Concepts of Gender Sensationalized: Newspaper Representations of Women in Industry during World War I

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Months after America entered World War I, American women faced the monumental question of whether or not they should participate in industrial wartime production. The *Bridgeport Evening Farmer* summed up the confusion, declaring, "the girls who must be self-supporting, are wondering whether or not it would be worthwhile in the end to undertake the jobs which the young men have thrown up at the call of the colors."[1] Meanwhile, the *Northwest Worker* voiced concerns regarding protective measures for women, arguing that the American public must: "protect women entering industries from bad surroundings, injurious tasks and exploitation—moral and physical."[2] These papers brought up a very real dilemma that had begun to plague Americans in regard to women working in industrial settings: how these new working women should be incorporated into the workforce in a manner safe for women's bodies and, more importantly, for society in general. This paper argues that during World War I American newspapers played a key role in constructing and maintaining acceptable societal gender norms by portraying accidents and injuries in industrial jobs differently for men and women to their readers. These issues reinforced sentiments regarding protective measures for women working in industrial jobs and workers compensation legislation.

In order to understand societal perceptions of working women's bodies and their injuries, it is important to see how historians have typically studied the male body. The male body is often studied by looking at the connection between the physical body, the idea of manhood, and accepted cultural notions of masculinity. A key component of these masculine ideals evolved

[1] "Girls Who Are In Men Jobs," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, 22 June 1917, 18.

[2] "Mobilizing Our Industrial Army," *Northwest Worker*, 28 June 1917, 3.

as notions of manhood shifted away from Victorian ideals to include passionate or "primitive" concepts of manhood.[3] Passionate manhood involved physical and animalist tendencies (strength and savagery), and the societal belief that male bodies, and thus their characters, needed to be strong. The military provided a ready way to cultivate manly men, leading to the conclusion that mental toughness often translated into physical toughness.[4]

While notions of manhood and masculinity were tied to masculine physicality of during the Progressive era, notions of womanhood were also tied to women's bodies and their obligations, both morally and domestically, to home and society. Men were expected to be physically active in public spaces; women belonged at home with family, as their main role required producing children and maintaining a home. At the turn of the century, Americans mostly accepted single working women, albeit grudgingly, as a necessary reality for an increasingly industrialized society; however, the female body was perceived as much weaker than the male body, and thus the types of work, pay, and eligible jobs open for women were extremely limited.[5] The workplace also represented a battleground of gendered spaces, since an important notion of womanhood involved human reproduction and women often faced discrimination and abuse because of what their bodies represented.[6] Maintaining the sexual

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[3] This shift occurs at the turn of the twentieth century, see E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

[4] Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American War*s (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); see also Kevin P. Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles & the Politics of Progressive Era Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

[5] Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[6] Sexual harassment became a way for male workers to maintain gendered notions of power and status and keep women as temporary workers in lower skilled labor with lower pay, see Daniel Bender, "Too Much of Distasteful Masculinity: Historicizing Sexual Harassment in the

difference between males and females in the workplace also maintained the gendered hierarchy in place in spaces where both men and women encountered each other on a daily basis.[7]

Newspapers provide a window into the societal expectations of readers; local newspapers especially do a better job of capturing the views of a larger section of the American public. They also have the unique ability to show how people processed cultural and community changes and allow historians to gain a new perspective on cultural phenomena and major historical events.[8] World War I is an especially interesting cultural phenomenon, as newspapers ran articles daily covering all aspects of the war effort, featuring home front issues such as women entering industrial work and, in some instances, their injuries.[9] By studying how newspapers represented accidents and injuries for women during World War I, historians can piece together how American society responded to women entering war-time industrial work, and what these interpretations meant for how Americans viewed appropriate spaces and types of work for women.

Garment Sweatshop and Factory," *Journal of Women's History* 15, 4 (Winter 2004): 91–116.

[7] For more on the sexualized workplace, see Daniel E Bender, *Sweated Work, Weak Bodies: Anti-Sweatshop Campaigns and Languages of Labor* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 336–388, 389–456. These new types of bodies in the workforce called into question male authority, as working women and their bodies threatened the traditional patriarchal structure

[8] Karen Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News: New Journalism and Literary Genre in Late Nineteenth-Century American Newspapers and Fiction* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2005).

[9] The types of newspapers are equally important, as newspapers such as the *Labor World*, and *Labor Journal* were union papers that had a specific agenda when it came to portraying working women in industrial settings. Other newspapers represented a socialist agenda, such as the *Day Book* and the *Northwest Worker*, while others represented the conservative middle-class perspective like the *Evening Public Ledger*. This is a small sampling of the newspapers studied, as I used Chronicling America to obtain a wide variety of newspapers across the country ranging from 1892 to 1923. http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov

In the early twentieth century, newspapers were extremely concerned with industrial accidents and injuries, but with men often at the center of the discussion. From 1911 to 1922, American newspapers advocated for industrial workers who suffered injuries while on the job. In order to interest sympathetic readers, newspapers ran multiple accident/death statistics centered on working men. An article in the *Evening Public Ledger* divulged that at a "conservative estimate, 855,866 accidents occur yearly in this country in manufacturing, mining, and commercial enterprises" and that "some [injuries] meant blindness, loss of limbs, invalidism for years, or perhaps a lifetime."[10] Other newspapers such as the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* also recognized a problem with industrial accidents, noting that, "thirty-three men die in [the mining] industry for each 10,000 employed," and that, "quarries rank second in fatalities" in the United States.[11] The *Richmond Times–Dispatch* claimed "industrial accident deaths in the U.S. are 7.1 percent of those employed;" however, the newspaper did not specify if that statistic included both male and female workers.[12]

While these papers highlighted men's industrial accidents, other articles blatantly focused on male industrial troubles. The *Evening Public Ledger* directly portrayed men as the most affected by industrial accidents. A 1915 article declared that "there is vast social misfortune in the fact that 75 percent or more of the workers killed in the mills, factories, and mines are under 49 years of age; they are men whose obligations to family and usefulness to the world have been only partly fulfilled."[13] The *Bennington Evening Banner* detailed the industrial injuries of five men specifically: for example, "Steven Gould, Center Rutland, employee of Vermont Marble Company, toe crushed by marble block on July 7," and "death of Allan McKenzie the quarry

[10] "A Million Wounded, Thousands Killed," *Evening Public Ledger*, 28 January 1915, 8.
[11] "Accidents to Employees Take Heavy Toll: Industrial Accidents Kill 22,000 Annually," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 12 June 1922, 1.
[12] Ibid.
[13] "A Million Wounded," 8.

worker, who died in the hospital from internal injuries."[14] The paper also lamented that there were a "total of 8 accidents in eight days in the state [Vermont]," all of which involved men.[15]

As sympathy swirled around industrial working men, newspapers struggled with how to include women in the industrial injury narrative and often failed to present industrial accidents and injuries involving women.[16] Some newspapers, such as the *Greenville Journal,* included women in their accident coverage: "New York—More than 500,000 men and women are injured or killed in the industries annually in the United States, or one person every minute;" however, more often than not, newspapers lacked female representation in injury reports.[17] Newspapers fleetingly mentioned women's industrial accidents and fatalities, with the focus often shifting back to men. A prime example of newspapers glossing over the severity of women's industrial accidents is seen in the *Labor World*, "of the accidents to women 19 were serious and 104 fatal," and that, "in addition to the fatal accidents to women, there were 16 fatal accidents to men."[18] The newspaper then detailed the fatal accidents to men, with only a mention of the accidents and fatalities of women industrial workers. As the United States geared up for World War I, women in industry became a necessity. As a result, newspapers needed to find acceptable ways to incorporate women into various spaces, including industry.

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[14] "Five More Accidents: Industrial Accident Board Has Heard of Eight in Eight Days," *Bennington Evening Banner*, 12 July 1915, 2.

[15] "Five More Accidents," 2.

[16] As industry and technology increased at the turn of the twentieth century, industrial work came with new dangers as companies tried to keep up with one another. This is especially seen in the steel industry, these jobs of course were traditionally held by men, and thus were more susceptible to industrial accidents than women were. See Christopher Decker and David Flynn "Work-Related Accidents and the Level of Market Competition: An Analysis of Worker Injury Rates at U.S. Steel Corporation, 1907–1939," *Economic Inquiry*, 46 (July 2008): 438-453.

[17] "Toll Taken of Human Life By The Industries," *Greenville Journal*, 1 August 1907, 3.

[18] "Monthly Report of State Department Shows Many Fatalities to Women," *Labor World*, 12 October 1918, 6.

With World War I on the horizon, American society struggled with how to start and maintain wartime production while the men went to the front. Incorporating women into industrial spaces seemed to be the obvious answer; however, newspapers reflected societal uneasiness about allowing women, with their injury-prone bodies, to fill men's jobs. Notions of patriotism for the war effort complicated things further, as women pitted duty for country against duty for family and other traditional gender roles.

Before the United States prepared to enter the war and Europe had already engaged in fighting, American newspapers expressed unease when discussing European women replacing men in the industrial war effort. Worries over societal expectations caused *The Evening Public Ledger* to run an article lamenting that the industrial labor situation in Europe caused major societal headaches: "with the proposed introduction of women in industry on a much greater scale than ever before, we have a deep problem to study."[19] Newspapers portrayed Europe's industrial women as problematic due to the war effort, and used these women as an example to discourage American women in industry, showing that there was a lack of support for working women on a large scale. *The Labor World* noted that the "experience in England and France [demonstrated]…the great extent to which women in war time leave their homes to join the industrial army," arguing that European countries already at war saw a surge in women into war industries.[20] *The Washington Times* also implied that the war effort ravaged women and used Germany as an example, noting that, "reports show 266,000 German women are now engaged in industries formerly only employing men," and that, "on general average one-third of these women have been physically disabled by their work."[21] In the case of Germany, American newspapers implied that encouraging women to work in industrial settings

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[19] "Maimed Workers State's Problem: Plan of Reconstruction of Industrial Cripples Urged by Doctors," *Evening Public Ledger*, 6 December 1918, 2.

[20] "New Army of Women Workers Must Receive Protection," *Labor World*, 28 July 1917, 3.

[21] "Women Sacrificed in War Industry, Labor Charges," *The Washington Times*, 8 August 1917, 4.

could cause serious bodily injury. These misplaced notions of patriotism could cause physical injury to women and disrupt societal gender expectations, since some of these injuries, "have been so serious as to preclude the women from motherhood."[22]

Labor newspapers urged Americans to take the warnings of Europe to heart and advocated for the protection of working women from the dangers of industrial work. *The Labor World* represented a common thread in union newspapers, using protective legislation for women in order to protect traditionally held male jobs. If women needed to participate in the war industry, then there was an "increased importance of strict provisions for safety first and health first," which would eventually benefit male workers when the time came to reclaim their industrial jobs.[23] The same newspaper also compared similar reports in England to the United States, as the paper worried that injuries regarding women were on the rise due to them entering the workforce in larger numbers. It bemoaned the fact that a "monthly report of state department shows many fatalities to women."[24] *The Northwest Worker* and *The Labor Journal* made a case for protection if women must enter the workforce, arguing that "as women enter industry in rapidly increasing numbers, the need becomes even more pressing for protective measures."[25] *The Labor World* also had the same sentiments, proclaiming that the "new army of women workers must receive adequate protection," and the comparison of women workers to an army is significant.[26] By comparing women industrial workers to soldiers, the newspaper attempted to validate the use of them in wartime industry by portraying these women as a key part of the American war effort.

While many labor union newspapers portrayed a struggle in acceptance of women industrial workers and their subsequent injuries, some papers saw World War I as a time for advancement for women. Some newspapers encouraged equal treatment for

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[22] "Women Sacrificed," 4.
[23] "New Army of Women Workers," 3.
[24] "Monthly Report of State Department," 6.
[25] "Mobilizing Our Industrial Army," 3; "Attacks on Labor Laws are Checked," *The Labor Journal*, 29 June 1917, 3.
[26] "New Army of Women Workers," 3.

women preparing to enter the work force, those already working, and those who were injured in industry. *The El Paso Herald* is a prime example of a newspaper advocating for the advancement of women, broadcasting that the "war brings women advancement normally requiring 25 years," and that "the war has brought to the women of the United States opportunities for which they might have worked in vain for 25 years in time of peace."[27] The *Herald* also felt that women's roles would continue to grow depending on how long the war lasted, noting "it is estimated that if the war continues three years more we may find 500,000 women in men's jobs," hoping that women could expand their number of jobs in industry by taking advantage of the opportunity the war presented. However, despite occasional calls for advancement during the war, women in industry still walked a narrow line between acceptance and rejection, as notions of patriotism became tools for debating traditional gender roles.

According to newspapers of the time, being patriotic often meant adhering to established gender roles. As shown previously, the American press portrayed European women injured in industrial accidents as a warning to the American public of the dangers of industrial working women. By framing an argument centered on patriotism, American newspapers seized on the opportunity to remind their American audience that industrial work was not only dangerous for women, but also for society in general. In their article criticizing the use of English women in factories, *The Northwest Worker* asserted, "English women pay [a] large price for patriotism" and blamed their injuries on the requirement to carry out their patriotic duty.[28] The article goes on to broadcast, "English women and girls are paying the price of patriotism as well as their men at the front." Comparing women's industrial accidents to the war front implied that there was a war on two fronts, at home as well as on the battlefield, and the American press wanted to ensure that the United States did not have the same issue.[29]

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[27] "War Brings Women Advancement Normally Requiring 25 Years," *El Paso Herald,* 29 May 1918, 6.
[28] "English Women Pay Large Price for Patriotism," *The Northwest Worker*, 28 September 1916, 1.
[29] "English Women Pay," 1.

Newspapers reported more injuries for women as they entered the workforce in large numbers during World War I. The *Harrisburg Telegraph* proclaimed that "twelve women were killed during the year while working in plants producing paper and paper products," highlighting not only that women were injured and killed, but also their specific injuries.[30] The same paper also divulged that "one woman was killed in each of the following employments: laboratory services; clay, glass and stone products; clothing manufacture and miscellaneous products."[31] Other newspapers incorporated women in general statistics, even mentioning them in accident articles directly with men. The *New Mexico State Record* announced that "estimates [show] that one-half of all fatal accidents are public accidents; one fourth industrial, and one-fourth in the home, and say that of the 45,000 accidental deaths in the United States annually only one-fourth are females."[32] The *Colville Examiner* proclaimed, "here in peaceful America we killed something like 128,000 men, women, and children from industrial accident,"[33] and *The Evening Public Ledger* disclosed, "it is realized that 34,000 men, women, and children are killed by accidents every twelve months."[34]

Newspapers played a critical role in defining how women should be presented to society, which specific types of work were especially dangerous for women, and the injuries to which women were susceptible. According to *The Evening Public Ledger*, "Women are wrecked most often through nervous exhaustion."[35] By using those specific words, the newspaper was representing the common belief that women were more prone to nervous episodes than men.[36] *The Washington Times* ran a long article that

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[30] "Movies to Show Workers How to Prevent Injury," *The Harrisburg Telegraph*, 11 February 1916, 19.
[31] Ibid.
[32] "For Disabled Women Also," 7.
[33] "To Humanize Industry by Preventing Accidents," *The Colville Examiner*, 6 December 1919, 1.
[34] "Who Pays?" *Evening Public Ledger,* 31 August 1917, 5.
[35] "Maimed Workers State's Problem," 2.
[36] For more information on neurasthenia, see Matthew Smith, "Madness in the USA from the Gilded Age to the Progressive Era, *History of*

lamented specific types of work as especially dangerous for a woman's delicate sensibilities; the newspaper listed, "wiping engines in the running house," "the foundry trade," and even complained that, "One lumber yard in Chicago is reported to be employing women in handling lumber."[37] *The Northwest Worker* agreed, disclosing that working as "feminine puddlers and machinists" also qualified as dangerous industrial work for women.[38] Additionally, *The Washington Times* reported, "Truly there can be no justification for employing women with so little discrimination;" in other words, wartime jobs led to more concern about women workers and their safety.[39]

As reports of women's accidents and injuries increased, some American newspapers published explicit ways women became injured. *The El Paso Herald* also as "Many women are said to have suffered permanent injury in the munitions plants because of gas poisoning; many have been injured also by lifting weights beyond their strength."[40] *The Northwest Worker* described in gory detail women injured in British factories during the war; some were "seared by molten metal, blinded by steel shavings, and [had] fingers snipped off by machinery."[41] Reporting became even more explicit in describing how women were not only physically incapable of industrial work, but also easily distracted mentally in its story of how quickly injuries can occur in female-occupied factories: "The ladle tips or the belt slips off the roller, there's a scream and another casualty goes down on the growing list."[42] *The Northwest Worker* also blamed women for being inexperienced,

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Psychiatry 23, 4 (December 2012); Richard Golden, "William Osler's 'The Nervousness of American Women,'" *History of Psychology* 11, 1 (February 2008): 1–14.

[37] "Women Sacrificed," 4.

[38] "English Women Pay," 1.

[39] "Women Sacrificed," 4.

[40] "War Brings Women Advancement," 6.

[41] "English Women Pay," 1.

[42] Ibid.; this was a common critique for working women in traditional male jobs, see also Carole Srole, *Transcribing Class and Gender: Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Courts and Offices* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).

reporting, "...industrial accidents have not diminished, inexperience being held to blame."[43]

While some types of work were labeled as especially injurious to women, newspapers also depicted the physical body of women as accident-prone and a weakness to industrial productivity. *The Topeka State Journal* used Europe as an example, proclaiming that "Thousands of European women are suffering from injuries received in industrial occupations that are altogether beyond their strength," and further claimed that "A movement has already started to prevent women from entering industries requiring a man's strength."[44] What industries required a man's strength? According to *The Topeka State Journal* and the "plea of the experts," Americans should "let the women take the office jobs and release the men for the heavy work."[45]

Whether completely limited or conditionally acceptable, newspapers continued to portray women industrial workers using gendered terminology as it related to their physical bodies and reproduction. For example, the *Aberdeen Herald* worried that "Working women at night near the time of childbirth and at the monthly period, or at any time under physically exhausting and destructive conditions" could damage society and believed that it was important to protect women "for their own safety and for the welfare of the race."[46] *The El Paso Herald*, which accepted women working in some specific industries, also used gendered language to restrict women workers. The paper asserted that

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[43] "English Women Pay," 1; again, another typical critique of women workers, that they do not belong in traditionally dominated industries, Srole, *Transcribing Class*, 129–159.

[44] "Women as Farm Laborers," *The Topeka State Journal*, 9 March 1918, 12.

[45] Ibid.

[46] "Perpetuating Poverty," *Aberdeen Herald*, 28 March 1913, 4; this argument is also seen in the famous *Muller v. Oregon* case, where the supreme court upheld protective legislation advocating a ten-hour work day specifically for women due to concerns over protecting women's bodies for childbirth. See Nancy Erickson, "*Muller v. Oregon* Reconsidered," *Labor History*, Vol. 30 (Spring, 1987): 228–250 and *Muller v. Oregon*, 208 U.S. 412 (1908).

enforcing a twenty-five pound weight restriction was a good measurement as "that is about the weight of a healthy baby about a year old, such as the average mother is called upon to lift many times daily."[47] *The Washington Times* worried that American women would suffer the same loss of womanhood as German women working in war industries, as their "injuries in most cases have been so serious as to preclude the women from serious motherhood."[48] Maintaining womanhood was also an important issue for *The Evening Statesman*, which believed that industrial working women needed to "retain the finer qualifications and be womanly," but also "she must do all this and remain free of mannish attributes."[49] This position represented a gender paradox that women working in industry often faced: They were expected to be strong and capable for the work needed by their country, but also needed to maintain their sense of womanhood and femininity.

Newspapers also placed an emphasis on the role women played as mothers and domestics. The *Evening Public Ledger* implored its readers to think about "Who pays, in anguish and enforced poverty, for the accidents of industrial life?"[50]The answer to the paper's question was that women in the roles of both mothers and children paid the ultimate price in industrial sacrifice—mainly due to the loss of their breadwinning husband. Of course, the most important societal value for women involved marriage and motherhood, as the *Los Angeles Herald* advocated for a "proposed reduction of two hours [to] give the relief necessary for home duties," to aid in accident prevention efforts.[51] *The Sun* also worried that with industrial work, the "expectation of marriage...prevents [women] from making themselves efficient when young, and makes them disappointed, weary, and old when their mental and physical powers should be in their prime."

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[47] "War Brings Women Advancement," 6.
[48] "Women Sacrificed," 4.
[49] "Women in Industry," *The Evening Statesman*, 24 June 1909, 4.
[50] "Who Pays?" 5.
[51] Limiting Women's Working Hours," *Los Angeles Herald*, 26 June, 1982, 12.

Newspapers feared that industrial work took women away from their womanly duties in favor of higher production.[52]

These beliefs persisted despite arguments in some newspapers that women were safer than men in industrial settings. The *Evening Public Ledger* believed that, "on the whole, the entrance of women into industry is viewed from a surgical standpoint with favor. It will mean a new era in 'safety first,'" and also that "women are naturally prudent and therefore less prone to injury."[53] In contrast, the *New Mexico State Record* argued "it seems possible that women suffer as many accidents in the home as men." The paper then discussed injuries women were susceptible to using gendered notions of public and private spaces for both genders. They "would probably suffer few accidents in public places because they travel about less. Women in industry are a tremendously increasing number."[54] In other words, women were perceived as suffering fewer industrial accidents because they were less inclined to be in public places. However, as they entered the work force, the notion of public gendered spaces was changing, along with preconceived beliefs that women were any safer than men due to their gender.

Women performing industrial work also found themselves at the center of societal concern, as the *Washington Times* feared that, "Employers [were] exploiting women for advertising purposes,"[55] and the *Bridgeport Evening Farmer* believed that women must be protected from "exploitation—moral and physical."[56] Both *The Labor World* and the *Bridgeport Evening Farmer* shared similar sentiments when the paper reported that women "should all be protected against bad surroundings, injurious tasks, speeding up and exploitation, moral or physical."[57] The *Northwest Worker* also advocated for more protection for

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[52] "Prospects of Marriage," *The Sun,* 17 April 1892, 21.
[53] "Treating Injuries of Nation's New Workers—Predicts New Era of Safety First," *Evening Public Ledger*, 9 May 1918, 8.
[54] "For Disabled Women Also," 7.
[55] "Women Sacrificed," 4.
[56] "Safety First and health is Workers' Motto: Labor Association Urges Equal Pay without Sex Discrimination," 18.
[57] "New Army of Women Workers," 3; "Safety First and health," 18.

female industrial workers, reminding its readers "as women enter industry in rapidly increasing numbers, the need becomes, even more pressing for protective measures."[58]

Political debates teemed around women working in industrial settings, and how their injuries (and injuries in general) affected American society. Workman's compensation became a major debate in newspapers, as they played into public sympathies in order to advocate for more funding. Still, men remained at the center of the workers compensation debate, as gendered ideals and language affected who was entitled to the most compensation for injuries and deaths. Workers compensation resonated with reformers who sought to improve hourly wages for men, especially men with families to support;[59] newspapers sympathized with the male breadwinner working to support a wife and children as an especially poignant loss to society. For example, the *Evening Public Ledger* felt that the "facts and figures of the terrific yearly toll of industrial accidents in the United States" made workers compensation the only way forward.[60] The same newspaper that argued for worker's compensation as the solution also viewed it as a flawed system, complaining, "an income under $800 is not sufficient to permit the maintenance of a normal standard of living for a family consisting of a man, wife, and 3 children." However, the paper never mentioned single women in need of adequate compensation.[61] The *Bridgeport Farmer* shared similar opinions, reporting, "In 115 cases of married men killed by industrial accidents in Erie County, New York, the families received nothing in 38 cases and the compensation in nine was $100 or less."[62]

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[58] "Mobilizing Our Industrial Army," 3.
[59] Price V. Fishback and Shawn Everett Kantor, "Did Workers Pay for the Passage of Workers' Compensation Laws?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 110, no. 3 (Aug 1995): 713-732.
[60] "A Million Wounded," 8.
[61] "A Million Wounded," 8.
[62] "What the Widows Get: Values Placed on Lives of Workmen Killed; Sums Paid at Big Disasters. How the Family Fares in Ordinary Accidents," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, 26 January 1911, 5.

For workers' compensation advocates, the focus on male breadwinners meant that the press portrayed the injured male worker as the most important to society. Newspapers such as the *Washington Times* "urged more money for hurt workers," and that "bigger payments to working men and their families" were needed in order to maintain families who depended on their men for support.[63] The *Labor Journal* ran an image of an injured man laid up in bed with mounting medical bills. This implied that not enough money came from workers compensation and the wife and children were suffering in poverty without adequate support.[64]

While conversations in newspapers portrayed injured male workers as more important than female workers, one newspaper ran an article advocating for gender equality in wages and compensation for injured women in industrial settings. In response to a letter in *The Tacoma Times*, advice columnist Cynthia Grey argued that a woman "should get her recompense for injury as easily as does the man" and that the current legal system in place for workers compensation gave unfair advantages to men. She asked, "Is it unreasonable to ask that as much be done for women?"[65] This must have posed a dilemma for working industrial women, especially those that were injured. Were men and women equal in industrial work, or were women helpless victims unable to provide for themselves? Women faced a double standard in societal perceptions: to be competent but still dependent, especially when newspapers constantly portrayed the dependent and helpless side as more important.

Accident prevention and government regulated safety measures became an important debate for American newspapers as editors emphasized the need for protections for all workers. Similar to arguments regarding protective legislation, newspapers again engaged in a gender-based discussion on who needed preventive safety measures and how to implement them. The *Harrisburg Telegraph* used graphic language in its plea for the

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[63] "Urges More Money for Hurt Workers," *Washington Times*, 23 September 1919, 3.
[64] "Safety First" Cartoon, *Labor Journal*, 16 October 1914, 1.
[65] "Cynthia Grey's Letters," *Tacoma Times*, 11 November 1913, 5.

government "to prevent slaughter,"[66] while *Goodwin's Weekly* called for "the fixing of minimum safety and health standards for various occupations."[67] The *Evening Public Ledger* disclosed that "three-fourths of the accidental deaths can be prevented,"[68] while the *Northwest Worker* argued that World War I presented specific industrial challenges, noting "that the mobilization of a great army of men and women in the industries to serve the nation in war requires efficient machinery and proper standards."[69] Gender also played a role in accident prevention efforts in newspapers. The *Los Angeles Herald* advocated for "limiting women's working hours," and that "the real question is whether sixty hours or more of factory work is injurious to the women and children thus employed."[70] Newspapers also implored the government and the public to initiate and enforce protective measures for women industrial workers. The *Bridgeport Evening Farmer* proclaimed that "as women enter industry in rapidly increasing numbers, the need becomes even more pressing for protective measures,"[71] while the *Los Angeles Herald* called for a "reduction of two hours [to] give the relief necessary for home duties and recreation."[72] This reinforced the idea behind protective legislation that women required specific protections due to their gender.

Finally, newspapers also represented rehabilitation results and efforts to incorporate the injured back into society; however, these discussions again centered on rehabilitating injured male workers. *The Washington Times* implored its readers to "restore many maimed [workmen]," and stressed that "the importance of this is obvious when it is considered that there are more than 500,000 men injured every year in industrial accidents and practically no

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[66] "Movies to Show Workers," 19.
[67] "Utah's Progressive Platform," *Goodwin's Weekly*, 21 September 1912, 12.
[68] "Who Pays?" 5.
[69] "Mobilizing Our Industrial Army," 3.
[70] "Limiting Women's Working Hours," 12; this was also standard protective legislation for women, see also *Muller V. Oregon*, 208 U.S. 412 (1908).
[71] "Safety First and Health," 18.
[72] "Limiting Women's Working Hours," 12.

effort is made to reclaim these men."[73] *The Capital Journal* reported that "between 75–100 injured workmen are receiving daily treatments for physical reconstruction…while 51 men had completed courses in vocational rehabilitation and 63 were in training in various schools," emphasizing the importance of rehabilitation services for working men, without mentioning working women receiving these types of services.[74] While some papers, such as the *Evening Public Ledger,* argued that there should be a "permanent system of reconstruction for industrial cripples, men and women who are hurt in industrial accidents,"[75] and *The Capital Journal* claimed that "important and gratifying results have been obtained during the past two years in the work of rebuilding men and women injured in industrial accidents,"[76] more often than not, newspapers were more concerned with rebuilding injured men rather than women.

While newspapers often portrayed industrial accidents and injuries involving men and women very differently (and on gendered terms), some editors ran articles that called for equality for female industrial workers in issues such as wages and even encouraged the American public to see industrial women workers as independent and thus positive for society. Cynthia Grey of *The Tacoma Times* advocated for women to receive equal compensation and treatment in workers compensation cases.[77] In cases involving equal pay for equal work during the war, the *Bridgeport Evening Farmer* and *The Northwest Worker* argued, "women who really take the places of men should receive the pay of men." Both papers sought equal pay for women working in

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[73] "Restore Many Maimed," *The Washington Times*, 15 March 1918, 16.
[74] "Rehabilitations Results Please," *The Capital Journal*, 1 March 1922, 8.
[75] "Maimed Workers State's Problem," 2.
[76] "Rehabilitations Results Please," 8.
[77] "Cynthia Grey's Letters," 5; see also Alice Fahs, *Out on Assignment: Newspaper Women and the Making of Modern Public Space*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011) for her discussion on the history of women's journalism. Specifically, her second chapters which discuss how women journalists would often write household advice columns that they would then lace with political commentary.

industry.[78] The *Northwest Worker* also felt that especially with the onset of World War I "accepted wage standards, built up through years of struggle, should not be undermined under cover of 'war necessity.'"[79] *The Sun* advocated industrial work for women, proclaiming that industrial training "shall make [women] self-sustaining and independent,"[80] and *Goodwin's Weekly* shared similar ideas when they encouraged "minimum wage standards for working women, to provide a living scale in all industrial occupations."[81] These newspapers' representations are just some examples of how, in spite of societal expectations regarding gender and injuries in industrial spaces, some editors used their papers as platforms to represent a new type of womanhood that encouraged more equality for women.

In the early twentieth century, newspapers had an important role in confirming and shaping societal expectations and norms based on the stories they covered. By focusing on men and their injuries in industrial accidents, papers portrayed a gendered workspace that had little (if any) acceptable room for women. With the onset of World War I, Americans had little choice but to turn to women to help with wartime production; however, even this foray into new spaces was guarded, as newspapers reminded their audiences that while women solved the manpower shortage, they still needed special protections and care due to their delicate and sensitive gender. Even discussions of workers' compensation for industrial injuries still portrayed women as the victims of their husband's injuries, reminding Americans that industrial accidents affected women mostly through the men in their lives as wives. While some newspapers tried to use opportunities like World War I to advance women working in industry by asking for equal wages and fair treatment, these newspapers were the minority in portraying a model of New Womanhood.[82] By studying how

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[78] "Safety First and health,"18; "Mobilizing Our Industrial Army," 3.
[79] "Mobilizing Our Industrial Army," 3.
[80] "Prospects of Marriage," 21.
[81] "Utah's Progressive Platform," 12.
[82] New Womanhood is a term used to describe a more active role for women in the public sphere and was coined at the end of the nineteenth century. It played a critical role in the defining womanhood into the

newspapers represented working women's accidents and injuries in industrial work in comparison to men, it is clear that newspapers shaped and maintained societal expectations of appropriate gender roles.

twentieth century, and embodied an independent, career-oriented, and educated woman.