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 Making Barnard History: The Research Process
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Assignment:

Isolate and consider a specific biographical fact/characteristic/trait about her as it relates to her performance as Barnard's head in one of the following ways:

as the predictive of her performance;

as the most determinative;

as the most surprising;

as the most overlooked/neglected;

as the most overrated/over-determined;

or in some other significant way of your choosing.

Post your speculation as a 1000-word presentation on the course blog

Topic: Emily Smith James and the impact her marriage had on her tenure as the Dean of Barnard College

Miss Emily James Smith was the first Dean of Barnard College and served from 1894 to 1900 (Louise Price, 163). At a mere 29 years old she was noticeably younger than the typically Barnard Dean appointee, whose age of appointment averages 43 years. (McCaughey, "Emily James Smith [Putman]"). Unlike Barnard's other 11 Deans and Presidents, Emily James Smith was the only one to resign from her position due to her marital status. She was also the only one of Barnard first four Deans to get married, which suggests that while Barnard was a college that supported women's equality inside the classroom, the college did not support women pursuing a career and a family at the same time. However, this was more of a cultural phenomenon than a reflection of Barnard's politics. Married women were expected to prioritize their families above all else. After getting married, Emily James Smith changed her name to Ms. George Haven Putnam (Louise Price, 163). Smith's decision to change her name reflects the cultural expectation that women were should give up part of their own identity in order to completely devote themselves to their marriage. For Smith, giving up her identity as a single woman meant giving up her promising career as a college Dean. Unfortunately, Emily James Smith's marital status was predicative of the longevity of her and made her short tenure as Barnard's Dean not at all surprising.

Much like other Barnard Deans and Presidents, Emily James Smith was an accomplished academic. After graduating with Bryn Mawr's first class in 1889, Smith enrolled in Girton College, Cambridge where she studied for two years (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015). Before being appointed as Barnard College's Dean in 1894, Smith taught at Packer Collegiate Institute in Brooklyn and studied Greek at the University of Chicago (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015). There was no question that Smith was an accomplished and intelligent scholar.

During her tenure as Barnard's Dean, Smith used her strong background in academia to further strengthen Barnard's curriculum, academic staff, and relationship with Columbia (McCaughey, "Emily James Smith [Putman];" Putnam, 1896-1897

Correspondence). Under her leadership, Barnard renegotiated its agreement with Columbia University (Putnam, 1896-1897 Correspondence). Ultimately, Barnard gained a seat on the University Council and the President of Columbia joined Barnard's Board of Trustees (Putnam, 1896-1897 Correspondence). Smith advocated for the admission of Barnard graduates to Columbia courses and women's access to Columbia facilities (Putnam, 1896-1897 Correspondence; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015) She was a successful Dean in the sense that she furthered the advancement of women's education by elevating Barnard's status in the eyes of Columbia University. She was also dedicated and involved in the Barnard community and served as a Trustee from 1901-1905 (Putnam, 1896-1897 Correspondence).

While she served in a leadership position at Barnard, Smith was extremely well respected in as Dean. In an 1896 article published in *Harper's Bazaar*, Annie Nathan Meyer calls Smith "one of those rare women—impossible a quarter of a century ago, but fortunately growing less exceptional every year—who combine high scholarship with executive ability and social charm" (Meyer, 38). Interestingly enough, Meyer praises Smith for her ability to be a woman who can balance two unique roles—scholarly excellence and social aptitude and leadership. Meyer does not mention even the possibility of Smith successfully balancing her roll as a Dean and with her potential roll as a mother, which is again a reflection of the times.

In 1896, a woman who could combine intellectual knowledge with social grace and leadership was groundbreaking. Today, we praise women for balancing successful careers and family lives. Much like Meyer's comment, we might say a similar thing about Sheryl Sandburg or Kirsten Gillibrand—"impossible a quarter of a century ago." Without a doubt Smith's accomplishments as Dean and the accomplishments of Barnard's other female leaders broke gender stereotypes, but—unfortunately—society just was not ready to allow Smith to excel both professionally and personally.

In 1899, Smith married American publisher and Civil War Veteran George Haven Putnam, officially becoming Ms. George Haven Putnam (The Columbia Encyclopedia, 2014; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015). One year later she resigned from her position at Barnard. However, rather than putting her successful career as an academic to rest, Smith continued to pursue her scholarly work. For example, eight years after her departure from Barnard College, Smith received praise from *The Classical Weekly* after publishing her paper "A Classical Education," in which she defends the importance of including the Classics in college and university curriculums (Knapp, 137).

In 1910, Smith published *The Lady: Studies of Certain Significant Phases of Her History*. In her book, she outlines how various historical cultures have portrayed women. From describing the feminism in Greek literature to illustrating the "insurgent Germanic lady," Smith details the various cultural expectations placed on women (Smith, viii-ix) Smith writes, "Every discussion of the status of woman is complicated by the existence of the lady. She overshadows the rest of her sex" (Smith, x). Smith notes that in almost every culture there is a distinction between being a "lady" and simple being of the female sex. A woman is frequently pressured to conform to societal expectations and act like a "lady"—whatever that means for her given culture.

Much like Smith's academic work illustrates, in her real life Smith also understood the distinction between simply being a woman and being a woman of a higher standing—a woman who behaves in a culturally acceptable manner. Her decision to

resign after only six years as Dean certainly suggests that Smith felt pressure to behave in certain way. Specifically, she felt pressure to prioritize her marriage over her tenure as Dean.

Emily James Smith returned to Barnard's campus in 1914 not as Dean but rather as a history Professor and continued to teach at the school until 1929 (Putnam, 1896-1897 Correspondence). In 1930, Smith officially retired from her career as a well-respected college professor and Dean, an accomplished scholar, and a groundbreaking feminist—but not from what could have been her lengthy career as the Dean of Barnard College (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015).

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