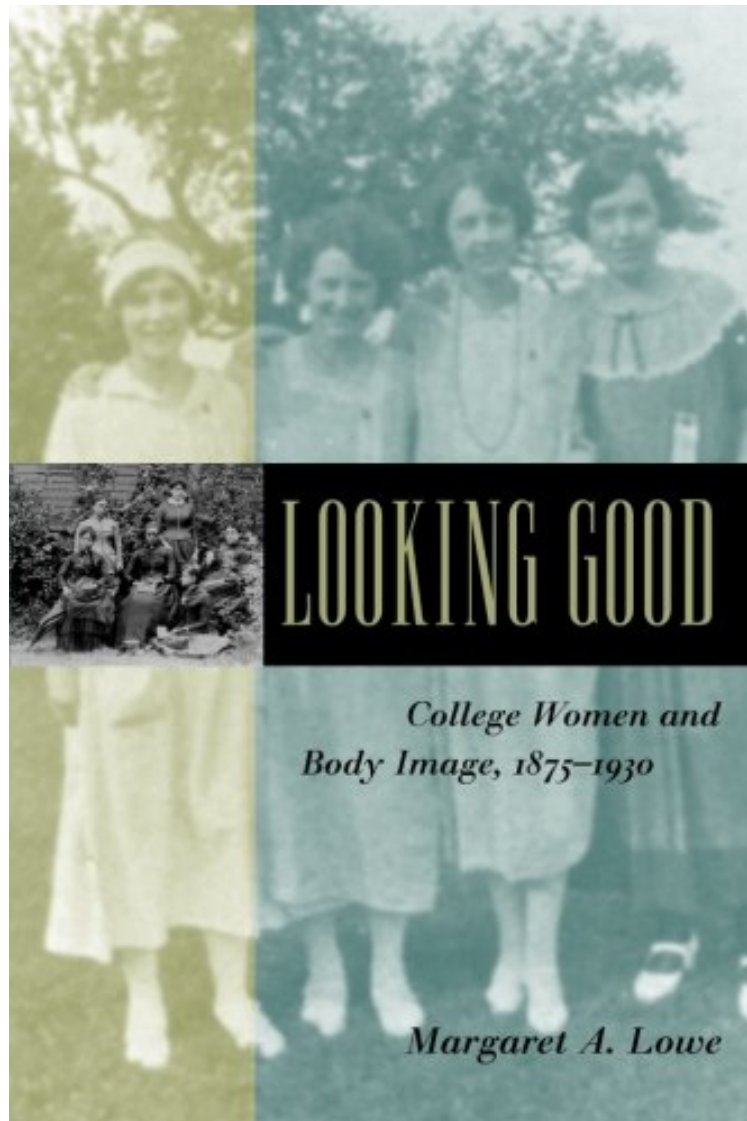


(Read now) Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875-1930 (Gender Relations in the American Experience)

Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875-1930 (Gender Relations in the American Experience)

Margaret A. Lowe

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Margaret A. Lowe : Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875-1930 (Gender Relations in the American Experience) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875-1930 (Gender Relations in the American Experience):

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, as young women began entering college in greater numbers than ever before, physicians and social critics charged that campus life posed grave hazards to the female constitution and women's reproductive health. "A girl could study and learn," Dr. Edward Clarke warned in his widely read 1873 book *Sex in Education*, "but she could not do all this and retain uninjured health, and a future secure from neuralgia, uterine disease, hysteria, and other derangements of the nervous system." For half a century, ideas such as Dr. Clarke's framed the debate over a woman's place in higher education almost exclusively in terms of her body and her health. For historian Margaret A. Lowe, this obsession offers one of the clearest expressions of the social and cultural meanings given to the female body between 1875 and 1930. At the same time, the "college girl" was a novelty that tested new ideas about feminine beauty, sexuality, and athleticism. In *Looking Good*, Lowe examines the ways in which college women at three quite different institutions—Cornell University, Smith College, and Spelman College—regarded their own bodies in this period. Contrasting white and black students, single-sex and coeducational schools, secular and religious environments, and Northern and Southern attitudes, Lowe draws on student diaries, letters, and publications; institutional records; and accounts in the popular press to examine the process by which new, twentieth-century ideals of the female body took hold in America.

"Lowe brightly illuminates a pressing subject for the first two generations of American college women: their appearance." (Choice) "A compelling account of life on campus for the female 'student body' over many decades of radical change... Lowe's greatest strength is in her ability to navigate a wealth of archival sources, find fascinating elements within them, and weave these sources effortlessly into her own language and claims." (Jonna Perrillo *History of Education Quarterly*) "Lowe has compiled a collection of fascinating data on the ways U.S. college women saw themselves and were seen by others in the period from 1875 to 1930." (Sara Halprin *H-Women, H-Net*) "Lowe innovatively uses young women's diaries, letters, correspondence, and other archival 'student voices' to illustrate the distance between cultural ideals of beauty and the reality of women's lived experience." (Samantha Barbas *American Quarterly*) "The comparative history of institutions often yields rich results, as Margaret Lowe demonstrates in her study of women's body image and behavior at three colleges—Smith, Spelman, and Cornell—between 1895 and 1930." (Lois Banner *Journal of Social History*) "Lowe uses the concepts of gender, race, and class as she explores the origins of body image through the lens of academia." (Cynthia Toman *Nursing History*) "An excellent book that advances our understanding of gender and race, and the importance of body not only on college campuses, but also in the wider society." (Kathryn Nemeth Tuttle *American Studies*) "Margaret Lowe has taken up a fascinating topic with both care and creativity. Investigating the increasing importance of body image to college women in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America, she traces changes in social and scientific ideals of female health and beauty, notions of femininity, and women's attitudes towards their own bodies. Lowe also makes a compelling case for the critical importance of race in this process. *Looking Good* is well conceived, carefully researched, and clearly written and argued." (Beth Bailey, author of *Sex in the Heartland*) "Lowe has produced a creatively researched analysis that provocatively extends the meaning of the female collegiate experience into larger social arenas." (Linda Eisenmann *American Historical*)

About the Author Margaret A. Lowe is an associate professor of history and Project Director of the Teaching American History Grant at Bridgewater State College.