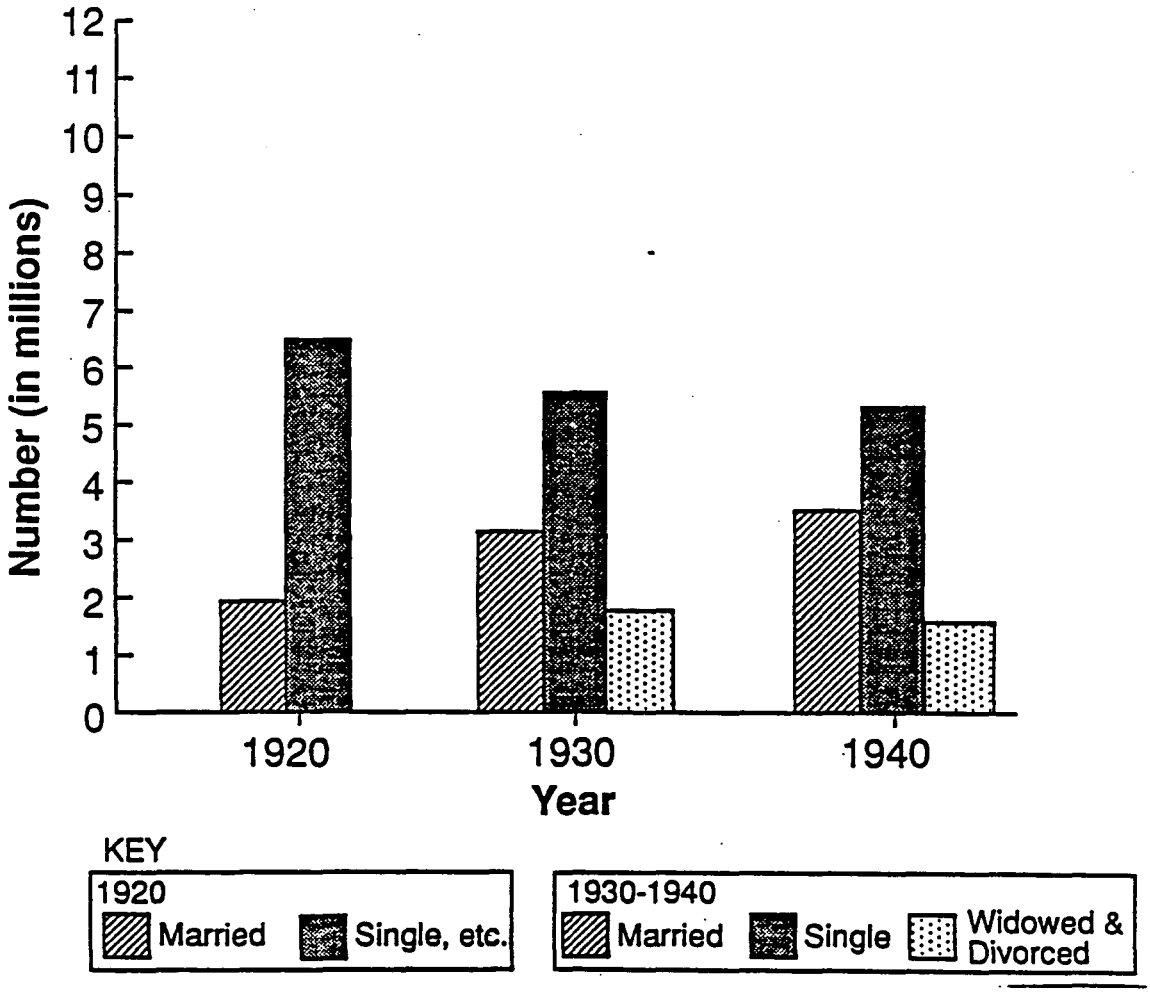

Figure 1. Population distribution and marital status of all working women 1920-1940 (Fifteenth census of the United States, 1930, p. 68; Sixteenth census of the United States, 1940, p. 111)

Parish (1939) suggested that the overall increase of women in the labor force during the 1930s came from those women who were the wives and daughters who had previously depended on fathers, brothers, or husbands for economic support. These women were seeking employment when their "standard of living" was threatened by male unemployment (p. 328).

According to Hooks (1947) by 1940 almost 25 percent of the total female population worked outside of their homes. The 30-year period from 1910 to 1940 brought significant changes in the types of jobs held by women. In 1910 only 28.2 percent of women in the labor force were employed in non-factory positions. This figure had risen to 45 percent by 1940. One of the reasons for the increase was the large number of women who were entering clerical occupations (p. 5).

The population distribution for clerical workers for the period from 1920 to 1940, as obtained from census records, shows that the number of women entering the clerical occupations increased between 1920 and 1930, then dropped drastically by 1940. I suggest that this drop was partially due to the depressed economic conditions of the 1930s. Total figures for working women did not include those who were on "Emergency Relief" and working for government programs.

Economic difficulties of industry during the early part of the 1930s led to rising levels of unemployment. The high volume of unemployment was due to the influx of people not usually employed. The largest increase in the labor force occurred among women in the younger age group (Parish, 1939, p. 325).

Numbers of married female clerical workers showed the largest increase during 1920 to 1930, while the number of single clerical workers fell. In the next section, I will discuss some of the reasons for the change in the marital status and distribution of clerical workers.

Questions 2: Which women were working? What did it mean for women to work?

> "In the business office women actually occupied new ground. They did not, it is true, occupy ground by fire and sword. They did not need to. The business office had never been occupied by rival males. It was a new land lying in the wilderness at the frontiers of industrial advance. Prior to the coming of the women, there had been no office in the modern sense (Women in business, July 1935, p. 50).

According to census data for the years 1920 to 1940, (Figure 2) both married and single women were employed as clerical workers. The number of married women in clerical jobs continued to rise during this 20 year period. During the period from 1870 to 1930 there were important changes in the economic contributions made by women. By 1930, one-quarter of all women were employed in the labor force.

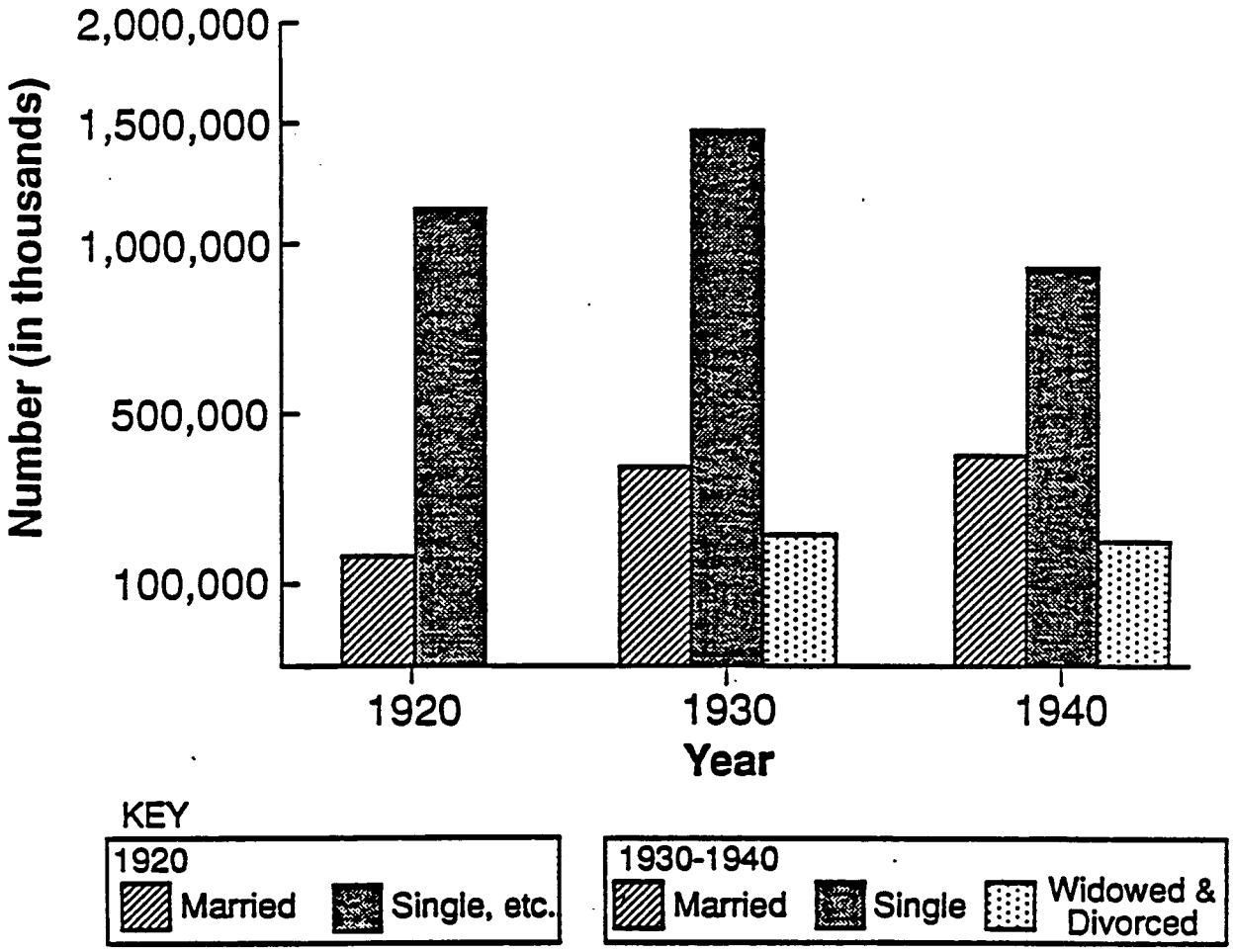

Figure 2. Population distribution and marital status of female clerical workers 1920-1940 (Fourteenth census of the United States, 1920, p. 69; fifteenth census of the United States, 1930, p. 68; Sixteenth census of the United States, 1940, p. 111)

Married women had joined the labor force in growing numbers, but single women still made up the majority of female non-farm workers. Most women in the clerical labor force were native born whites. Over 40 percent of all female non-agricultural workers were in white collar jobs; half of these were in the clerical occupations (Rotella, 1981, p. 1).

In 1934, Erickson conducted research in which she gathered information about 43,000 women in seven cities across the United States: New York, Hartford, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Des Moines, and St. Louis. Their project lasted 15 months and developed "because of the large number of women in clerical work, and requests for information about their employment" (p. 1).

Most of the women included in the data were young. Half of them were under 25 years of age and single. More than 25 percent of them had been with the same company for five or more years. The average work day was approximately seven hours, with the totals for the week being between 39 and 42, depending on whether or not the company was open on Saturday morning (p. 3).

The median salaries per month ranged from $87.00 in St. Louis to $109 in New York. Investment houses and banks paid the highest salaries, while mail-order businesses and publishers offered the lowest. The most lucrative positions

were secretary and supervisor (p. 11). When length of employment was correlated with salary, there was a definite increase in salary with years of experience. About 17.1 percent of the women had only a grammar school education and 74.8 percent had some high school education. Roughly 8.1 percent of the women reported completing some college work, but only 2.2 percent had attained a college diploma (p. 11). The high percentage of women who had completed some high school course work possibly reflected the change from attending commercial business schools to learning business skills through the high school curriculum.

In this survey, 84.8 percent of the women were single, 11.8 percent were married, and 3.4 percent were widowed or divorced. The unusually low number of married women in the survey may have been due to a failure to report change in marital status to employers because some firms fired married women. Atlanta had the largest proportion of employed married women and Des Moines had the smallest percentage. This may have been due to the fact that many of the women in Des Moines became farm wives who then worked in the family agricultural business (p. 13).

Coyle (1929) suggested that there were several reasons for "the high esteem clerical positions have been regarded" (p. 181) by women. There had long been a social stigma attached to employment in manual work, and a high social

status to work that used the brain rather than the back. The office occupations were usually clean, they did not require manual labor, and the hours were short. The income was not very high, but it was constant. The clerical positions also had certain benefits such as vacation and sick leave (p. 181).

Wandersee (1981) maintained that during the early decades of the 20th century many middle class men were not paid enough to support their families according to the American Standard of Living. The term "standard of living' refers to a level of economic aspiration (p. 1). These families either had to live beyond their incomes, or rely on a second income. Both of these alternatives characterized many families during the 1920s and 1930s, and strongly influenced the entrance of married women into the labor force (p. 1).

One writer (Women in business, August, 1935) discussed the causes and consequences of the entrance of women into business. According to the writer, the office created a social institution and placed in charge of this arena the "American Girl." And anyone who can "endure the dreary monotony and dress on the meager wage can do the work" (p. 50). According to the author, the only reason most women were willing to work for such low wages in positions which

had no path for advancement was the possibility of marriage (p. 55).

Although the article was published anonymously, it would seem likely that the author was male. The author marveled at the ability of office workers to dress well on a limited budget. One picture portrayed women eating lunch and the caption read "keep luncheons with the $2.40-a-week maximum permitted by a "25-a-week pay check. Fortunately for the stenographer it is still chic to be slender" (Women in business, August, 1935, p. 50). It was assumed that the office worker could not afford enough food to gain weight (Women in business, August, 1935, p. 50).

Fortune (Women in business, August, 1935) suggested that the relationship between women clerical workers and the office was based on sex. But it was not, in the accepted meaning of the word, a sexual relationship. The blonde stenographer with the "sleazy stockings and the redundant breasts" (p. 55) was not its symbol. The iconographic symbol of the office was the competent, agreeable, "thirty-odd-year-old, intelligently dressed woman who sat in imperturable self-respect behind secretarial desks at many of the major offices across the country" (p. 55).

Thousands of female clerical workers were said to be "living in the richest Victorian tradition, the lives of daytime wives." Many of the best paid secretaries performed

the duties of a wife, running personal errands, giving consolation and encouragement; Fortune suggested that the death of these women's bosses would mean a "painful widowhood" (p. 55).

Although the clerical occupations maintained a high social status among women, these positions were notoriously badly paid except for those women who were personal secretaries or supervisors. It may not have occurred to an employer to wonder how women managed to live on their salaries and still look so well dressed and groomed. He could have noticed "that most of his young ladies look as though they were accustomed to something very much better than misery" (p. 90).

According to Marsh (1924) the road to economic independence was not easy, but a woman with brains and perseverance could achieve it. There was a growing number of well educated, young women from comfortable homes who were traveling to New York City to work. These women wanted to use their talents and ambitions to achieve success in the world (p. 122).

Business men of the city were raising their hiring standards in response to the large number of well-qualified female applicants. There were well-paid positions available for women with common sense and decision-making skills. These women were advised to come to the city with at least

$200 for living expenses until they could find employment. Salary increased with experience, and between two and eight years of gradual climbing was needed to advance in the world of business (p. 122).

Marsh (1924) also advised women that they would not meet eligible men until they had risen in the office and in society.

> Men of the kind you know at home, who are persons of good family, with correct social and business connections, are not within your sphere when you are a self-supporting girl in New York City. In the first place, the men that would interest you have business connections with people of position and social standing--and a presentable bachelor is welcome to any hostess. Then he is likely to have a fraternity house or college club here, and there he will find friends; and last if he has not friends, he at least has the money to go to the theater or amuse himself in some other way denied to the girl who can barely make ends meet (p. 127).

This quote emphasizes the wage differential between men and women who were starting out in business. It was presumed that men would be able to achieve the correct social contacts much more easily than women. Also, men had the money to pay for entertainments not available to women on their entrance level salaries.

The author (Women in business, August, 1935) included the clothing budgets of several female office workers. For some women living on their own, or in lower-paying positions, the amount spent on clothing and cosmetics was low. One $15.00-per-week typist spent $50 a year on clothes

and $10 on cosmetics. A married secretary making $45.00 per week spent $800 a year on clothes and $20 on cosmetics. This was possible because the woman's husband paid for the home, food, and insurance. And a $120.00-per-month typist, who lived with her parents, spent over $600 on clothes and $10 on cosmetics (p. 51).

One major variable in the amount of leeway office workers had in their budget was their living arrangements. It cost women less to live with their parents and pay for board than it cost to live independently. Also, the amount of responsibility married women had for the daily household expenses was a variable in the amount of money they had available for clothes and make-up.

Clerical work not only offered women the opportunity to use their brains rather than physical strength, but it also reflected their role in society. Women that would normally have been organizing a household and running a family, were instead running machines and taking care of their male bosses. One of the incentives for women entering into office work may have been the opportunity to meet eligible bachelors who would allow them to retire from the office and become housewives.

The 1920s marked the beginning of a new era for women. Gaining the right to vote and the novelty of women working outside the home made earning a living an alternative to

marriage for single women. This could account for the majority of working women being single.

The increasing number of married, divorced, and widowed women in clerical work in the 1930s may have emphasized the increasing acceptance by society of employment for women. The depression led to a large proportion of society being unemployed, and this is reflected in the drop in the number of women employed in the clerical field. Also, as the male bread-winners of families lost their jobs, wives may have found work in offices.

Question 3: Which types of advice were available to women office workers on dress and behavior?

> The best-dressed women are those with attractive appearance. And for this honor I would nominate the young American business woman! She with moderate salary and often great responsibilities has somehow solved, each for herself, the problem of looking well all day, every day (If at first, 1934, p. 35).

Several themes were covered in the popular literature available to women on business dress and behavior. These included purchasing durable clothing, maintaining propriety in dress and manners, dressing on a limited budget, preserving hygiene, and balancing work and home life. Ladies' Home Journal (If at first, 1934) suggested that the discussion of fashion for the business girl was not the same as that of the business executive, who had more time and money to spend on clothing than the clerical worker. These

women had to buy wisely and make money stretch to meet all of their needs. Most of their shopping had to be done during lunch hours and on Saturdays (p. 32).

Vogue (A guide to chic, 1926) the business woman was deserving of special attention because her occupation required her to look good and at the same time wear clothing that was sturdy. She had to be at work by nine in the morning and would not have an opportunity to change her clothes until dinner (p. 70). Thornley (1930) asserted that youth and a good figure, plus the ability to make rapid decisions, eased the frustration of acquiring the proper wardrobe for business (p. 30).

Business women were encouraged to take their cue from businessmen. Vogue (A sound plan, 1930) suggested that no one was better groomed, better pressed, or more carefully coordinated than the male business executive. Although women may have seen his business attire as a uniform, columnists proposed that women could adopt these principles without forfeiting individuality or femininity (p. 35).

According to Vogue (A guide to chic, 1926) it was better to have a small number of better-quality dresses in styles that would last for several years. A woman needed a color scheme before she could make any purchases. Some writers suggested black as a color for the basic pieces, plus a light tone and a bright primary color for secondary pieces

and accessories. The most expensive items, such as a good wool coat were to be chosen first. If possible, a fur coat was a good addition to the winter wardrobe after the purchase of a wool cloth coat (p. 70).

In contrast, Matlock (1926) urged women to buy higher priced items, such as coats, in January when they would be on sale. This was one way for women on a tight clothing budget to purchase items of good quality and still have enough money left for accessories and smaller items such as lingerie (p. 123). Fortune (Women in business, July, 1935) claimed that the average clerical worker spent $20 a month on clothes. The most costly items were silk stockings because most women needed at least one pair per week at 50 to 70 cents per pair (p. 55).

Two Vogue articles entitled "A guide to chic for the business woman" from 1924 and 1926, discussed the role of jewelry in the wardrobe of the working woman. It was necessary for women to wear a small amount of jewelry to relieve the plain dresses of the period; business dress required simple necklaces, such as imitation pearls, or brooches and small earrings that harmonized with the colors of the outfit (A guide to chic, 1926, p. 142).

Thornley (1930) encouraged women to upgrade the quality of the clothing that they purchased. If a dress did not have a matching coat, it was appropriate to ask the buyer in

the store about having a coat made. Some stores encouraged their customers to be creative in the purchase of their clothes (p. 38).

She also urged women to buy simple leather pumps with a medium heel for work. The nice thing about the fashion for simple pumps was that no one had to know that women could not afford as many pairs of shoes as they would like to have had (Thornley, 1930, p. 38).

Vogue suggested a basic wardrobe (A guide to chic, 1924) that included a coat and skirt with two blouses, one that matched the coat lining and a darker blouse that matched the color of the coat. A small, plain hat completed the ensemble. A crepe de Chine dress with a scarf or piece of fur was also to be included (p. 99).

Using a multi-year plan was suggested by several authors in the planning of a working wardrobe. Anderson (1928) in the Journal of Home Economics proposed that teachers help students to develop a realistic clothing budget for women who worked. This article would have affected a younger audience of high school girls just beginning to work. The issue of clothing budgets for working women was prevalent enough for the subject to appear in the academic literature.

Vogue (A guide to chic, 1924 and 1926) both suggest that women should please themselves in choosing the basic colors for their clothing. Other articles provided information

about general wardrobe plans, but did not discuss the relationship between choice of wardrobe color and personal coloring (If at first, 1934, p. 33).

Matlock (1926) suggested that to be considered well-dressed, women were to take time to study the fashions in at least one magazine per month. It was important to be conservative in the choices of clothing pieces that were worn for more than one season, but dresses to be worn for only one season "could be as ultra-modish as your age and figure becomingly permit" (p. 122).

Women who worked in offices were reminded by authors of books and articles to always consider propriety in their choice of clothes for the office. Even in the hot days of summer, the clerical worker was supposed to stay away from thin dresses that showed "untidy underclothes, crumpled by the heat." A slip was mandatory, so that a woman's legs would not show when the sun shone on her skirts (MacGibbon, 1935, p. 99).

Vogue (A guide to chic, 1924) proposed that sport, garden party, or afternoon reception dresses were out of place in an office. Short sleeves were not considered proper for office wear. Elbow-length sleeves were permissible, although long sleeves were best. The sleeveless gown was considered to be vulgar (p. 99).

Writers suggested that the trouble with clerical workers was that they dressed for work with the thought of going out socially directly after work. Those who went to work in the morning dressed for evening were not suitably dressed for the office. The one-piece, collarless dress was seen as an alternative because with a change of accessories it could be made more or less formal. Simplicity in the choice of dress, with interchangeable accessories, was one way to stretch a limited wardrobe (p. 99).

In contrast, Woodward (1924) felt that business women did not need advice on clothes and manners for the office, and that wearing sleeveless dresses in the summer did not affect a woman's ability to type. "The long day is the best time most girls have to look pretty. Then, why shouldn't they look just as seductive and dangerous to men as they know how during these important hours?" (p. 570).

According to Babcock (1930) it was essential for the business woman to be feminine without being sexy. The right clothes were important and, due to the declining cost of copies of designer clothing available in the stores, it was possible for the secretary to use a wardrobe plan and be as well dressed as women executives.

MacGibbon (1934) suggested that a great deal had been written about correct dress, but little had been written on office manners. She did not feel that it was necessary to

restate rules such as not wearing sleeveless dresses to work. "Girls of good taste would rather wear street clothes to dances than dancing frocks to the office if they can't have both" (p. 35).

MacGibbon (1935) emphasized the importance of daily hygiene. She prescribed a daily bath and a shampoo every two weeks. It was important to keep the clothes, as well as the body, cleaned. A minimum of make-up could maintain healthy complexion. If a woman was healthy and getting enough sleep, all that she needed was rouge and lipstick (p. 35).

Women were encouraged to keep a small box of beauty aids in one of their desk drawers. Then during the day they could take this box to the dressing room to make any necessary repairs. Also on the nights when women were going directly from work to dinner they could add more make-up for an evening look (MacGibbon, 1935, p. 88).

Many of the articles in popular magazines discussed correct dress for the office, but columnists also presented advice on office manners and suggestions for success in the field of office work. Emphasis was placed on the fact that status in the office was dependent solely on the importance of the position occupied. According to MacGibbon (1934) this rule applied outside of work also. If a woman accidentally met one of her employers after work, it was

common courtesy to say hello and the next move was to come from the person holding the superior position (p. 36).

In an earlier article MacGibbon (1933) asserted that although good manners were as much asset in the office, as in social life, the rules were totally different. A woman was to expect no concessions because she was female. The basic rule of office etiquette was that status depended on the importance of the position a person held. It was important during business hours to remain impersonal and to forget outside events (p. 54). MacGibbon reminded women that the office was not the place to speak about personal affairs. However, "there are exceptional occasions when we need to remind those over us that we are not machines, that we are human, as this is what enables us to carry on" (MacGibbon, 1933, p. 54).

Roberts (1935) described an interview with Kay Francis, an actress who was a secretary before beginning her movie career. Francis believed that women needed to learn to leave their work and business attitude at the office. Women needed to strike a balance, to become well-rounded individuals. Professionally, it was important to show that they were competent, but they didn't need to be cold or unappealing in their personal lives (p. 14).

A writer in Mademoiselle (Shermund, 1939) discussed some of the most often ignored rules of etiquette in the office:

> It seems the female at work is given to girdle-hitching--an exception certainly to the rule that all unaffected gestures are charming. She engages in marathon phone conservations with the men in her life, which can hardly be classed as heavy industry. She gossips, and lays herself wide open to gossips. She wears garments about as subtle as a Rocket's and, in a decor dominated by desks, about as appropriate. Her slip traileth like the arbutus in spring. . . and what would arbutus be doing in an office? (p. 50).

According to Woodward (1924) except for love, money or influence, stenography was a woman's shortest path to a more powerful job. It had always been assumed that enthusiasm, exactitude, and hard work were all that was needed to make money in business. These qualities could help a woman hold a job, but had nothing to do with making money. In order to make money, she needed creativity and daring (p. 565).

Marsh (1924) suggested that many young women went to New York City to get jobs as clerical workers. Twenty-five dollars per week was the highest salary a beginning office worker could expect to receive. A strong, "fighting spirit" was needed to live on this amount. Women had to manage without a great many things they had taken for granted at home (p. 124).

Popular magazines of this period also carried articles about the cost and benefits psychologically to the working woman. Vogue presented an anonymous article concerned with the unhappiness of husbands who had wives who worked (Women's business, 1929). The author suggested that romance

and a little domesticity were all a husband asked of a wife, but instead he got efficiency. And in becoming more efficient, the woman found inefficiency in her husband. The writer complained that women should learn that matrimony was a business with which working women seemed to be losing contact (p. 69).

According to Roosevelt (1930), working represented a freedom for many women. And one way this freedom could be measured was through a weekly paycheck. Many women threw away the advantages of education and breeding with which they had grown up, for a paycheck, and took "positions with salaries about sufficient to keep them in car-fare, all for the temporary exhilaration of having a job" (p. 45).

This article was written before Eleanor Roosevelt became the First Lady. She emphasized that women wanted to prove that they had the capability to earn money whether or not they needed to make a living. She commended volunteerism for the woman who did not need a job, because of the economic situation of the time. She also encouraged women with capital and ingenuity to start small businesses that would provide jobs for others (p. 102).

Marston (1936) suggested that if women wanted to compete with men on an equal basis in the business world, they would have to endure unpleasantness, and gain an understanding of male ruthlessness and learn to calculate their moves by

observation. One of the basic gender differences between men and women was the greater dominance of men and the compliance of women. When women no longer acted as compliant creatures, their positions would rise to male levels (p. 7).

Other authors believed that working could make women better wives. According to Bennett (1920) the working woman could meet her male companion on common ground. Their mutual interests were not just romantic, but stretched over all aspects of their lives. They could be lovers and friends which made the perfect relationship (p. 58).

An article in Mademoiselle asserted that careers could give a woman a new personality or rob her of all of her charm. This happened when a woman took her job too seriously. It was the desire to oppose their "natural make-up" that caused unbecoming aggressiveness (Odmark, 1940, p. 91).

Most primary sources acknowledged the importance of proper appearance and behavior in obtaining and keeping a clerical position. Simplicity in dress and an unobtrusive attitude were two keys to success as a clerical worker. The idea was to dress in quality clothing pieces without drawing the attention of superiors or peers. If people commented on a woman's clothing, something was wrong with the appearance.

During the depression salaries of some workers were cut; this would have meant less disposable income to spend on clothing. This may have been one reason why magazines such as Vogue published fewer articles headed toward the working woman.

Some writers feared that women would not be able to separate their work and social lives. This concern may reflect the novelty of women working during these two decades. The long-term benefits and consequences were not yet known. People were unsure that society was ready to give up its old idea of women as nurturers and "help-mates" of men.

Question 4: Were there changes in advice in periodicals about dress at any time between 1920 and 1940?

Most of the advice on the subject of dress presented in periodicals remained very similar between 1920 and 1940. Illustrations of suggested clothing showed changes in style, but the advice was general and relied on the common sense and "good taste" of the readers in using these suggestions in the design of their working wardrobes. Suggestions such as devising a wardrobe plan, maintaining personal hygiene, and using minimal make-up were prescribed by several authors during this period.

Vogue (A guide to chic, 1926) suggested that a tailored suit had no place in the wardrobe of the business woman,

unless her position required her to be outdoors often (p. 148). This idea changed during the 1930s because suits were being shown in both Vogue and Harper's Bazaar as suggestions for office wear. These suits were worn as a total outfit, rather than pieces that could be mixed-and-matched.

By 1930, broader fashion had changed, and suits had become a fashion alternative for everyday wear. Ladies' Home Journal (If at first, 1934) suggested that a tailored or tweed suit was good economy because it was possible to blend seasonal wardrobes with it. A knit suit was another possible office outfit (p. 34). Even earlier, Babcock (1930) advocated the suit with a jersey blouse for the office. It allowed women to go directly from work to the country (p. 36).

One of the biggest changes between the 1920s and 1930s was the emergence of the suit as an alternative for daywear. Many of the suits pictured in Vogue and Harper's Bazaar during the 1930s were designer originals that were high-styled with fur trim and exaggerated features that would not have been appropriate for the office. Suits featured in these periodicals under the country and college-wear categories were much simpler in design and would have been seen as more appropriate for work.

The siphoning-down process for suits and dresses from designer levels to retail stores models (or ready-to-wear)

may have meant that the average woman was wearing styles a year or two older than those that were pictured in the magazines. Also, the styles of the suits may have become less exaggerated and more practical as they were reinterpreted for the popular consumer market.

Question 5: Was there a relationship between the writer's advice and his or her attitude toward women?

The author's attitude toward women, especially working women, was evident in many of the articles that appeared in periodicals between 1920 and 1940.

Both male and female authors talked about the dangers involved in having a career. Odmark (1940) suggested that a woman's career was fine as long as it was kept under cover. And it was possible to make "a killing" in the office as long as women are willing to acknowledge that a woman's place was still at home (p. 91). As a woman, Odmark was expressing her own opinion about a woman's primary role in society.

On the other hand, Marston, a male psychologist (1936), suggested that being female in the business field was fine if she could survive working with "werewolves" or males in the big, bad world of business (p. 7). It can not be said that either all male or all female writers held the same view of career women.

Many of the articles written in support of women in business were written by women who had themselves succeeded in this vocation. Writers such as MacGibbon (1934) and Woodward (1924), who had achieved some success as women executives, encouraged other women to enter the business arena as clerical workers and rise to higher positions through promotion. Both gave advice and tips on dressing properly, living on a clerical worker's salary, and using initiative to impress superiors.

Male authors expressed concern about the ability of women to survive the male competitiveness of business. This may have reflected the reluctance and insecurities of men having to compete in the business arena with women, especially in a field that in the past had been predominantly run by men.

Writers' opinions varied from being very supportive to very negative. Most of the female writers not only supported women working in the business field, but encouraged them to use their intellect and creativity to rise above the position of secretary.

Question 6: Which other sources offered advice to business women?

Etiquette books, secretarial practice handbooks, and books specifically written for business women provided information on dress and manners for the working woman.

Eichler (1923) in the Book of Etiquette concluded that there was nothing more conducive to respect and trust than subdued tastes in clothes. Any woman who was fashionably dressed in dark, simple clothes would fit easily into the business environment. This book gave wardrobe advice for women appropriate to many occasions (p. 181).

Harmony in dress (1926) suggested that having one main color in the wardrobe saved both time and energy in deciding what to wear each morning. Because all of the pieces would go together, the woman wasted no time worrying if the colors coordinated. The business woman was told to set her clothing priorities in the following order: cleanliness, neatness, and finally, smartness in style (p. 83).

The business "girl" was told never to wear frilly sleeves, low necklines, unpressed collars, or clothing that made her self conscious. "A stenographer who continually adjusts her straps or fusses with her hair can distract the dictator, and lessens her employer's respect for her" (Harmony in dress, 1926, p. 84).

Frederick (1937) wrote his Standard Business Etiquette for all people engaged in business. The section on etiquette for secretaries told women to never wear exotic, odd, strongly colored, or formal clothes to the office. Clothing was to make a woman appear unobtrusive and business-like (p. 3).

Loso (1937) designed Secretarial Office Practice as a textbook to provide a comprehensive business course in office procedures to help students better understand various office duties. The secretary was supposed to be loyal to her employer at all times. Proper dress was also emphasized as an important aspect of success in business. Office workers were to select clothing according to the level and type of position that they held (p. 125).

Books for working women were more than handbooks: they provided support and encouragement that was not always available in society or popular literature. Women were told to improve themselves in business and personally. Hoerle and Saltzberg (1919) argued that once established in a job, a woman should not be content to stay at the same level. She could achieve advancement through initiative. It was important to learn everything possible and then discover new ways of doing things (p. 246).

MacGibbon (1935) in Manners in Business discussed the introduction of visitors, getting along with superiors, relationships with co-workers and socializing at the office. MacGibbon also wrote for magazines such as Ladies' Home Companion, and while some of the information appeared in her magazine articles, the book was a more comprehensive guide to the etiquette and political skills needed for success in the business world.

According to MacGibbon (1935) if a woman was correctly dressed for office work, she would not stop men in the elevator or cause a commotion among her peers. "It is harder for women in the lower salary range because employers still expect them to be as well groomed as women executives. Through some miracle of hard work and self-denial, many of them accomplish the impossible on small incomes" (p. 40).

Quayle (1932) discussed personality development, decision making, and self-fulfillment. By feeling better personally, women would have more success in their careers. An indicator of mental health was the clothes women wore. A healthy body, mind, and emotions made a person want to make a positive impression on others (p. 42).

The main difference between the information provided in books and in magazines was that books could provide information in more depth. Also, the books could deal with subjects such as menstruation and "sexual urges" that may not have been thought appropriate by magazine editors and the public. This was true for the books written specifically for business women, rather than the more general etiquette books.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The following conclusions were developed after analysis of the available data. I would conclude that there were two groups of women in the labor force, those who were working until they married and those who worked for the independence both economically and personally.

Clerical workers were expected to dress well on very small salaries, which also had to cover all of their living expenses. Authors encouraged women to buy a few quality pieces rather than using their limited money for a large number of cheaper, inferior quality pieces. I would question whether women actually followed this advice. While buying quality garments such as coats and shoes might have meant that they lasted longer, being forced to wear the same outfit several times a week could be very monotonous.

Several major themes developed in studying the advice available on dress and hygiene. It was suggested that women formulate a wardrobe plan before making any purchases. A few quality pieces based on a single color scheme, in combination with brightly colored accessories would provide a practical wardrobe for the office. Grooming and proper hygiene were to be maintained at all times.

The findings of this study suggest that magazines available to women claimed to be the purveyors of good taste on the subject of dress and grooming. The advice in these

magazines was general and expected women to adapt the advice to their own lives and circumstances. I would argue that the rules for proper office dress were relatively stringent, although there were choices within those rules. All office workers were to appear proper and unobtrusive.

Many of the articles referred to women who worked in the clerical field as "girls." This term encompasses all clerical workers, regardless of age or marital status. I would suggest that this term implied their position in the business hierarchy, and the fact that they did not have any authority in the corporate arena.

The reasons that women went to work may have changed between 1920 and 1940. In the '20s, women were just beginning to attempt to establish themselves as individuals. Having obtained the right to vote and the daring mood of the early '20s may have stimulated some women to work in order to establish their independence. By the '30s, there appears to have been more emphasis in periodicals on home and the family. The total number of women employed in the clerical fields decreased, but the percentage of employed married women continued to increase. The depressed economic situation may have forced many women to remain employed when they would have preferred to be at home.

Writers expressed fear that women who worked would carry their business attitudes into every aspect of their personal

lives. Most of the women authors supported the employment of women, while most of the male authors saw only pitfalls and problems for the "weaker" sex in the corporate world. The difference in attitudes may be because women perceived employment as a means of independence and men feared that their superior role in both business and domestic affairs was being threatened.

Implications for future research

The next step for this research would be to broaden the time to cover the period from 1870 or the earliest date when popular literature became available on the subject of dress for women in business. It might be possible to develop trends in advice for women in the business field over a longer period. Another possibility might be to look at the depiction of employed women in popular fiction during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

An interesting idea would be to look at the ways department stores catered to the employed woman during the early 20th century. Were special departments or promotions developed to meet the needs of this growing population? Store records or newspaper advertisements for personal shoppers may provide insight into this idea.

Advice such as the development of wardrobe plans and wearing colors that compliment a woman's coloring is still given in the 1990s. A comparison between advice on business

etiquette for the periods 1920-1940 and 1970-1990 would allow researchers to analyze similar and contrasting trends for these two periods.

SUMMARY

During the early 20th century, there was an increase in the number of women entering the work force, especially as office workers. The focus of this research was to identify the types of advice available to office workers in popular women's magazines, and to explore how this information changed during the 20-year period from 1920 to 1940. Research questions focused on which women were working, what it meant for women to work, advice available on office dress and etiquette, and changes in advice over time.

Primary literature such as Harper's Baza[a]r and Vogue was searched for articles written for business women. Primary sources, such as census figures and government labor bulletins, provided social and economic information about the numbers and types of women who were employed in offices.

Writers encouraged women living on small salaries to plan their wardrobes carefully before making any purchases. A color scheme based on a single color for major clothing pieces, a neutral color for other pieces, and a bright color for accessories could provide a well-coordinated working wardrobe with just a few quality pieces.

Women who worked in offices were reminded to consider propriety in their choice of dress. Etiquette demanded that evening and party clothes were not appropriate for office dress. Proper hygiene and a minimal use of make-up could

have a positive effect in how a woman was evaluated by her superiors.

Authors conflicted in their opinions of whether women should be employed in business occupations. Some writers felt that women were wasting years that could have been devoted to marriage and family. Others suggested that a job contributed to a woman's self-esteem, and, therefore, could make her a better wife and mother.

Information on dress and office behavior appears to have remained generally constant from 1920 to 1940, with variations being attributed to various writers' opinions rather than specific social or cultural changes.

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