

tented themselves with work . . . of a philanthropic sort, no criticism was encountered, but when they sought to discover the causes and remedies for poverty, sickness, unequal opportunity, and war, the opponents shouted: 'radicalism'" (130).

Nielsen's book is illuminating and instructive. She is correct to remind us that the politics of gender and family are still "at the very core of our political understandings and discussions" (139). Moreover, she shows us that just as there is no such thing as "pure politics" (politics without gender) there should be no such thing as "pure political history" (political history without gender analysis). At times Nielsen's text is weighed down by too many abbreviations for the various organizations she studies. Furthermore, her rather dismissive explanation of why conservative women took little interest in the politics of birth control raises more questions than answers. Overall, however, *Un-American Womanhood* is an excellent contribution to our understanding of American politics in the modern era.

*Rumors of Indiscretion: The University of Missouri "Sex Questionnaire" Scandal in the Jazz Age*, by Lawrence J. Nelson. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003. xv, 323 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer Susan Ohmer is the William T. and Helen Kuhn Carey Assistant Professor of Modern Communication in the Department of Film, Television, and Theatre at the University of Notre Dame. She has published articles on George Gallup and the social history of survey research in *The Journal of Film and Video*, *Film History*, and *The Velvet Light Trap*.

In this fascinating study of a controversial social science project at the University of Missouri in the 1920s, Lawrence Nelson demonstrates how what began as an undergraduate paper became linked to contemporary debates about the nature of adolescence, the role of a university in students' lives, the use of survey research, and the concept of academic freedom. Nelson's delineation of the links among these topics makes the book a model for historians of the social sciences and of college life in this period.

The questionnaire that launched a national debate originated as part of a sociology class taught in spring 1929. For his senior research project, Orval Hobart Mowrer mailed surveys to 700 male and female undergraduates, asking their reactions to several hypothetical situations. Mowrer wanted to know whether women would break their engagement to a man if they learned that he had indulged in illicit sexual relations, and whether men would associate with women who accepted money in return for sexual favors. Other questions asked

about attitudes toward birth control and trial marriages, "wherein a man and a woman would . . . live in sexual intimacy for some days or weeks . . . in order to determine whether or not they were sexually compatible" (10). Within a few days, copies of the form began to circulate beyond their intended recipients; some found their way into the hands of journalists.

The explicit nature of the questions sparked a firestorm throughout the state. Newspapers complained that it was "a desecration and an outrage" to mention such topics to young women and demanded that the university fire the faculty involved. Missouri legislators threatened to withhold funding. University president Stratton Brooks seized upon the controversy to attack broader changes within campus culture that he opposed. In closed-door sessions, Stratton and members of the university's board of curators examined not only Mowrer's questionnaire but survey research in general, other classes on human sexuality, and the changing roles of women on campus. Nelson analyzes contemporary newspaper accounts and the university's records of those meetings to reveal their conflicting attitudes towards adolescents. Although students argued that they discussed these topics themselves outside of class, Stratton and the committee voted to fire the professors who had assisted Mowrer.

The committee's decision was not final but required the approval of the full board of trustees. Before it met, other faculty and some alumni mounted a counter-campaign that made Missouri a cause célèbre for academic freedom. Concerned that the university would lose its intellectual credibility, they asked the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) to intervene. Nelson draws on AAUP files to illustrate how that organization, which was then only 14 years old, struggled to define its own role within academia as it adjudicated the Missouri case. Its investigators denounced Missouri for its "clear breach of the principles of freedom of teaching and research" (229). The Missouri dispute enabled the AAUP to assert the principle of tenure, which was not yet established, as a necessity for academic freedom. Faced with growing criticism from around the country, the full board agreed to reinstate one of the faculty involved and eventually fired President Brooks.

Nelson's detailed social history enables readers to find parallels with developments at other universities in this period, including the University of Iowa. Although Iowa did not experience the specific controversy that Missouri endured, it witnessed a similar expansion in the social sciences under the leadership of Carl Seashore. Like his colleagues at Missouri, Seashore made surveys and other quantitative methods the cornerstone of psychology at Iowa. During the 1920s,

Iowa also experienced the changes in campus life that Nelson describes, as more and more teenagers pursued higher education, and college towns changed to reflect their mores. At Iowa as at Missouri, new ideas about modern women challenged traditional social norms that emphasized their roles as wives and mothers. Like Missouri, Iowa was pulled between its small-town culture and its emerging national role as a center of research, commerce, and transportation.

*Uncommon Americans: The Lives and Legacies of Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover*, edited by Timothy Walch. Contributions in American History 200. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003. xi, 314 pp. Photograph, notes, index. \$67.95 cloth.

Reviewer Lisa Ossian is a history instructor at Southwestern Community College, Creston, Iowa. Her research and writing have focused on the Great Depression and the World War II home front in Iowa.

Herbert Hoover saved more lives from famine than any other person in the twentieth century, forever earning the title of the Great Humanitarian; he also earned a million dollars before his fortieth birthday through innovative mining practices worldwide, earning another title as the Great Engineer.

*Uncommon Americans* opens with its only photograph, which both intrigues and startles the reader with the gaze of Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover, almost begging readers to reconsider and reevaluate their lives and legacies. In this volume of 19 varied essays, 17 authors examine the Hoovers' political, social, and economic contributions within seven chronological categories: first thoughts, formative years, helping hands, progressive ideals, glorious burdens, exile and return, and a last word. Each essay examines a particular facet of either Hoover's life, presenting interesting analytic phrasings and appropriate descriptions but perhaps appearing too apologetic in counteracting previous historiography.

Many historians have considered Herbert Hoover to be the most influential man in American public life from 1921 through 1933, but as George Nash argues, an intellectual fog continues to surround the man and his presidency, with many Americans simply labeling him a failure due to the ultimate leadership crisis of the Great Depression. John Milton Cooper's essay, "The Hoovers' Early Years," directly critiques contemporary historians' dismissal of the Hoovers, particularly citing Arthur Schlesinger's biography, *Crisis of the Old Order*, which staged the initial negative tone, comparing the Hoovers' life to a Richard Harding Davis novel but without the heroism.

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