

“Embodied Selves”: The Rise and Development of Concern for Physical Education, Active Games and Recreation for American Women, 1776-1865

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Introduction

Although the question of equal rights for members of the female sex was raised during the founding of the New England colonies (as, for example, when Anne Hutchinson challenged the Puritan theocracy of Boston),¹ such equality has yet to be fully reached in America in fact (or in law) in 1977.² The 1970s witnessed a growing agitation for “women’s rights” and, with the enactment of Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, objections to discriminatory treatment of members of the female sex have been increasingly voiced. Among the more visible thrusts of recent Title IX affirmative action efforts has been that which focuses upon women’s sports and physical education. There are times when one might be almost inclined to believe that modern women’s emancipation is intimately bound up with her athletic ability--or certainly with her physicality.³ (The role of the perception of one’s--in this case woman’s--corporeal being in the establishment of selfhood and self-worth is a topic which has not yet received sufficient attention in histories of physical education. The enormous importance of the interaction of “body” and culture, especially for women, is a topic far too complex to be treated here, however. Readers who are interested in the subject of sexuality and culture and the development of the self should consult the works of professional researchers in such fields as anthropology, psychology and sociology, as well as some of the more recent scholarly and popular works on the subject.)⁴

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The 1970s is not the first time that concerted efforts have been made in the United States to draw attention to the lack of equality afforded women in social, educational, political and economic life. Neither, is it the first time that efforts have been made to improve the general condition of women. Nor, is it the first time that there have been endeavors to draw attention to the physical needs and abilities of women or attempts to improve their health and “physical education.”⁵ Stirrings for expanded educational opportunities, for better health care, for the recognition of women as worthy corporal beings and for “women’s rights” had already reached noticeable proportions in the United States in the decades preceding the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, often called, the single most important event of the nineteenth century women’s rights movement. Such efforts grew in number and intensity until the dislocations of the Civil War temporarily impeded their progress.

Surely, these early endeavors did not advocate the type of *athletic sport* which has occupied so much of the Title IX discussion of the 1970s. The type of organized sport with which we in the twentieth century are so familiar did not develop (for men, much less for women) until at least the mid-1800s. Many of these early proposals, however, did encourage a variety of simple games and active pastimes (as well as calisthenics) for girls and women, and it seems reasonable to argue that, at the least, they helped to establish a climate favorable to the development of both curricular physical education and extra-curricular sports for females in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The acknowledgement that girls and women might appropriately “take more active exercise” was important in fostering the social and cultural circumstances which opened to them the more strenuous and spectacular forms of activity which characterize the formalized and structured sports available to women in the twentieth century.

The Eighteenth Century Beginnings

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries American women possessed relatively few political, legal, even social, rights. Like their counterparts abroad, they were bound by law to their husbands. The same reasoning which could be—and was—used to invoke and sanction” . . . the principle of inequality in the distribution of wealth amongst men . . . to be acquiesced in as a permanent condition of society,”⁶ could also be used to support the contention that women were not equal to men. This did not mean, of course, that women were unaware of the disparity between their rights and those accorded men, nor that they were disinter-

ested in trying to remedy, the situation. In the minds of many women (and some men) the proposition that all men were created equal, which the Declaration of Independence had supposedly promised, became translated into the contention that, *if all men were created equal, why not women?* While it might have been industrialization which made it possible for women to finally gain emancipation in the twentieth century, an important and early influence was the stream of ideas which flowed from the eighteenth century “Enlightenment” and was articulated in works like Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* and the writings of liberals like William Godwin and the famous—or infamous—Mary Wollstonecraft.⁷

The America which by its Declaration of Independence had proclaimed that all men were created equal did not, in 1776, extend this same concept to members of the female sex. On May 7, 1776 Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John, observing that while the founding fathers were: “. . . proclaiming peace and good-will to men. . .”, they insisted upon “. . . retaining absolute power over wives.”⁸ Two years later Mrs. Adams again wrote to her husband lamenting the “. . . trifling, narrow, contracted education . . .” which women in America received and the way the subject of female education was either neglected or ridiculed.⁹ In August 1775 the *Pennsylvania Magazine* published an article entitled “An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex” in which the author encouraged greater acknowledgement of the rights of women, even though their duties in life might differ from those of men.¹⁰ The *Massachusetts Magazine* implied, in 1789, that attitudes were becoming more favorable toward the subject of female education.¹¹ In 1790 this same journal began a series entitled “On the Equality of the Sexes” in which Judith Sargent Murray, writing under the name “Constantia”, deplored the depressed conditions to which women had been subordinated, and proclaimed that if women were to be “. . . allowed an equality of acquirement, let serious studies equally employ our minds, and we shall bid our souls arise equal in strength.” It was, Mrs. Murray contended, the limited education, employment and recreation permitted to women which had “. . . enervate[d] the body and debilitate[d] the mind; . . . ”¹² Another early spokesman favoring a somewhat improved female education was Dr. Benjamin Rush, physician and Professor of Chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania. As a member of the all-male Board of Visitors of the Ladies’ Academy of Philadelphia, Dr. Rush addressed a gathering of students and their families in 1787, declaring that in this newly created republic, “. . . ladies should be qualified to a certain degree by a peculiar and suitable education, to concur in instructing their sons in the principles of liberty and government.” Concerned about the health of young ladies, he stipulated that dancing might be pursued as a form of healthful activity.¹³

The first sustained argument in favor of the “rights of women” to be published in America is usually held to have been written by Charles Brockden Brown, often called the first professional man of letters in the United States. Brown’s *Alcuin: A Dialogue* was published in 1798. (The first two portions of this small book also appeared in serial form in 1798 under the title “The Rights of Women”).¹⁴ Brown considered the customary separation of the sexes to be most injurious, observing that boys and girls “. . . associate in childhood without restraint, but the period quickly arrives when they are obligated to take different paths. . . .”, and this does not benefit either. From their earliest years, Brown maintained, men and women require the same type of care and instruction and it is illogical to believe that one sex will find physical vigor, suppleness and health more valuable than will the other sex. Since the limbs and organs of both sexes are basically the same, he held, there must, obviously, be one best diet, regimen and type and amount of exercise to develop the human body regardless of the sex of the individual.¹⁵

The Early 1800s

In a pioneer, frontier country, such as America was at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it is certain that large numbers of women found themselves in circumstances where strenuous physical demands were made upon them daily. Many frontier women, and probably a high percentage of town women, were physically worn out by the demands of family responsibilities and domestic occupations. Especially in the northeast many worked long hours in mills and at similar employments. (A distinction was made, of course, between “women” and “ladies”). How much time most American females actually had for a cultivation of their minds or bodies, even if custom had deemed such activity appropriate, is highly questionable. The most serious impediment to their progress, however, was the prevailing attitude which relegated them to a dependent and subordinated life. The expected, one might almost say the ordained, role for women in the nineteenth century was marriage and motherhood. Moreover, during the “Victorian period” the image of the helpless female became increasingly pronounced. The extent to which this ethic prevailed was noted by many foreign observers. Harriet Martineau, who visited America in the 1820s and 1830s, offered a prime example when she observed that in America, “. . . wifely and motherly occupations may be called the sole business of women. . . .”¹⁶

A cautiously-phrased request for the amelioration of such limitations was provided in 1818 by Hannah Crocker Mather in her *Observations on the Real Rights of Women*. While the author acknowledged that the

duties in life of each sex might properly differ, she contended that God “. . . has endowed the female mind with equal powers and faculties . . .” to those given to men. After they have completed their domestic duties, women have a right to improve their literary and scientific abilities. Mrs. Cracker was also aware of the need for greater attention to women’s bodily welfare. “The constitution and habit of the body,” she wrote, “has a very great effect on the mind of either sex. . . .” The relationship between a sound body and a sound mind is no different for women than for men and those who are most vigorous and animated are usually also more cheerful and able.¹⁷

By the third decade of the nineteenth century a general zeal for social reform of various kinds had become evident in America. Religious revivalism and temperance movements flourished, abolitionism was gaining momentum, reformers established a variety of utopian settlements, the common school movement was under way, and incipient “women’s rights” crusades were forming. While the vast number of Americans still accepted the thesis that women were inferior to men—hence, that it was legitimate to limit their activities and opportunities—a growing number found such inequality to be objectionable, if not downright intolerable. There were outspoken “feminists” like Frances Wright, agitators for special causes like Emma Willard and Catharine Beecher, reformers like the Grimke sisters (who combined advocacy of women’s rights with other social causes), and those like Margaret Coxe who were much more conventional in their views. Some were champions of suffrage and more or less total equality; others were scandalized by such requests, believing that woman’s role in life differed from that of man. There was, however, one subject upon which most of the ladies—and a considerable number of men—were in rather general agreement; this was improved education for members of the female sex—even though they might disagree considerably as to what form that education should take). For the very liberal, women had the right to full development of all their abilities; for the more conservative, it was clear that an education which was limited to morality and “the accomplishments” would be of little value in managing a household, (and should a husband die, a widow must be able to insure that her young sons received a proper education). Some type of improved female education seemed indicated. Educational, popular, and even some medical journals took up the subject, devoting a surprising amount of attention to matters of health and “physical education.”¹⁸

When William Russell began publication of the *American Journal of Education* in 1826 female education, physical recreations, and physical education received extensive attention. The first issue carried a five-

page article entitled “Physical Education” which declared:

The subject of the following article is daily attracting more of the attention to which it is entitled. Several of the recent institutions in our country, have introduced regular arrangements for corporal exercise; and we shall embrace the earliest opportunity of recording the progress, which the heads of these seminaries communicate The time we hope is near, when there will be no literary institution unprovided with proper means of healthful exercise and innocent recreation.

Russell promised to keep his readers informed of the importance of physical education and to introduce “. . . all the information that can be desired. . . .”¹⁹ To comply with this promise Russell utilized three approaches: a) original articles; b) articles reprinted from domestic and foreign journals; c) reviews of books on the subject of gymnastics, calisthenics and physical education. The first issue of the *American Journal of Education* also championed the cause of improved education for members of the female sex, discussing the Boston High School for Girls (established in 1821) and the desirability of a “. . . provision for a higher education of our daughters at the public expense. . . .”²⁰ The June 1826 issue questioned why proper physical education should be denied to girls, noting that “. . . great sufferings frequently ensue, from the neglect of those early habits which increase strength and fortify the constitution.” Having judged the vigorous gymnastic exercises imported from Europe to be inappropriate for women, the author of this article called for some other type of regular system of exercises for them.²¹ The November 1826 issue included an article reprinted from *The Boston Medical Intelligencer*²² entitled “Gymnastic Exercise for Females.” It was written by William B. Fowle, founder of the Boston Female Monitorial School, who as early as 1824 had introduced there regular and systematic exercises for the girls.²³ Fowle suggested that the term “hygienic exercises” might replace the term “gymnastics” because most people associated the latter with heavy exertions inappropriate for girls.²⁴ The January 1827 issue of the *American Journal of Education*, quoting from *Parent’s Friend*,²⁵ declared: “Girls should have plenty of amusements: they should run races, play out of doors and in the garden . . . jump, run, halloo . . . exert the good spirits and vivacity so natural to their age”²⁶ The May and June 1827 issues discussed “Suggestions to Parents: Physical Education” and “Education of Females,” respectively. The May issue was especially eloquent on the subject of physical activities and youthful games:

The benefits of the gymnasium can never be properly felt but by *unintermitted daily* use. . . Of all the hindrances to health, however which are connected with the schools, none is more serious than the great want of suitable playgrounds, where regular exercises may be taken and innocent recreation enjoyed, under the superintendence of the teacher. Every school should not only be furnished with a play ground, but with at

least some of the simpler gymnastic apparatus. and with a good supply of the larger implements commonly used in youthful games. Besides the general benefit to health. an important point of a mental and moral kind would in this way be secured. The pupil would be convinced that education was not meant to interfere with recreation. but rather to authorize and encourage it, by rendering it consistent with or conducive to improvement and happiness.²⁷

Comprehensive book reviews of Voarino's²⁸ and Hamilton's²⁹ treatises on physical education for girls were published in the July 1827 issue, along with the declaration that, ". . . our principal object, at present . . . is to bring forward the subject of regular exercise for girls. . . ."³⁰ During the five years that Russell served as editor (1826-1831) the *American Journal of Education* devoted substantial attention to the subject of "physical education for girls." This practice was continued by William Woodbridge, who assumed the editorship in 1831.³¹ Lydia Sigourney wrote in Woodbridge's *American Annals of Education* that mothers must devote proper attention to the physical welfare of their daughters and decried the use of tight and deforming corsets. The January 1833 issue encouraged teachers to join in the sports of the children. The July 1836 issue contained an article entitled "Physical Education of Females" extracted from a 1835 summer session address delivered by Dr. John Andrews, M.D. at the Steubenville, Ohio Female Seminary, wherein Dr. Andrews outlined the relationship between body and mind and stressed the ". . . necessity of judicious regulations in reference to labor, to diet, to dress, to exercise and repose. . . ."³²

Russell's *American Journal of Education* and Woodbridge's *American Annals of Education* were by no means the only educational publications to take up the matter of healthful exercise and active recreations for members of the female sex. The *Massachusetts Teacher* from 1849 to 1856, for example, remarked upon the subjects, often borrowing articles from works like *Household Words* and extracting from books like Catharine Beecher's *Letters to the People on Health and Happiness*. It praised the benefits of "out-of-door life" and "exercise in the open air" for women, discussed the interdependence of the intellectual and the physical, upheld the decision of the Massachusetts legislature that schools should teach physiology, admonished parents to ensure for their children ". . . the proper consideration of the laws of life and health," and suggested that teachers, as well as pupils, should ". . . devote a portion of each day to vigorous exercise. . . ." Other articles criticized the prevailing tendency to limit girls' physical activity to dancing and a few light calisthenics, suggesting, instead, games like shuttlecock and ". . . games in which their judgements shall teach them what they ought to do, and in which practice shall teach their hands to execute what their heads have planned." The December 1856 edition, quoting from the *Boston*

Medical and Surgical Journal, declared: "It is not merely a saunter that will benefit a young girl. . . . We had far rather see a girl romp than a sickly, over-imaginative, novel-reading, candy-eating creature" The more vigorous outdoor activities which it was believed English girls engaged in were recommended, and parents were encouraged to set the proper example by joining in their children's sports.³³ Horace Mann praised a gymnastic school for young ladies in the *Common School Journal*, which occasionally discussed physical education.³⁴ Henry Barnard's *American Journal of Education*, which began publication in 1855, also included a number of similar articles in the decade before Civil War. In 1856, for example, Catharine Beecher's "Health of Teachers and Pupils" called for increased attention to physical training in a course "designed to exercise every muscle of the body." No class of women, Ms. Beecher noted, suffered more from lack of exercise than did *female teachers*. Barnard published articles on playgrounds and gymnastic apparatus and on the benefits of physical education, of which Mason's "Physical Exercise in School," with its concluding plea—"If we as teachers take this matter of physical exercise in school into serious consideration, determined to cultivate the physical well-being of our pupils as enthusiastically and systematically as we do the intellectual, we shall see even in our day, a better and happier, because healthier race . . ."—is a prime example. In 1862 and 1863 Barnard's *American Journal of Education* published Dio Lewis' "New Gymnastics", which detailed a large number of specific exercises, provided examples of proper gymnasium costumes for women (and men), and declared that with proper exercise "even the feeblest of girls" could be transformed into ". . . erect, ruddy, vigorous young women."³⁵

Nor were educational journals alone in bringing the subjects of health and physical activity for members of the female sex to the attention of their readers. The *American Monthly Magazine* for 1829 included an article entitled "Physical Education" in which the author asserted that at perhaps no previous time in history had physicians more fully acknowledged the importance of physical exercise. Having contended that a ". . . regular system of exercise, under the name of Physical Education, has lately been introduced and received by the public with unprecedented favor," the author declared that many of the exercises engaged in by men would be ". . . equally applicable to the female. The difference, so striking in the appearance of the two in civilized life, is owing, in great measure, to the difference in their physical education; and may be ascribed to that cause rather than to any which nature has established."³⁶ The *New York Free Enquirer* decried denying exercise to girls, and averred that when the physical and moral condition of women was improved the "millenium" would be realized.³⁷ John Stuart Skinner, editor of the

American Farmer, often included articles dealing with the importance of active exercise for females. Frequently drawing from contemporary journals, Skinner included assertions such as the one that most exercises appropriate for boys (with the exception of those termed “athletic”) might be recommended for girls: “Trundling a hoop, battledore, trap-ball, and every game which can exercise both the legs and the arms, and at the same time the muscles of the body, should be encouraged. . . .”; for older girls, however, more propriety should be observed. Other articles in Skinner’s journal suggested that those social restraints which interfered with young women receiving adequate exercise should be removed.³⁸

Efforts for Women by Women

While it must be acknowledged that during the 1800s there were numerous men who supported the concept of an improved condition for women, it was women themselves who supplied the major persistent voice of the movement toward greater freedom and opportunity. Of all the proclamations which were issued by women during the first decades of the nineteenth century concerning better education for their sex, a remarkable number called for greater attention to health and physical education. This was surely influenced by what Shryock had described as general advances in medicine and public health, and by popular health movements between 1800 and 1860.³⁹ Expanding medical knowledge cannot alone, however, account for the magnitude of the women’s concern. The recognition that women had bodies and that their bodies were the visible, tangible means by which they could be known as discrete persons must be seen, at the least, as equally important. Women, no less than men, were embodied spirit, and the desire for a recognition that they had intellectual, moral and *physical* abilities (and rights) recurs again and again in their writings and speeches.

Although British by birth, her adventures in the United States place Frances Wright among the notable American feminists of the early 1800s. She surely had an impact upon American society—both favorable and unfavorable. Her *Views of Society and Manners in America*, published in 1821, has been called one of the most celebrated travel memoirs of the early nineteenth century. Among her many undertakings she served as a co-editor of the *New Harmony Gazette* (later the *New York Free Enquirer*), and founded the ill-fated Nashoba communitarian settlement. In *Views of Society* Frances Wright wrote: “I often lament that in the rearing of women so little attention should be commonly paid to the exercise of the bodily organs; to invigorate the body is to invigo-

rate the mind, and Heaven knows that the weaker sex have much cause to be rendered strong in both. In this happiest country [women's] condition is sufficiently hard. . . . A vigorous intellect . . . is broken down by sufferings, bodily and mental." She believed that it was "the union of bodily and mental vigor" which gave to the American male his special energy of character, and that the benefits of "wholesome exercise" should also be accessible to women. While it was not necessary for women to emulate all men's activities, ". . . they might, with advantage, be taught in early youth to excel in the race, to hit a mark, to swim, and in short to use every exercise which could impart vigor to their frames and independence to their minds"⁴⁰ In her *Course of Popular Lectures*, published in 1829, Ms. Wright declared that women should be regarded as human beings and that ". . . the fair and thorough development of all the facilities, physical, mental, and moral . . ." must be assured; girls have "equal claims" to the development of *all* their faculties.⁴¹

Few American women in the early 1800s were as outspoken as was Frances Wright. Emma Willard, a staunch advocate of improved education for women, was never a supporter of women's political rights.⁴² In 1819 Mrs. Willard approached Governor De Witt Clinton of New York with an appeal for state-aided schools for girls. Her *Plan for Improving Female Education* suggested that dancing was a suitable instruction because it provided exercise—"needful to the health"—and recreation—necessary for the "cheerfulness and contentment of youth." She also suggested that their employment at domestic duties would "afford a healthy exercise" as well as help reduce the costs of the girls' education. While it was never Mrs. Willard's intention that women receive the same education as men, their responsibilities for raising children and "elevating the community" made it necessary to seek the ". . . perfection of their moral, intellectual and physical nature."⁴³ The considerable success of her Troy Female Seminary drew attention to Emma Willard's views concerning the proper education of girls. So, also, did the success of Mary Lyon, whose work is often mentioned along with that of Emma Willard. Mary Lyon had already had a variety of teaching experiences before her Mount Holyoke Seminary opened in 1837. In summers, commencing in 1824, she joined the staff of the Adams Female Seminary where her friend Zilpah Grant was preceptress. Apparently, calisthenics formed part of the curriculum at Adams for it was reported that Ms. Grant damaged her achilles tendon in 1827 while teaching calisthenics.⁴⁴ The girls at Mount Holyoke received twenty minutes of calisthenics and performed one hour of domestic duties each day. Housework helped reduce the pupils' costs and, as a by-product, it provided the girls with physical exercise. In July 1838 Ms. Lyon wrote: "The daily work brings one hour

of regular exercise . . . [and] seems to give them a relish for exercise . . . they walk more here of their own accord. . . .”⁴⁵

In 1831 a treatise entitled *Course of Calisthenics for Young Ladies*, purported to have been written by an American mother, was published at Hartford, Connecticut. The author, who is designated only by the letter “M”, dedicates the work to “. . . Mothers and Instructresses, with the earnest wish, that the subject [of calisthenics] may receive the attention that it deserves. . . .” The small volume takes the form of a series of letters intended initially for the “. . . benefits of the author’s own family.” A variety of exercises (i.e., the triangle; the wand; weight exercises; postural exercises; exercises for “grace of motion”; exercises to increase muscular strength; the “oscillator”⁴⁶; exercises to relieve the effects of tight lacing) are included, accompanied by numerous illustrations. The author also observed that calisthenic exercises like “la Grace”⁴⁷ promoted cheerfulness and contributed to overall health. Not only were these exercises deemed useful for the home; “M” hoped that “. . . the time . . . is not far distant, when Calisthenics will be introduced into every female school in the United States.”⁴⁸

Among the earliest American women to formulate an extensive system of calisthenic exercises and endeavor to have these incorporated into the education of girls was Catharine Esther Beecher. She was certainly one of the more prominent figures in the cause of improved education for American women in the decades before the Civil War. Sklar⁴⁹ contends that Catharine Beecher’s Hartford Seminary was considered by her contemporaries to be, “. . . one of the most significant advances made in early nineteenth century education for women. . . .” Although a tireless agitator in favor of their better education, Ms. Beecher was convinced that a woman’s proper role in life consisted in being a wife and mother; hence, women needed an education which differed in a number of particulars from that given to men. She was opposed to overt participation by women in social movements, and especially to the growing agitation for equal political rights.

Ms. Beecher was highly critical of the typical female seminary of her day, insisting that it was *action*, not *ornament*, which should be the goal for a woman; she favored more practical studies, calisthenics and better health care. In works like *A Treatise On Domestic Economy* (1841)⁵⁰ she provided practical instruction on family health, infant care, children’s education and home management. Her best-known works dealing with the subject of “physical education” were *Letters to the People On Health and Happiness* (1855),⁵¹ *Physiology and Calisthenics for Schools and Families* (1856) and *Calisthenic Exercises for Schools, Families and*

Health Establishments (1856).⁵² The last-mentioned work opened with the statement: "The design of this book is to teach the methods by which children may be trained *at school*, so as to become healthful, strong, graceful, and good-looking." After devoting numerous chapters to a discussion of the organs of the body, the "laws" of health, and abuses of the body and their remedies, Ms. Beecher then described sixty-two exercises for the schoolroom, accompanying all but three with illustrations of girls (and a few of boys) performing them.⁵³ Ms. Beecher was always especially concerned about postural and physiological abuses which prevailing fashions were apt to inflict upon girls and women; she discussed various causes of structural deformities (and the means of avoiding these), and suggested exercises designed to alleviate such problems.⁵⁴

Ms. Beecher had considerable practical experience in her career as an educator. In 1829 she published an essay entitled *Suggestions Respecting Improvements In Education* in which the goals of her Hartford Female Seminary were described. Here she outlined many of the themes which she later expanded upon: "It is to mothers and to teachers that the world is to look for the character of. . . each ensuing generation." However, women have rarely been systematically prepared for these important duties. "Have you been taught anything of the structure, the nature, and the laws of the body, . . ." she asked. "Were you taught to understand the operations of diet, air, exercise and the modes of dress on the human frame? Have the causes which are continually operating to prevent good health . . . ever been made the subject of any instruction?"⁵⁵ These are the questions to which Ms. Beecher set about providing answers. In this early essay she also set forth her views on the proper operation of a boarding school for girls. The "formation of personal habits and manners," the formation of the disposition and conscience, and the "business of physical education" all needed special attention, she insisted. She also suggested that a school should have an assistant who could provide young ladies with instruction in calisthenics.⁵⁶

Catharine Beecher resigned her position at the Hartford Female Seminary in 1831 and opened the Western Female Institute in 1832. She also established several other rather short-lived schools. It was her enduring conviction that women needed economic independence, and an avowed aim of her Women's Educational Association was the establishment of teaching positions for women so that they might become financially independent. Her textbooks on physiology and calisthenics enjoyed a wide circulation and surely had a valuable role in introducing the American people to the need for physical education and health education at home and at school; her articles appeared in numerous popular and educational publications, some of which reached a very wide reading audience.

Interest in improved health, physical education and active recreations for members of the female sex was by no means limited to educators. Ladies who enjoyed success in the literary field were also supporters. One of the earlier to make a successful career of literature was Lydia Sigourney. Her effusive and flowery books and articles were widely read by women in the 1830s and 1840s. Louis Godey paid her five hundred dollars a year merely to use her name in association with his *Lady's Book*. In 1833 Mrs. Sigourney published *Letters to Young Ladies*, her most popular prose work, in which she stated: "Since without health, both industry and enjoyment languish . . . it is desirable to multiply those modes of exercise, which are decidedly feminine." She objected to allowing fashion to impair health and advocated a balance between what she called the modern penchant for neglecting the body and making it a slave to the mind and the Spartan example of excessive concern for the physical. She recommended walking, riding, sea-bathing and an assortment of vigorous domestic tasks for young girls, speaking favorably of Mary Lyon's Mount Holyoke Seminary and the work of Catharine Beecher, Sarah Josepha Hale and Mme de Genlis, the famous French educator of the late eighteenth century.⁵⁷

Mrs. Sigourney was a frequent contributor to Godey's *Lady's Book*, which was edited for nearly forty years by Sarah Josepha Hale. At the height of its popularity this magazine boasted a circulation of over 150,000 copies, being a style-and taste-setter for large numbers of American women. After a brief teaching experience Sarah Josepha Hale settled down to family life. In 1827 the Reverend John Blake, principal of Boston's Cornhill School for Young Ladies, encouraged her to accept the editorship of the *American Ladies' Magazine*. Its first issue carried her optimistic declaration: "In this age of innovation, perhaps no experiment will have an influence more important on the character and happiness of our society, than the granting to females the advantages of a systematic and thorough education." She further asserted that insufficient attention was devoted to ". . . the physical strength of women; or to that course of instruction and treatment which relates to the vigor and improvement of their bodily powers,"⁵⁸ Although she accepted the prevailing belief that there was a "divinely ordered gulf" between the sexes (criticizing feminists like Frances Wright and the movement for female suffrage), Mrs. Hale held several progressive views concerning women's sphere. She was a tireless champion of improved education, praising the work of innovators like Emma Willard and Mary Lyon. Under her editorship the *American Ladies' Magazine* printed numerous comments concerning educational innovations. The January 1829 issue, for example, described the benefits of play for young children; the November 1829 issue included an announcement of the Greenfield High School for

Young Ladies in which it was stated: "Our system of Education embraces the three-fold object of Physical, Intellectual and Moral culture. . . Physical health and its attendant cheerfulness promote a happy tone of moral feeling, and they are quite indispensable to successful intellectual effort. We are ambitious that our pupils should return to their homes [with]. . . an increased share of muscular vigor and youthful freshness." The use of the battledore, cornella, rope-skipping, swinging, walking and country rides were mentioned. The January 1830 edition stated, in a long excerpt from The *Journal of Health* entitled "Physical Education of Girls": "The bodily exercises of the two sexes ought, in fact, to be the same. As it is important to secure to both, all the corporal advancements which nature has formed them to enjoy . . . girls should not be confined to a sedentary life. . . ." They need freedom to enjoy the exercise of their muscles as much as do boys.⁵⁹

In 1836 Louis Godey persuaded Mrs. Hale to join him as editor of his very popular *Lady's Book*. In spite of her own conforming inclinations (and Godey's policy of avoiding controversial topics), Mrs. Hale did not falter in her efforts to improve the lot of American women, (at least along the lines which *she* deemed proper). Boyer has judged: "On the great theme of education for women she never wavered. . . . In an era when a delicate pallor was considered fascinating and an early death romantic, she tirelessly urged upon her readers the virtues of exercise, fresh air, proper diet, and sensible dress. . . ."⁶⁰ In July 1841 Mrs. Hale wrote an article of her own for Godey's *Lady's Book*, quoting extensively from a Glasgow physician and adding that in her estimation she found the views ". . . judicious, and well calculated to promote the physical improvement of Children":

. . . females, from their earliest years. should be allowed those sports and amusements in the open air, so necessary to a proper development of their bodies. and which are now confined entirely to boys. . . . Until girls are 14 or 15 years old, they should be allowed to play in the open air at least *six hours* every day . . . They should be allowed to run, throw the ball, and play at battledore. . . . All these exercises call the different muscles into action, strengthen the limbs, and impart a healthy tone to the different organs; the blood circulates freely, the nervous system is invigorated.⁶¹

She vowed that physical exercise, active recreations and playful games would be discussed in subsequent issues and, indeed, Sarah Josepha Hale did for many years use her "Editor's" section (as well as a careful selection of articles) to discourse upon several of her favorite topics, not the least of which were improved health and proper physical education for members of the female sex.

Among the more notable American ladies of the first half of the nineteenth century was Margaret Fuller, whose *The Great Lawsuit: Man*

*Versus Men, Woman Versus Women*⁶² and *Woman In the Nineteenth Century*⁶³ became “bibles” of the women’s rights movements. During her short lifetime she was author, teacher, literary critic for the *New York Tribune*, foreign correspondent, intellectual conversationalist and a pioneer in feminist proclamations. She associated with the New England Transcendentalists and helped Emerson and Thoreau edit *The Dial*. As did others of this “Transcendental movement,” she believed that a sound body was indispensable for the proper development of the mind and that *all* the human faculties (mental, spiritual, physical) must be freely and harmoniously developed.⁶⁴ Disappointed that his first child had not been a boy, Margaret’s father set for her the most demanding tasks; her diaries reflect her concerns about the ill-effects of a childhood devoted to excessive reading, late hours and inactivity. She often referred to what she believed was a growing emphasis in favor of physical education in the United States: “If we had only been as well brought up in these respects,” she declared; “I can’t help but mourn sometimes, that my bodily life should have been so destroyed by the ignorance of both my parents.”⁶⁵ In her *Life Without and Life Within* she commented favorably upon a lecture delivered by Dr. John Warren, M.D. on the subject “Physical Education and the Preservation of Health,” wherein Dr. Warren maintained: “. . . gymnastic exercises, especially in the open air, are needed by everyone who is not otherwise led to exercise all parts of the body by various kinds of labor”; even if adults were not interested in their own health, she insisted, they ought to be concerned that their children had ample playful activity.⁶⁶

It is abundantly clear that the majority of American women did not share the very liberal views espoused by a Frances Wright or a Margaret Fuller. Writers like Margaret Coxe, whose *Claims Of the Country On American Females* was published in 1842, adhered to a much more traditional concept of woman’s proper sphere. Her *Young Lady’s Companion* (1842), for example, was praised for the “. . . wise moderation [which] pervades the work; the aim is always at the promotion of the very best features of female and Christian character.” Indeed, it was on the basis of the more traditional argument that the major reason for women to receive a proper physical education was because it was their Christian duty to raise physically healthy and morally sound children that she included a chapter entitled “Hints to American Females on the Physical Culture of Youth.” “Judicious, systematic, physical culture is needed for our daughters no less than for our sons. . . ,” she declared; “it is a requisite to promote the health, happiness, and moral excellence of both.” Girls were ill-prepared for the arduous tasks of domestic life because all too often, “. . . exercise which would invigorate the frame, is discouraged as unlady-like and rude. . . .” If a woman failed to fulfill her

“wifely duties” a husband was likely to look elsewhere for sexual satisfaction, thereby destroying the normal and proper fabric of society. All this might ensue because of the “. . . inattention of mothers to the physical culture of females.”⁶⁷

Although the majority of American men and women might adhere to the more traditional views expressed by Margaret Coxe, by the 1840s active stirrings for greater female emancipation were clearly evident. When Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were denied the right to be seated at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, so many contend, the Seneca Falls “Women’s Rights” Convention of 1848 was born. When preparing for this now-famous convention Mrs. Stanton paraphrased the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self evident; that all men and women are created equal. . . . The history of mankind is the history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman. . . .” Mrs. Stanton repeated the same sentiments on July 19, 1848 in her maiden speech before the first “women’s rights” convention in America at Seneca Falls, New York: “. . . the time [has] come for the question of women’s wrongs to be laid before the public . . . , woman alone can understand the height, the depth, the length and the breadth of her degradation.”⁶⁸ From the Seneca Falls Convention until the Civil War numerous women—and not a few men—dedicated to the cause of expanded “rights” for members of the female sex labored to achieve increased freedom for American women. A proper education was clearly seen to be one of the corner-stones. Lucretia Mott, for example, in her *Discourse On Women* (1849) declared: “. . . the demand for a more extended education will not cease, until girls and boys have equal instruction in all the departments of useful knowledge let women receive encouragement for the proper cultivation of all her powers . . . strengthening her physical being by proper exercise and observance of the laws of health. . . .”⁶⁹

Since the public press and most journals did relatively little to further their cause (and sometimes tried to impede it), the women had to rely upon abolitionist newspapers and a variety of journals published for and by themselves. The first issue of *The Una*, published by Paulina Wright Davis, included an article entitled “Woman As Physically Considered,” in which the author declared: “Our aim in these remarks is to come to the physical organization of the sexes, and to prove that woman is not man’s inferior.” Although men might be stronger, they were not necessarily superior beings; in fact, in some respects the physical ability of women is “. . . decidedly superior to the sex which rules and oppresses her.”⁷⁰ While reporting upon the deliberations of various women’s rights conventions, *The Una*, (like other similar publications) often observed

that women, as well as men, had a right to the highest mental and *physical* development. When Amelia Bloomer began publication of *The Lily* in 1849 its masthead carried the statement "Devoted to the Interests of Women." The topics which it most frequently discussed were: temperance; women's rights; suffrage; health and physical education for women; dress reform; access to the professions-especially medicine.⁷¹ *The Lily* declared in its May 1, 1849 issue that there was too great an inclination to urge the enlightenment of women solely, ". . . as a sure means of improving man, rather than as in itself an intrinsic excellence"⁷² With increasing frequency the desire to see women regarded as human beings with *their own* worth and integrity was stressed. The June 1, 1849 issue condemned the lack of concern regarding the health and physical education of American women: "Shame on us, that we, who boast of having raised women in the nineteenth century to the position in life which she ought to hold, so educated her that not one of her powers, physical or mental, can even attain a full and healthy action . . . has not a girl a physical system to be developed and matured and invigorated?" Pitching the quoit, throwing the ball, sliding down hills, roaming through hills, it was held, had all been denied to girls on the excuse that these were "unfeminine" when, instead, active exercise, games and sports should have been encouraged.⁷³ Jane G. Swisshelm (publisher of her own newspaper, *The Saturday Visiter*) complained that women sewed too much instead of exercising in the fresh air, and suggested that the "laxity of parental authority" in America was due to ". . . the absorbing pursuit of money that occupies the minds of men [and] from the want of physical education of women, and the place assigned them as intellectual inferiors. . . ."⁷⁴ A considerable number of the articles which appeared in *The Lily* were contributed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the dedicated and extremely active advocate of women's rights, who frequently wrote under the name of "Sunflower." In April 1850 Mrs. Stanton discussed the topic "man's claim to physical superiority." As had Mary Wollstonecraft before her,⁷⁵ Mrs. Stanton declared: "We cannot say what the woman might be physically, if the girl were allowed all the freedom of the boy, in romping, swimming, climbing, and playing hoop and ball. . . . Physically as well as intellectually, it is *use* that produces growth and development."⁷⁶ A writer using the pseudonym "Veritas" discussed "Improper Education of Women" in the April 1855 issue, declaring that women had a right to be educated morally, mentally and physically; girls should not be excluded from ". . . the open air and field sports, which would develop and invigorate both physical and mental powers," for such hoydenish activities help insure that women may become intelligent and self-reliant.⁷⁷

The clothing styles worn by women throughout the nineteenth century

seriously inhibited their freedom of movement. Tight lacings interfered with circulation and could lead to structural deformities; long skirts swept the ground and were unhygienic; fashion might burden women with ten or more pounds of garments. In 1851 *The Lily* began an earnest discussion of the “new costume.” This outfit, which came to be known as “bloomers” for Mrs. Amelia Bloomer who advocated and tried to popularize it, consisted of full pantaloons and a shortened skirt. Writing in July 1851, Mrs. Stanton declared an intention to free women from the constraints of their traditional costume and permit free use of lungs, limbs, spine and ribs; such discussions continued throughout 1851 and 1852. By 1854, however, the “new costume,” and the debate which surrounded it in the public press, had generated so much adverse publicity that it was feared that criticisms of dress reform might interfere with other advances. Most of the ladies abandoned their new dress, but meetings of the National Dress Reform Association did continue. *The Lily*, reporting on such a meeting in August 1856, once again declared that the cause of the poor health of so many American girls and women could be attributed to “fashionable long-skirted garments.”⁷⁸

Women’s Rights Conventions proliferated in the years immediately following the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. The Ohio Convention of 1851 issued a declaration that not only were women deprived of a liberal education, they were also “. . . either deprived of healthy physical exercise and development . . . [or] . . . overpowered by domestic drudgery . . . ” The proceedings of the 1885 National Women’s Rights Convention, resolved that “. . . the right to acquire knowledge should be limited only by the capacity of the individual,” and that social attitudes which excluded women from the best colleges, universities and schools of law, divinity and medicine were unendurable. At an evening session of this same Convention Mrs. Frances Gage declared to those assembled that American women still had great need for better education, greater independence, more opportunities for employment, and improved physical strength.⁷⁹

One of the causes vigorously pursued by several of the ladies who favored augmented opportunities was the right to be trained for and granted access to the so-called “male professions.” Of these, medicine received the most frequent discussion in the women’s journals. (This exclusion of women from the learned professions—law, theology and medicine, had been criticized in the Declaration of Principles adopted at Seneca Falls in 1848). The first woman in the United States to be graduated from a proper medical school was Elizabeth Blackwell. Admitted to Geneva College against the unanimous opposition of the faculty, she graduated in 1849 at the head of her class but found it impossible to se-

cure a position in the medical establishment. With the support of private capital she finally opened the New York Infirmary in 1857, staffed entirely by women. In 1851, Dr. Blackwell delivered a course of lectures in New York on bodily hygiene and physical education—two topics which were of particular interest to her throughout her medical career. These lectures were published in 1852 as *The Laws of Life, With Special Reference to The Physical Education of Girls*. In her introduction Dr. Blackwell declared that her object was “. . . to call your attention to the importance of this subject—physical education of the young—and to urge upon you the means by which our present degeneracy may be checked. . . .” It was her further conviction that women no less than men could not live as “disembodied spirit,” and since the self was expressed through the physical, the body must be properly cared for.⁸⁰

With her extensive medical training, Dr. Blackwell was more scientifically informed than most women concerning the physiological and anatomical benefits of exercise; in fact, *The Laws of Life* reads very much like a basic physiology of exercise textbook written for the layman. Four “basic laws of health” are discussed by the author: the law of *exercise* (or movement) in life; the law of *order* in exercise; the *balance* of exercise; the law of *use* in exercise.⁸¹ Dr. Blackwell criticized the typical school curriculum for its failure to devote adequate attention to the child’s physical development, stating: “. . . education of the mind shall always be subordinate to our education of the body, until the body has completed its growth.” Children were subjected to poor ventilation, improperly constructed desks and lack of exercise; often they were not properly fed; towns neglected to provide any kind of playgrounds for them. Because of lack of understanding of the laws of health, the health of girls had been impaired before they reached maturity; therefore, they became feeble wives and mothers. To all this improper and neglected physical education of American females, Dr. Blackwell contrasted the type of physical education provided women in other nations (i.e., Sparta, Athens, England). She insisted that the school system in America must be changed and, “. . . a system of scientific gymnastic training should be adopted—every kind of active sport encouraged. . . .”⁸²

Various Medical and Quasi-Medical Contributions

During the nineteenth century “the laws of health” did receive increasing attention from members of the medical profession, as well as in a spate of health fads which arose around the third decade of the century.

Shryock has characterized the decades from 1820 to 1860 as ones of growth in all types of medical institutions, as well as in the establishment of a variety of medical journals and health periodicals. Students began to go abroad in larger numbers to study at Paris—at that time probably the most advanced center for medicine and public health—and to London where various sanitary and health reforms were underway. Although in the United States training by apprenticeship was still more common than attendance at medical school, faculties were growing and chairs of physiology were being established.⁸³ Both doctors and laymen authored books and pamphlets on the general subject of health, many of which devoted considerable attention to matters of hygiene and physical education. In all this, women received a measure of benefit. In fact, in many ways, both the health problems of women and the implied-if not always stated-propriety of regarding women as worthy corporal entities was given expanded attention.

The *Boston Medical Intelligencer* for May 1825 published an article entitled “Physical Education,” written by Dr. James Field, M.D. of London, in which lack of exercise in relation to curvature of the spine among girls was discussed. Dr. Field asserted that “. . . a certain degree of *hoydenism* . . . skipping and scampering . . .” must be allowed, and that girls should play games like battledore, tennis and trap-ball. The prevailing notions of female fragility and helplessness, he contended, were entirely erroneous. In 1826 Dr. John G. Coffin, M.D. (who contributed articles on physical education to Russell’s *American Journal of Education*) assumed publication of the *Boston Medical Intelligencer*, wherein William B. Fowle’s article on the exercises provided girls at his Boston Female Seminary appeared. Fowle expressed his hope that “. . . the day [was] not far distant when gymnasiums for women will be as common as churches in Boston. . . .” Dr. Coffin added his own support, proclaiming that Fowle’s was “. . . the first account we have seen of gymnastics having been successfully practiced in any school for girls in any part of the United States.” Dr. Coffin admonished his reader, asking whether anything had been done “. . . in the last half century in the American Union, to render our women what they are capable of being made, healthy, efficient, and happy beings?”⁸⁴

The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal for December 1835 described the problems inflicted upon a little girl due to lack of exercise, urged parents to pay attention to the natural laws of growth and health, and drew attention to Dr. Andrew Combe’s *Principles of Physiology Applied to the Preservation of Health and the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education*. In early 1836 this same journal published an article entitled “Physical and Moral Evils of the Present System of Female Edu-

cation In the United States” in which the author criticized the present system of education for not devoting sufficient attention to the physical education of girls: “They are sent to school when they are three or four years old, confined there for hours together in one position, and when they are released for the day, instead of being allowed to play like boys, they must return home. . . .” Among the many faults of the typical female education, the author declared, one of the most unfortunate was the failure to provide young ladies with adequate active exercise in the open air.⁸⁵

The *Health Journal and Advocate of Physiological Reform* discussed topics like “the Graham System,” ventilation of school houses, the relationship of tight-lacing to spinal deformities, and offered hints on exercise to young ladies. It reprinted “Physical Education of Girls” from the *Journal of Health* and “Physical Education” from the *New England Farmer*. This latter article stipulated that daughters would profit from “. . . vigorous exercise, and that too in the open air. . . .” It also frequently excerpted from (or at least mentioned) works like Caldwell’s *Thoughts On Physical Education*, Combe’s *Principles of Physiology* and William Alcott’s extensive writings on health and physical education.⁸⁶ The *American Medical Intelligencer* also reviewed Caldwell’s *Thoughts on Physical Education*; and the *New York Medical and Physical Journal* reviewed works like Dr. William P. Dewees’ *A Treatise on the Diseases of Females*.⁸⁷ The *Water Cure Journal* discussed “Healthy Children” from William Alcott’s *Golden Rule*, reported that Horace Mann had decried “. . . the destructive practice of depriving children of fresh air and exercise. . . .”, reprinted “Evils of Tight-Lacing” from the *Boston Journal of Health*, and excerpted “Health of Females” from Lydia Sigourney’s *Letters to Mothers* (including her plea for earnest play and active sports for little girls). From *Jerrold’s Magazine*, the *Water Cure Journal* borrowed “Physical Education” (noting the need for physical exercise on the part of both boys and girls); from the *New York Sun* it took “Out-of-Door Exercise for Females” (observing that foreigners often remarked upon a lack of health among American women).⁸⁸ Sylvester Graham’s *Journal of Health and Longevity* also mentioned Mrs. Sigourney’s observations on the health of girls, discussed the ill-effects of tight lacing, and noted the importance of fresh air and exercise for girls.⁸⁹ Graham’s insistence that proper hygiene was dependent upon the observance of sound physiological rules (even though his views often tended to extremes), helped foster support for various dietary, dress and exercise reforms for women. Several Ladies Physiological Reform Societies were organized, and a few of the more outspoken, like Paulina Wright Davies (founder of *The Una*), even had the temerity to give lectures on physiology.

The need to devote greater attention to the observance of sound physiological and anatomical principles, especially on behalf of the female sex, was a subject treated by several medical doctors in the first six decades of the nineteenth century. Dr. E. W. Duffin's *The Influence of Modern Physical Education of Females in Producing and Confirming Deformity of the Spine* was well-received in the United States. (This was one of the works to which "M" referred in *Course of Calisthenics for Young Ladies*). Duffin was concerned about the high incidence of postural and structural difficulties among women, and believed calisthenic exercise could be invaluable in the prevention and correction of many of these problems.⁹⁰ In a small treatise published in 1833 Dr. Charles Caldwell declared that since much of the perfection of the American race was dependent upon liberal exercise in the open air, ". . . a much larger amount of it than is taken by children at school, especially female children, is essential." Although he would have women avoid "masculine activities," they could benefit from things like riding, walking, dancing, gardening and doing housework. As did many of his contemporaries, Caldwell inveighed against the tight and constraining clothing worn by women.⁹¹ This small volume was cited or quoted in numerous health journals in the 1830s and 1840s. Another work which was frequently mentioned was Dr. Andrew Combe's *The Principles of Physiology Applied to the Preservation of Health and the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education*; this was issued in the Harper Brothers Home Library series at fifty cents per copy, thus making it financially attractive. Dr. Combe was vitally concerned that the American people develop a better understanding of the laws of health. He thoroughly endorsed physical activity for growing children, believing that active sports were superior to things like walking, and that the sociability in games encouraged the children to continue to participate. Instead of being confined to formal walks, Combe maintained, girls would be both ". . . delighted and benefited by spending two or three hours a day in spirited exercise." He disapproved of the prevailing assumption that the physical education of the two sexes should differ so radically (although he held that the type and amount of exercise should be adjusted to the needs of the individual); he also referred with disapproval to the number of structural deformities which could all too often be found among pupils in female seminaries.⁹² Another medical commentator on the evils caused by a deficient physical education for girls was Dr. John Bell, whose *Health and Beauty: An Explanation of the Laws of Growth and Exercise . . .* was published in 1838. Health, beauty, education, even humanity, Bell declared, are all based upon proper development of the natural structures of the human body. Unfortunately, false notions of grace and feminine reserve had prevented girls from engaging in anything more than the most formal and limited exercise—which proved to be monotonous and heartless. Happily, Bell

observed, methodological exercises (gymnastics for boys; calisthenics for girls), were receiving greater attention. He, too, discussed the hazards of stays and confining clothing and advocated a type of dress which would allow young girls ample opportunity to freely exercise their muscles. The absence of city playgrounds—especially for girls—he held, made necessary the establishment of programs of methodical exercise in schools.⁹³ In 1846 Dr. John Warren's *Physical Education and the Preservation of Health* (based upon a lecture he had delivered to the American Institute in 1830) became available to America's reading public. Although its benefits might be understood in theory, Warren asserted, regular exercise was too much neglected in *practice*. Girls were discouraged at an early age from engaging in natural physical activities and taught to spend their leisure quietly at home, much to the detriment of their health and well being. This practice, combined with the type of clothing which they wore, resulted in the structural illnesses which were all too apparent among American women in the early 1800's. Girls should walk, dance, play battledore, play ball with both hands, exercise with the triangle and dumbbells, and use the parallel bars. "Every seminary of young persons," Warren declared, "should be provided with the instruments for these exercises."⁹⁴

The salubrious reciprocity among physical, mental and moral health was stressed by several physicians. A prime exemplar of this attitude was Dr. William A. Alcott, one of the most active health reformers of the first half of the nineteenth century. A prolific writer in the cause of both health and social reform, Alcott was also an editor of several journals, including Woodbridge's *American Annuals of Education* (to which he also contributed articles on physical education) and the *Boston Health Journal and Advocate of Physiological Reform*. As a young man Alcott accepted a teaching position, thereupon beginning an association with an activity which would be of deep interest to him throughout his lifetime. In *Confessions of A School Master* (1839) he declared: "Indeed this [school keeping] was always nearest my heart. I had only resorted to another profession as a discipline to my mind, and that I might have, as the common saying is, 'two strings to my bow'"⁹⁵ Alcott soon became convinced that both morality and health were being sacrificed to the intellect in America; in the stifling atmosphere of the school house children's and teachers' health was impaired. This was deemed especially serious by Alcott, who always believed that health and Christian salvation were intimately related; healthy bodies meant healthy spirits. "The redemption of the intellectual and moral world and the physical conditions of mankind most proceed together," he insisted.⁹⁶ In 1849 Alcott's *The Young Woman's Guide to Excellence* (which the author claims was written in 1839) was published. "Excellence" was the thing to strive for

in life, he declared, because it brings happiness; it is to be sought in all spheres: moral; intellectual; physical. He was convinced that human happiness was far more dependent upon daily exercise of the whole muscular system than most people realized. He objected to tight clothing because of the physiological and structural harm it could cause; walking, gardening, housekeeping, dancing and riding were described as the best forms of exercise for females.⁹⁷ In *Letters To A Sister*, however, Alcott noted that gardening and walking were not sufficient: "You need something more active, as jumping, running, and the like."⁹⁸ The benefits of calisthenics for young ladies in cities he mentioned in his *Library of Health*.⁹⁹ Chapter III of his *Young Woman's Book of Health*, entitled "Errors in the Physical Education of Young Women," condemned the attitudes which relegated American females to a condition of delicacy and nervousness and stipulated that "woman ought to possess at least twice as much muscular power as she now does."¹⁰⁰ His *Laws of Health*, which provided an extensive discussion of the how, when and why of muscular exercise, likewise questioned whether women's inferior strength and endurance might not be due as much to their "mis-education" as to their natures.¹⁰¹ Alcott was also a staunch supporter of overall improvement in female education; he believed that women merited a much more comprehensive education than the type they usually received, and would have them study subjects like physiology; hygiene; anatomy; chemistry; natural history; philosophy; domestic and political economy; and higher mathematics.

While many theorized concerning the importance of systematic exercise, Dr. Dioclesian Lewis took various steps to facilitate actual participation. Lewis had studied at Harvard Medical School—from which he did not graduate—and had served as a physician's apprentice. (An honorary degree from a small homeopathic hospital conferred upon him the title "Dr.>"). In 1852 "Dio" Lewis joined the Sons of Temperance and soon achieved a reputation as a temperance and health lecturer. He developed his own system of calisthenic exercises (which he called the "new gymnastics"), based upon the use of hand apparatus and set to music, borrowing many of these movements from foreign and domestic sources. In August 1860 Lewis introduced his new system at a meeting of the American Institute of Education in Boston, (this was reported in the October *Massachusetts Teacher*), and a resolution was passed recommending the introduction of Dr. Lewis' gymnastics into the schools. To train the necessary teachers, he opened the Normal Institute for Physical Education on July 4, 1861, hiring medical men from Harvard to teach physiology and hygiene. (It is generally held that this was the first actual training school for gymnastics in the United States, and even though it closed in 1868 its graduates helped spread Dio Lewis' message concerning the

need for an organized program of physical exercises to considerable numbers of American men and women).¹⁰² His "New Gymnastics" appeared in a two-part series in Barnard's *American Journal of Education* (and also in book form) in 1862. The gymnastic costume which he recommended for women bore a marked resemblance to the "new costume" which Amelia Bloomer had depicted in *The Lily* several years earlier. Concerned that "education as a whole must be made symmetrical," Lewis criticized the typical education for neglecting the body; even the feeblest of girls, he declared, would need little more than an hour a day of his "new gymnastics" to be ". . . transformed in two or three years from crooked, pale, nervous creatures, into ruddy, vigorous sound women."¹⁰³

The bombardment of Fort Sumter on April 12-13, 1861 launched the United States into four years of sectional strife which brought severe ruptures to the lives of many Americans. Efforts, of necessity, were directed toward problems occasioned by the dislocations of the Civil War. The women's movement was one of many to suffer from the upheaval. When the surrender was finally signed at Appomatox the advocates of "women's rights," many of whom had devoted themselves to other worthy causes during the hostilities, were shocked and dismayed to learn that the momentum which they believed they had seen developing in the decades preceeding the Civil War had slowed dramatically. They were even more distressed to learn at the American Equal Rights Association annual meeting in 1868 that the support which they had generated in the years prior to the war was now diverted, for political reasons, to the cause of *male* black suffrage. The women, in effect, were told they would have to wait. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the indefatigable spokesman for women's rights, declared of the proposed 15th amendment to the Constitution of The United States: ". . . shall the freest Government on the earth be the first to establish an aristocracy based on sex alone?"¹⁰⁴

Although small and divided, the women's rights movement was not abandoned, nor was the issue of improved health and physical education. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was prophetic when she declared in 1882: "Woman is now in the transition period from the old to the new . . . all girls are not satisfied with the amusements society has to offer . . . statistics show that girls taking a college course are more healthy than those who lead listless lives in society."¹⁰⁵ With the rise of institutions of higher learning in the decades following the Civil War women began to enter colleges and universities in substantial numbers, and by the 1880s and 1890s concern for the health and physical education of the college woman had resulted in the establishment of courses of calisthenics for them as well as in the beginning of women's college sports. In the broader so-

ciety the rapid increase of interest in sports and the rise of the athletic club contributed to the renewed concern for health, physical education, recreation, play, games and active sports for American women.¹⁰⁶ The early proponents of such causes (those who spoke out in their favor from 1776 to 1865) may have felt their efforts to have been vindicated.

Concluding Observations:

It has been claimed that the amount of attention which is directed to a problem in any given period of history can be as telling as the actual incidence of the problem. If this is so, the problem of ill-health and lack of exercise among American women was a considerable one in the first half of the nineteenth century; at least, this seems to have been the opinion held by many men and women of the period. In *The Feminization of American Culture* Ann Douglas has made the observation that, “the cultural uses of sickness for the nineteenth century . . . lady are undeniable. To stress their ill-health was a way . . . to dramatize their anxiety that their culture found them useless; it supplied them, moreover, with a means of . . . obtaining psychological and emotional power even while apparently acknowledging the biological correlatives of their social and political unimportance.”¹⁰⁷ Most investigations of the health of women in the nineteenth century have focused upon questions of their delicateness and illness rather than upon the converse—the development of robust, vigorous health—the type of health which a proper regimen and physical education is supposed to help ensure.

Certainly, questions which, in one way or another, had to do with the delicateness, ill-health and “fashionable diseases”¹⁰⁸ of American women were frequently raised in the first six decades of the nineteenth century. Throughout the entire century—indeed, well into the twentieth century—the biological functions of females, especially those associated with reproduction, were grossly misunderstood by medical doctors as well as by the general public. Traditional myths prevailed, and little scientific fact was known. In the 1880s and 1890s, the period of the rise of American higher education, many college authorities were fearful that the “strains” of academic work would be harmful to the psychological development of young women. It has been asserted, moreover, that many men (educators and doctors by no means excluded) consciously or unconsciously used the argument of the supposed inferiority of women to justify their own concepts of the lordly and superior male. The majority of American doctors would probably have agreed with the contentions of works like Dr. Edward Clarke’s *Sex In Education* (1873) that women

were inherently intellectually and physically inferior to men. This impression was one which also appears to have been held by substantial numbers of American women who, from childhood, had been constantly reminded of their frailties.¹⁰⁹

Not all Americans of the period from 1776 to 1865 were willing, however, to accept the argument that a woman's biology rendered her in any way inferior to men—different, yes; inferior, no! There were even more who took an intermediary position: women might be inferior to men both intellectually and physically, but not as inferior as tradition had forced them to be. Beginning at least as early as the last decade of the eighteenth century, an increasing number of American men and women argued that women were far more capable, stronger, healthier—and even wiser—than they were customarily pictured to be; or at least they could become so if their development were not arrested by social custom and false and limiting conceptions of their abilities.

To be sure, the concern for improved “physical education” for members of the female sex was part of the greater movement for social reform and augmented rights and opportunities for American women—a movement which had begun well before the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 and has extended well into the seventh decade of the twentieth century. In addition to those who may have stressed ill-health as a way to “. . . dramatize their anxiety that their culture found them useless . . .” there were women—and men—who declared that women were not useless. Given the opportunity, they could become quite useful. Many also maintained that opportunities to lead a useful life was demanded by both common decency and by the provisions of the Declaration of Independence which, by declaring that “all men were created equal,” had implied women, too. Such opportunities included those which were concerned with hygiene, proper regimen and “physical education.” In the minds of many, since the *physical* constituted the tangible manifestation of the means by which individuals could be known as discrete, whole persons, it merited more attention. Greater freedom in the forms of their dress, exercise, recreation, and even sport could be interpreted as an indicator of women's overall increased freedom.

The evidence clearly indicates that a substantial amount of interest in the health and physical education of the female sex existed in the United States between 1776 and 1865. Men and women of a diversity of interests and persuasions spoke out, with varying degree of intensity, for greater attention to such things as: calisthenics; playful games; exercise; less confining clothing; active recreations; instruction in physiology and anatomy; more healthful school and home environments; more physical

activity in girls' seminaries. For some, such recommendations were modulated and cautious; for others, the demands were strident and persistent. In the views of several "feminists" the recognition of her physicality—the obvious corporeal, tangible evidence of woman's existence in the world—was of the utmost consequence. From the 1800s through 1850s a time when most American women—like women abroad—were either overworked or were considered helpless and "delicate," when the anticipated role for a woman was wife and mother, the intensity of the requests for greater physical activity for girls and women reached remarkable proportions. The first concerted appeals came from individuals, beginning with Judith Sargent Murray's brief observations and Charles Brockden Brown's *Alcuin* (1798). By the 1820s various periodicals had begun to address the subject with some regularity. Educational journals like William Russell's *American Journal of Education* (the nation's first educational journal), the *Massachusetts Teacher* and Henry Barnard's *American Journal of Education* took an especially active role in fostering both improved female education and physical education for boys and girls. Journals as the *American Monthly Magazine* and the *American Farmer* did likewise. The *American Ladies' Book* and Godey's *Lady's Book* frequently advocated improved physical education and active games for American girls and women, even though the majority of the so-called "ladies' periodicals" still portrayed the Victorian image of the weak, helpless woman whose physical activity was confined to a leisurely walk or, perhaps, a ride in the country. Women authors like Lydia Sigourney and Margaret Fuller encouraged more playful physical activity. The rise of interest in medical questions in the 1820s in some ways facilitated the growth of the interest in and concern for the physical education of American women. The *Boston Medical Intelligencer*, the *Health Journal and Advocate of Physiological Reform* and the *American Medical Intelligencer* often carried articles on the subject. So did periodicals which might be better classified as "health fad" journals—those like the *Water Cure Journal* and Graham's *Journal of Health and Longevity*. After the first "women's rights" convention of 1848 a number of newspapers written by and for women began publication. *The Lily* and *The Una* discussed dress reform, health and physical education, and especially in the case of *The Lily* (and possibly largely due to the efforts of Elizabeth Cady Stanton), there were numerous assertions that to be considered as equals—worthy of the same status and treatment as that afforded men—the physical aspect of women's being must be respected. In fact, improved health and greater freedom in the choice of physical activities were among the major demands of many of the American "feminists" of the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Another of these demands was the right to be trained for and granted entrance to the so-called "male professions" (law, theology, medicine). In the case of

Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman in America to be graduated from a proper medical school, the health and physical education of girls and women was an issue of particular concern. Beginning in the 1830s and through the Civil War a growing number of medical doctors devoted some attention to the health and physical education of American women. In the case of men like William A. Alcott this attention was extensive. The majority of American doctors, however, persisted in the belief that women were delicate and inferior creatures—an attitude which may have had a retarding effect upon the development of more scientific knowledge concerning the physiology of women.

While most such proposals remained largely theoretical, women like Emma Willard, Mary Lyon and Catharine E. Beecher actually endeavored to provide opportunities for greater physical activity in their seminaries. So, apparently, did men like William B. Fowle and William A. Alcott and the directors of schools like the Greenfield High School for Young Ladies, where a variety of active games were said to take place.

Although the dislocations of the Civil War impeded the progress which those who advocated better physical education for girls and women thought they had begun to make; although the women were told at the 1868 meeting of the American Equal Rights Association that “women’s rights” would have to wait until the cause of black *male* suffrage was settled—indeed, wait until the first decades of the twentieth century—a small, but determined, group persisted. It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the efforts put forward between 1776 and 1865 provided an ideological milieu which was favorable to the development of curricular physical education and extra-curricular sports programs for females in the last decades of the nineteenth and first seven decades of the twentieth century. The failures and successes of those who have sought to extend better health, improved physical education and expanded athletic sports opportunities to American girls and women from 1865 to 1978, is, however, a story which is beyond the scope of the present investigation.

Notes

1. “One of the charges made against Mistress Hutchinson was that she failed to teach women ‘that which the Apostle commands, viz., to keep at home.’” *Antimontanism in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, 1636-1638*, Prince Society Publications, XXI (Boston: 1894), 167. Cited in Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Women’s Rights Movement in the United States*, revised ed. (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 1975), 352. For a somewhat different interpretation of the manner in which the proper role of colonial women was viewed see: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, “Vertuous Woman Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735.” *American Quarterly*, XXVIII: 1 (Spring 1976), 20-40: “Unwilling or unable to transfer spiritual equality to the earthly sphere, ministers might under-

standably begin to shift earthly differences to the spiritual sphere, gradually developing sexual definitions of the psyche and soul.” (p. 40).

2. As of April 1978 only 35 states had ratified the Equal Rights Amendment of 1972, (three subsequently sought to rescind their affirmative votes). With regard to efforts to enforce the law banning discrimination by educational institutions which receive Federal aid, (in particular, those efforts pertaining to athletics and physical education) see: *H.E.W. News* (June 18, 1974); “Education Programs and Activities Receiving or Benefiting from Federal Assistance: Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex,” *Federal Register*, XXXIX:120, Part II (June 20, 1974); Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, Memorandum from Leotus Morrison, A.I.A.W. President, to President of A.I.A.W. Member Institutions (November 5, 1974); “What Constitutes Equality for Women in Sports?” Project on the Status of Women (Association of American Colleges, 1974); “Revolution in Women’s Sports,” *WomenSports*, I:4 (September 1974), 34-56; “Women’s Sports: There Are Some Growing Pains,” *Los Angeles Times* (April 23, 1975).

3. The revival of interest in the history of women’s movements and women’s achievements has resulted in numerous new publications as well as in the reissue of many works. For example: Page Smith, *Daughters of the Promised Land: Women in American History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970); Caroline Bird, *Enterprising Women* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1976); Nancy F. Cott, ed., *Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1972); Joan Goulianos, ed., *By A Woman Writ: Literature From Six Centuries By and About Women* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1974); Carol C. Gould and Mark W. Wartofsky, eds., *Women and Philosophy: Toward A Theory of Liberation* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1976). Mariam Schneir, ed., *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings* (New York: Random House, 1972) has pointed out: “The vast majority of women are unaware of the great feminist writings of the past In short, women have been deprived of their history—.” (p. xi).

4. See for example: Patricia Branca, *Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home* (London: Croom Helm, 1975); Elizabeth G. Davis, *The First Sex* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1971); Signe Hammer, ed., *Women: Body and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975); Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973). Carol Smith-Rosenburg and Charles Rosenburg, “The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Women and Her Role In Nineteenth Century America,” *The Journal of American History*, XL (September 1973).

5. As Spears and Swanson have recently noted, although in the twentieth century sport has become the “dominant component” of physical education. “in the early days of the United States, sport as such existed in a nebulous form...” *History of Sport and Physical Education in the United States* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1978), xi. The term “physical education” has been given a variety of definitions in the past two centuries, and even today there is far from total agreement concerning its exact meaning. Some limit its use to the pedagogical sphere, while others favor a broader scope. At the least, the term has seemed to include those types of endeavors which have a concern for hygiene, exercise, diet, rest, proper clothing, developmental play, active pastimes and recreations. and simple games.

6. Quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1945). 16-17. The majority of Americans were convinced, of course, that it was divine providence which predetermined such inequality. For a discussion of popular attitudes toward women in England in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, (with some observations on women in America) see: Duncan Crow, *The Victorian Woman* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1975).

7. Robert E. Riegel, *American Feminists* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1963) contends that there were two independent lines of development. “One was the ideological approach, which derived directly from the ideas of the Enlightenment, and which was of prime importance to the first feminists. The other was the economic changes that made possible in fact the objectives for which the feminists fought.” (preface). Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (London: J. Johnson, 1791) has been referred to as one of history’s most important statements regarding “... human rights unobstructed by any sexual bias.” See: Charles W. Hagelman’s introduction to the Norton Library edition of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1967). The “Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Godwin Author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*” were printed in several issues of *The Ladies’ Monitor* in late 1801; this same journal had announced in August 1801 an anticipated publication of “*A Second Vindication of the Rights of Women*,” by an American Lady. For a discussion of Mary Wollstonecraft’s views on physical education see: Roberta J. Park, “Concern for the Physical Education of the Female Sex From 1675 to 1800 in France, England and Spain,” *Research Quarterly*, XCV:2 (May 1974), 104-119. For a useful discussion of how “enlightenment faith in liberty and equality” concerning the power and potentiality of women suffered “at the hands of nineteenth century [biological] science,” see: Flavia Alaya, “Victorian Science and the ‘Genius’ of Women.” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXXVIII (April-June 1977), 261-280.

8. Charles F. Adams, ed., *Letters of Mrs. Adams. The Wife of John Adams* (Boston: Wilkins, Carter and Co., 1848), 75. Ernest Earnest. *The American Eve In Fact and Fiction, 1775-1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 10-28.
9. Charles F. Adams, ed., *Letters of Mrs. Adams, The Wife of John Adams: With An Introductory Memoir by Her Grandson Charles Francis Adams* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1841), I, 130. The editor suggests that the 1778 letter may not have been sent. As late as 1809 and 1814 Mrs. Adams was still asserting that there was need to provide American women with a more extensive education, albeit one in keeping with their expected roles as wives and mothers. *Ibid.*, 265; 278-279. Mercy Otis Warren, whose *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* (1805) is considered by some to be a major political work, suggested in her private correspondence that women should only appear to be uniformed and inferior but never be so. Noted in Lawrence J. Friedman and Arthur H. Shaffer, "Mercy Otis Warren and the Politics of Historical Nationalism." *The New England Quarterly*, XLVII:2 (June 1975), 194-215.
10. *The Pennsylvania Magazine: Or American Monthly Museum* (August 1775), 363-365. It has been suggested that the author of this statement was Thomas Paine, editor of *The Pennsylvania Magazine*. However, Frank Smith, "The Authorship of 'An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex,'" *American Literature*, II:3 (November 1930) contends that the article was a filler item taken from the European press and probably written in French by a Mr. Thomas. (pp. 277-280).
11. *Massachusetts Magazine* (March 1789), 28-29. Mary Sumner Benson, *Women In Eighteenth Century America: A Study of Opinion and Usage* (New York: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1966) maintains that much of the most interesting material dealing with women came not from the ladies' magazines but from the pages of [magazines] designed for general circulation." (pp. 214-215).
12. *Massachusetts Magazine* (April 1790), 223. From February 1792 to December 1792 that *Massachusetts Magazine* carried Mrs. Murray's further pronouncements on the status of women in America in a series entitled "The Gleaner," Benson, *op. cit.*, 172-177.
13. Quoted in Nathan G. Goodman, *Benjamin Rush: Physician and Citizen, 1746-1813* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), 313-314. Dr. Rush was an early American proponent of physical exercise. In 1772 he delivered a "Sermon on Exercise" in which he declared: "Man was formed to be active. The vigor of his mind, and the health of his body can be fully preserved by no other means, than by labor of some sort." Rush listed a number of exercises which would be beneficial, indicating that these needed to be varied according to the age, sex and temperment of the individual; he also observed that women had less need of active exercise than had men. In Dagobert D. Runes, *The Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 358-372.
14. *The Weekly Magazine of Original Essays, Fugitive Pieces and Interesting Intelligence* (February-April 1798), Vernon L. Parrington, *The Romantic Revolution in America, 1800-1860* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1927), 180-184. Abraham Blinderman, *American Writers On Education Before 1865* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), 99.
15. Charles Brockden Brown, *Alcuin: A Dialogue*. Lee R. Edwards, ed. (Massachusetts: The Gehenna Press, 1970), 23-26; 56-60; 92-93; 102. David Lee Clark, *Charles Brockden Brown* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1952).
16. Harriet Martineau, *Society In America* (New York: Sanders and Otley, 1837), II, 245-259. In "How to Make Home Unhealthy," *Harper's Monthly*, I (October 1850), 601-619, she ridiculed the fashion which forbid to girls and women any type of vigorous physical activity. The extent to which women were considered to be physically and mentally inferior to men—and the restrictions placed on their ownership of property, the wages they earned, and even the right to the custody of their own children—has been discussed by numerous authors. See for example, Eve Merriam, *Growing Up Female In America* (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1971); Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." *American Quarterly*, XVIII:2, Part I (Summer 1966), 151-173; William O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 7; Susan Phinney Conrad, *Perish The Thought: Intellectual Women In Romantic America, 1830-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 95-104. The abolitionist Sarah Grimke pointed out that there was good reason to believe that women in earlier periods of history had enjoyed substantially greater advantages than did women in 1837. See her *Letters On the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1838; reprinted 1970), 56-60. Foster Rhea Dulles, *A History of Recreation: America Learns to Play* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965) maintains that, "In Colonial days they [women] had been able to enter far more fully into both the work and the recreation of men... they enjoyed as spectators if not as actual participants whatever amusements were available." (pp. 95-98). The title of a recently published book by Martha Vincinus, ed., *Suffer and Be Still: Women In the Victorian Age* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972) aptly sums up the plight of women in the nineteenth century.
17. Hanah Crocker Mather, *Observations On The Real Rights of Women, With Appropriate Duties*

- Agreeable to the Scripture, Reason and Common Sense* (Boston: Printed for the Author, 1818), 1; 18-20; 56-58.
18. Eleanor W. Thompson, *Education for Ladies: 1830-1860* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947) has declared: "No matter what the concept of women's sphere, from the many who, in practice, confined it to the parlor, to the few who aspired to break all bonds assunder and let her have the same opportunities as man, with all the shades of difference between these two extremes, there was one point of agreement—women should be educated." (p, 42). One of the more comprehensive treatments of "physical education" for girls and women in America from the 1820s to the 1860s may be found in Thomas Woody, *A History of Women's Education In the United States* (New York: The Science Press, 1929). II, 98-136.
19. *American Journal of Education*. I:1 (January 1826), 19-23.
20. *American Journal of Education*, I:1 (January 1826), 61. Russell was acquainted with the New England educational innovator Amos Bronson Alcott, with Elizabeth Peabody and other members of the so-called "Transcendentalist" group interested in new forms of education and also in the "perfection of the body." See: Roberta J. Park, "The Attitudes of Leading New England Transcendentalists Toward Healthful Exercise, Active Recreations and Proper Care of The Body: 1830-1860," *Journal of Sport History*, IV: 1 (Spring 1977), 34-50
21. *American Journal of Education*, I:6 (June 1826), 349-352.
22. *The Boston Medical Intelligencer* had begun publication in 1823. In late 1826 the *American Journal of Education* reported that Dr. J.G. Coffin, M.D. had recently become the editor of the aforementioned journal, noting that Dr. Coffin had already contributed several articles to the *American Journal of Education*, (some of these dealing with "physical education"). I:10 (October 1826), 633.
23. [Barnard's] *American Journal of Education*, XXV (June 1861), 608.
24. William B. Fowle, "Gymnastic Exercise for Females," *American Journal of Education*, I:11 (November 1826), 698-699; William B. Fowle, "The Animal Mechanism and Economy," *Boston Medical Intelligencer*, IV:23 (October 24, 1826), 196-197; Woody, *op. cit.*, 109-110.
25. *Parent's Friend: Or Extracts from the Principal Works of Education . . .* was first published in London in 1802. An American edition appeared in 1803.
26. *American Journal of Education*, II:1 (January 1827), 37-43.
27. *Ibid.*, II:5 (May 1827), 289-292; II:6 (June 1827), 339-340.
28. Signor Voarino, *Treatise on Calisthenic Exercises, Arranged for the Private Tuition of Young Ladies* (London: Chiswick, 1827).
29. Gustavus Hamilton, *The Elements of Gymnastics for Boys, and of Calisthenics for Young Ladies* (London:Poole and Edwards, 1827).
30. *American Journal of Education*, II:7 (July 1827), 428-432.
31. William A. Alcott, who often commented on the physical education of the female sex in his voluminous writings on health, joined Woodbridge as associate editor. Woodbridge changed the name to the *American Annals of Education*.
32. *American Annals of Education*, III: I (January 1833) - VI: 2 (February 1836).
33. *The Massachusetts Teacher*, II:12 (December 1849), 368-369; III:3 (March 1850), 65-68; III:8 (August 1850), 244-247; VIII:9 (September 1855). 265-267; VIII:11 (November 1855), 343-344; IX:12 (December 1856), 550-556; 561-565.
34. *Common School Journal*. I (November 1838); II (September 1840) V (November 1843); VII (June 1845).
35. [Barnard's] *American Journal of Education* VI (September 1856), 399-408; VIII (March 1857), 139-146; XX (March 1860), 185-215; XXIII (December 1860), 527-538; XXV (June 1861), 597-680; XXVII (June 1862). 513-562; XXIX (December 1862), 665-700; XXXIV (March 1864), 61-68.
36. *The American Monthly Magazine*, I:8 (November 1829), 541-546. The author concluded that the world would profit from "... substituting works on Physical Education for those entitled 'Universal Doctors.' and 'Family Physicians.'" This same issue also referred to works of Sarah Josepha Hale and Lydia Sigourney.
37. *New York Free Enquirer*, III: 26 (April 23, 1831), 205-207. See also: *New Harmony Gazette* II:14 (January 3, 1827), 109. In the early 1830s Frances Wright was associated with the *Free Enquirer*, a continuation of the *New Harmony Gazette*. For an assessment of the New Harmony settlement's views on physical education see: Roberta J. Park, "Harmony and Cooperation: Attitudes Toward Physical Education and Recreation In Utopian Social Thought and American Communitarian Experiments, 1825-1865," *Research Quarterly*, XCV:3 (October 1974), 276-292.
38. "Of the Exercises Most Conducive to Health in Girls and Young Women," *American Farmer*,

- IX:32 (October, 1827), 254; "On the Quantity of Exercise Proper for Girls and Young Women." *Ibid.*, IX:34 (November, 1827), 270-271; "Education of Girls," *Ibid.*, XI:41 (December, 1829), 325-326. See also Jack W. Berryman, "John Stuart Skinner and the *American Farmer*, 1819-1829: An Early Proponent of Rural Sports," *Associates National Agricultural Library Today*, I:3 (October 1976), 11-32.
39. Richard H. Shryock, *Medicine and Society In America: 1660-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), Chapter 4. Mariam Gurko, *The Ladies of Seneca Falls: The Birth of the Women's Rights Movement* (New York: Macmillan, 1974). claims that one of the inconsistencies which feminists objected to most was the proclamation that women were weak and fragile, yet they were constantly assigned physically demanding chores at home and on the farm. (pp. 26-28). See also: Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden From History: Rediscovering Women In History From The Seventeenth Century to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 39-46.
40. Paul R. Baker, ed., *Views Of Society and Manners In America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1963), 215-222. See also: Alice S. Rossi, ed., *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 105-107. Frances Wright, a friend of Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter Mary Shelly, believed in freedom in just about everything for everyone. Her public advocacy of such freedoms brought the accusation that she favored atheism and free love. The term "Fanny Wrightism" came to be associated with those women who had the audacity to speak out in public.
41. Rossi, *op. cit.*, 113-115. In a lecture entitled "Of the More Important Divisions and Essential Parts of Knowledge," she stipulated: "We must allow this to be important. If any thing concerns us, it should be our bodies and minds. What do we understand of their structure? What of their faculties and powers? If we understand not these, how may we preserve the health of either?" In Frances Wright, *Course of Popular Lectures* (New York: Published at the Office of the Free Enquirer, 1829), 65-66.
42. Alma Lutz, *Emma Willard: Pioneer Educator of American Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).
43. Emma Willard. *A Plan for Improving Female Education* (A reprint of the second edition of 1819, Middlebury, Vermont, 1918). The original, printed by J. W. Copeland in 1819, bore the title *An Address to the Public, Particularly to the Members of the Legislature of New York, Proposing A Plan for Improving Female Education*.
44. Sydney R. MacLean, In, *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, Edward T. James, ed. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1971), II, 73-75; Woody, *op. cit.*, 113; Willystine Goodsell, ed., *Pioneers of Women's Education In the United States: Emma Willard, Catharine Beecher, Mary Lyon* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1931), 65.
45. Marion Lansing, ed., *Mary Lyon Through Her Letters* (Boston: Books, Inc., 1937), 102-103; 232-233. Emily Dickinson wrote from Mt. Holyoke Seminary on November 6, 1847: "At 12, I practice Calisthenics and at 12¼ read until dinner...." In Paul M. Angle, *The American Reader: From Columbus to Today* (New York: Rand McNally and Co., 1958), 272.
46. The "oscillator" was described as a kind of weighted balance-board invented by James Q. Casey, Esq.
47. "La Grace" was played by two young ladies, each holding a stick of about one foot in length in each hand, who toss back and forth to each other "...a small light hoop of wood, about nine inches in diameter . . . bound with ribbon, which is tastefully tied in a bow on each side." (An almost identical game was demonstrated by an exhibitor at the 1977 national convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation).
48. *A Course of Calisthenics for Young Ladies In Schools and Families, With Some Remarks on Physical Education* (Hartford: H. and J. Huntington, 1831), 60-63; 70-71; 81.
49. Kathryn K. Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study In American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 59.
50. Catharine E. Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon and Webb, 1841).
51. Catharine E. Beecher, *Letters to the People On Health and Happiness* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1855). Ms. Beecher was attracted to the "water cure" and discussed this at some length in *Letters to the People The Water Cure Journal*, published in the 1840s, occasionally discussed the influence of fashion upon health.
52. Catharine E. Beecher, *Physiology and Calisthenics for Schools and Families* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1856). To this edition is added *Calisthenic Exercises for Schools, Families and Health Establishments*.
53. Beecher, *Calisthenic Exerciser op. cit.*, iii-58.

54. Beecher, *Physiology and Calisthenics...*, *op. cit.*, 152-179; *Calisthenic Exercises...*, *op. cit.*, 51-53. Such concern was well-founded. Writing in the late 1850s, Thomas Colley Gratten, former British Consul for the State of Massachusetts, observed that American women were pretty and had slight figures but that, "... compressions, by means of assassinating whalebone, was the cause of many a premature death. and of most defective figures to the squeezed-in survivors"; he also felt that abstinence from wholesome exercise arose from a "... very mistaken modesty." *Civilized America* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1859), II, 55-56.
55. Catharine E. Beecher, *Suggestions Respecting Improvements in Education, Presented to the Trustees of the Hartford Female Seminary, and Published at Their Request* (Hartford: Packer and Butler, 1829), 7-9; 56.
56. *Ibid.*, 75.
57. Lydia H. Sigourney, *Letters to Young Ladies* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1837), 94-97; 101-102; 113-114; 235; 246. Mrs. Sigourney did not wish, however, to upset the established order of nature: while the sexes might differ (all as a part of "Divine Order") this did not imply that one was inferior. (p. 179)
58. *American Ladies' Magazine*, I:1 (January 1828), 1; 21-27. Ruth E. Finley, *The Lady of Godey's: Sarah Josepha Hale* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1931) goes so far as to state: "She was the first to stress the necessity of physical training for her sex; she was the first to suggest public playgrounds." (p. 17). Although she may not have been the first, Sarah Josepha Hale was surely one of the earliest American ladies to make a concerted appeal for healthful physical activity for women.
59. *American Ladies' Magazine*, II:1 (January 1829), 89-90; II:10 (October 1829), 485-486. III:1 (January 1830), 46-47.
60. Paul S. Boyer, In, *Notable American Women, 1607-1950, op. cit.*, II, 111-112. When the question of medical education for women arose Mrs. Hale gave her rather cautious support, on the condition that the women receive their education in separate medical schools.
61. [Godey's] *Lady's Book*, XXIII (July 1841), 41-42.
62. Margaret Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit: Man Versus Men, Woman Versus Women," *The Dial*, IV: 1 (July 1843), 1-47.
63. Margaret Fuller, *Woman In the Nineteenth Century and Kindred Papers Relating to the Sphere, Condition and Duties of Woman*, Arthur R. Fuller, ed. (Boston: Taggard and Close, 1860). It had been hoped that Margaret Fuller might preside over the first National Women's Rights Convention at Worcester, Massachusetts, October 23-24, 1850. However, she, her husband and their small son were lost in a shipwreck off the coast of New York while returning from Italy. See: Harriet H. Robinson, *Massachusetts In the Women's Suffrage Movement* (Boston: Roberts Bros., 1881), 19-41.
64. The New England "Transcendentalists" were generally supportive of a much more liberal education for women than was then the vogue. For an assessment of their views concerning "physical education" see: Roberta J. Park, "The Attitudes of Leading New England Transcendentalists Toward Healthful Exercise, Active Recreations and Proper Care of the Body," *loc. cit.* Louisa Mae Alcott, the daughter of the Transcendental educator Bronson Alcott, wrote: "Active exercise was my delight . . . No boy could be my friend till I had beaten him in a race, and no girl if she refused to climb a tree, leap fences, and be a tomboy." Quoted in Gerda Lerner, *The Female Experience: An American Documentary* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1977), 7.
65. Quoted in Thomas W. Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1885), 22.
66. Margaret Fuller, *Life Without and Life Within, Or Reviews, Narratives, Essays and Poems* (Boston: Roberts Bros., 1874), 116-119.
67. Margaret Coxe, *Claims of the Country on American Females* (Columbus: Issac N. Whitings, 1842), II, 3-4; 99-102.
68. See for example: Gurko, *op. cit.*: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda J. Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage* (Rochester: Charles Mann, 1887), 1, 70-75; 805-810.
69. Quoted in Wendy Martin, *The American Sisterhood From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1972), 59.
70. *The Una*, I:1 (February 1, 1853), 8-9.
71. The importance of such journals was discussed by Mrs. Stanton: "Then we [Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton] would get out our pens and write articles for papers, or a petition to the legislature; indite letters to the faithful here and there; stir up the women in Ohio, Pennsylvania or Massachusetts; call on *The Lily*, *The Una*, *The Liberator*, *The Standard* to remember our wrongs . . . I am the better writer, she the better critic. In Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, eds.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, As Revealed In Her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences (New York: Harper and Bros., Publishers, 1922) I:1, 154-155.

72. *The Lily*, I:5 (May 1, 1849), 36.

73. *Ibid.*, I:6 (June 1, 1849), 48. This article was reprinted from the *New York Commercial*. The author of this article was probably Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

74. *Ibid.*, I:9 (October 1, 1849), 74.

75. Mary Wollstonecraft had written in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*: "I wish to persuade women to endeavor to acquire strength, both of mind and body. Let us then by being allowed to take the same exercises as boys, not only during infancy, but youth, arrive at perfection of the body, that we may know how far the natural superiority of man extends."

76. *The Lily*, II:4 (April 1, 1850), "Man Superior—Intellectually, Morally and Physically," by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, (p. 31). Mrs. Stanton's preoccupation with improving society's attitudes toward women appears to have begun at an early age—possibly when her father expressed his wish that she had been a boy. When she was sent to Emma Willard's Troy Seminary in 1830, Mrs. Stanton recalled: "The thought of a school without boys, who had been to me such a stimulus both in study and play, seemed to my imagination dreary and profitless"; she concluded from her own experience that it was a mistake to send girls and boys to separate schools. See: Stanton and Blatch, *op. cit.*, 37-39.

77. *The Lily*, VII:7 (April 1, 1855), 5.

78. *Ibid.*, III:6 (July 1, 1851), 50. "Our Costume." The originator of the costume is purported to have been Elizabeth Smith Miller, whose father George Smith once declared: "... as long as women wore clothes which crippled and handicapped them physically, they would remain in a state of slavery." Active women seemed to appreciate—even delight in—the freedom of the new costume, which was patterned after that worn "... in sanitariums by women recuperating from the effects of tight lacing and the lack of physical exercise"; it was also used by gymnasts and skaters. In advocating its adoption, *The Lily* increased its circulation. See: Alma Lutz, *Created Equal: A Biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 1815-1900* (New York: The John Day Co., 1940), 63-69. See also: James Laver, *Manners and Morals in the Age of Optimism: 1848-1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966): "A growing number of women were beginning to think that the Adam's rib theory of women's origin had been over-exploited in a patriarchal society they could never compete with men in the work of the world so long as they were clad in the voluminous and hampering clothes of the mid-nineteenth century. Emancipation inevitably meant emancipation in dress." (pp. 180-185).

79. *The Lily*, III:8 (August 1851), 60; VII:19 (October 15, 1855), 150-152.

80. Elizabeth Blackwell, M.D., *The Laws of Life, With Special Reference To the Physical Education of Girls* (New York: George P. Putnam. 1852), 34. See also: Elizabeth Blackwell, *Pioneer Work In Opening the Medical Profession to Women* (New York: Source books, 1970). Ann Douglas Wood, "The Fashionable Diseases: Women's Complaints and Their Treatment In Nineteenth Century America," In Mary Hartman and Lois W. Banner, eds., *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives On the History of Women* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1974), 1-22.

81. *The Laws of Life... op. cit.*, 11; 94-106; "... every organ is intended to receive a certain quantity of fresh arterial blood... and send off the refuse venous blood... Muscular exercise aids... the return of the venous blood... All the organs of the body are impaired by lack of exercise if the tone of the muscles is destroyed... the tone of the organs will be destroyed in corresponding degree."

82. *Ibid.*, 112-121; 178.

83. Richard H. Shryock, *Medicine In America: Historical Essays* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), 111-1202; *Medicine and Society In America: 1660-1860, loc. cit.* See also: John R. Betts, "American Medical Thought On Exercise As The Road to Health, 1820-1860." *Bulletin of The History of Medicine* XLV:2 (March-April 1971), 138-152. John R. Betts, "Mind and Body In Early American Thought," *The Journal of American History*, 54 (March 1968), 787-805.

84. *The Boston Medical Intelligencer*, III:1 (May 17, 1825), 130; IV: 23 (October 24, 1826), 196-199.

85. *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, XIII:17 (December 2, 1835), 270-272; XIII:23 (January 13, 1836), 357-361.

86. *Health Journal and Advocate of Physiological Reform*, I:6 (May 27, 1840); II:23 (April 23, 1842).

87. *New York Medical and Physical Journal*, IV (1825) 522-524.

88. *Water Cure Journal*, III:1 (January 1847), 11-14; 20-21 III:10 (May 1847), 151; III:12 (June 1847), 183-184; IV:4 (October 1847), 306-307; V:6 (December 1848), 154-156.

89. *Graham Journal of Health and Longevity*, II:18 (September 1, 1838), 285; II:20 (September 29, 1838), 311-312.

90. E.W. Duffin, M.D., *The Influence of Modern Physical Education of Females in Producing and Confirming Deformity of the Spine* (New York: Charles Francis, 1830), 103-110. Athletic Exercises,

the author held, were too violent for girls; calisthenics were more appropriate; a Ms. Mason is said to have selected appropriate activities for women from the work of Clais.

91. Charles Caldwell, M.D. *Thoughts On Physical Education: Being A Discourse Delivered to A Convention of Teachers In Lexington, Ky. On The 6th and 7th of November 1833* (Boston: Marsh, Capen, and Lyon, 1834), 60-64; 116-132.

92. Andrew Combe, M.D., *The Principles of Physiology Applied to the Preservation of Health and to the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1836), iii; 112-130.

93. John Bell, M.D., *Health and Beauty: An Explanation of the Laws of Growth and Exercise; Through Which A Pleasing Contour, Symmetry of Form, and Graceful Carriage of the Body Are Acquired, and the Common Deformities of the Spine and Chest Prevented* (Philadelphia: E.L. Carey and A. Hart, 1838), 199-253.

94. John Warren, M.D., *Physical Education and the Preservation of Health* (Boston: William D. Ticknor and Co., 1846), 5-52. It was Warren's views that were referred to by Margaret Fuller in her *Life Without and Life Within*

95. William A. Alcott, M.D., *Confessions of a School Master* (Reading: H.A. Lantz. 1856—revised edition), 173. See also: Paul R. Mills, "William Andrus Alcott, M.D.: Pioneer Reformer In Physical Education, 1798-1859," *76th Proceedings of The National College Physical Education Association for Men* (January 6-9, 1973) 29-34.

96. This attitude has been referred to as "Christian Physiology." See: James C. Whorton, "Christian Physiology: William Alcott's Prescription for the Millenium," *Bulletin of The History of Medicine*, XXXIX: 4 (Winter 1975), 466-481.

97. William A. Alcott, *The Young Woman's Guide To Excellence* (Charles H. Peirce, 1849), pp. 17-44; 207-217; 280-286.

98. Noted in Bruce L. Bennett, "Reaction to 'William Andrus' Alcott, M.D., Pioneer Reformer in Physical Education, 1798-1859," *76th Proceedings of the National College Physical Education Association for Men, op. cit.*, 35-36.

99. William A. Alcott, *The Library of Health* (Boston: George W. Light, 1837-1841), 5 Vols. In this work Alcott excerpted From a large number of contemporary sources.

100. William A. Alcott, *Young Woman's Book of Health* (Boston; Tappan, Whittlemore and Marsh, 1850) 18-45.

101. William A. Alcott, *Laws of Health* (Boston: J. P. Jewett, 1857), 19-75. Alcott made extensive efforts to correct the lack of knowledge concerning health which he felt was prevalent in America. His *The House I Live In, Or the Human Body* (Boston: Light and Stearns, 1837), intended for "the use of families and schools," was quite popular.

102. Charles W. Hackensmith, *History of Physical Education* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 352-353; 373-374. Arthur Weston, *The Making of American Physical Education* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), 30-31; Fred E. Leonard, *Pioneers of Modern Physical Training* (New York: Association Press, 1915), 83-88.

103. Dio Lewis, "New Gymnastics," [Barnard's] *American Journal of Education*, XXVII (June 1862), 531-562; XXIX (December 1862), 665-700; Dio Lewis, *The New Gymnastics* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868).

104. Carrie C. Catt and Nettie R. Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1923), 68; Flexner, *op. cit.*, 145-158.

105. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Health of American Women." *North American Review*, CCCXIII (1882), 510-517.

106. See for example: John R. Betts, *America's Sporting Heritage; 1850-1950* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1974); Ellen Gerber et al., *The American Woman In Sport* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1974); Elizabeth Cynthia Barney, "The American Sportswoman," *Fortnightly Review*, LVI (August 1, 1894), 263-277.

107. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 92-93.

108. See For example: Ann Douglas Wood, "The Fashionable Diseases: Women's Complaints and Their Treatment in Nineteenth Century America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, IV:1 (Summer 1973), 25-52; Patricia A. Vertinsky, "The Effect of Changing Attitudes Toward Sexual Morality on Physical Education for Women in Nineteenth Century America," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, VII:2 (December 1976), 26-38. Carl N. Degler, "What Ought to Be and What Was: Women's Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century." *American Historical Review*, LXXIX:5 (December 1974) contends that "muscular exercise" and "education for usefulness" were often of-

ferred as antidotes to a woman's denial of her sexual impulses. This article also contains a detailed discussion of the work of Clelia Duel Mosher, M. D., Associate Professor of Personal Hygiene and Medical Adviser of Women at Stanford University, where she also served as Director of the Women's Gymnasium. Dr. Mosher's articles sometimes appeared in the *American Physical Education Review* (i.e., November 1911; December 1925).

109. Edward H. Clarke, *Sex in Education: Or A Fair Chance Girls* (Boston: J.R. Osgood and Co., 1873). For a persistence of such ideas see for example, Aileen Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement; 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).