Distinguishing a Western Women's College: A History of the Curriculum at Colorado Women's College, 1909-1967

Jennifer Ann Thompson
University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/647

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu,dig-commons@du.edu.
DISTINGUISHING A WESTERN WOMEN’S COLLEGE: A HISTORY OF THE CURRICULUM AT COLORADO WOMEN’S COLLEGE, 1909-1967

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Jennifer Ann Thompson
August 2010
Advisor: Edith W. King
Abstract

Colorado Women’s College (CWC), a private, Baptist college for women in Denver, Colorado, first welcomed students to its campus in 1909, making it one of only a handful of women’s colleges in the American West, where coeducation predominated. This dissertation describes and interprets the curriculum offered at CWC in the period from 1909 to 1967. The analysis of the curriculum is divided into six eras, marked by moments of curricular change, including the College’s transitions from four-year college to junior college, and back. This project distinguishes CWC as an understudied institution by placing it within the literature on the history of women’s colleges.

The study documents academic degrees and courses offered, pedagogical techniques employed, College enrollment figures, and most popular student majors. In addition, the study explores how CWC defined the purpose of education for women through its established curriculum. Comparisons are made between CWC and other women’s colleges and the study includes student responses and reactions to the CWC curriculum.

Employing the historical method, this dissertation utilizes primary source documents collected from archival repositories, including College course catalogs, yearbooks, student newspapers, local and national newspapers, alumnae survey questionnaires, oral history transcripts, and more to provide a window on the curriculum at Colorado Women’s College.
The study discovers that CWC always offered a diverse curriculum (including liberal arts, domestic, and vocational curricula) that served women’s multiple needs and ever-changing social roles. During the early 20th century, debates raged between those who argued for women’s domestic education to prepare them for future roles as wives and mothers, and those who advocated for a liberal arts education for women, comparable to that offered to men. In the midst of these constant debates over the purpose of education for women, CWC elected to offer a curriculum that reflected both sides. The study concludes that CWC, throughout its history, found ways to balance these competing ideologies so as to never over-emphasize any one position. In particular, the College utilized a personality development program beginning in the 1930s (which became central to CWC’s identity) to maintain traditional and modern ideas regarding women and their education.
# Table of Contents

List of Tables ............................................................................................................................... viii

List of Figures ................................................................................................................................ ix

List of Abbreviations .................................................................................................................... xii

Chapter One: Introduction and Overview of Colorado Women’s College................................. 1
The Transition to Junior College Status ....................................................................................... 3
The Return of CWC as a Four-Year College ................................................................................. 5
CWC Becomes Temple Buell College ............................................................................................ 6
The Merger with the University of Denver .................................................................................. 6
Purpose of the Study ..................................................................................................................... 7
Significance of the Study .............................................................................................................. 8
Previous Research on Colorado Women’s College ..................................................................... 9
Personal Experiences with Colorado Women’s College/The Women’s College ......................... 10
Research Questions .................................................................................................................... 12
Organization of the Study ........................................................................................................... 12
Citation of Sources ...................................................................................................................... 13

Chapter Two: The History of Women’s Colleges in America .................................................... 15
The Founding of the Women’s Colleges .................................................................................... 16
Curriculum in the Women’s Colleges ......................................................................................... 24
Women and Marriage Patterns in the Women’s Colleges ............................................................ 28
Women and Relationships in the Women’s Colleges ................................................................. 31
Student Life in the Women’s Colleges ......................................................................................... 33
African American Students in the Eastern Women’s Colleges .................................................... 38
Southern Women’s Colleges ........................................................................................................ 39
Comparisons of Women’s Colleges in England and America ..................................................... 41
New Trends in the Literature ....................................................................................................... 45
Women’s colleges in the post-World War II Era ........................................................................ 45
Women’s colleges and the periodization of higher education in the U.S. ................................. 46
Catholic women’s colleges ......................................................................................................... 48
Research Gaps in the Literature .................................................................................................. 48
Contemporary Studies of Women’s Colleges ............................................................................. 50
Recent themes in the literature .................................................................................................. 52
Women’s colleges and nontraditional students ....................................................................... 54
Chapter Summary ....................................................................................................................... 55

Chapter Three: Historical Method and Primary Sources ............................................................ 57
The Uses of History in the Field of Education ............................................................................ 58
Overview of Historical Methods ................................................................................................. 59
Differences Between the Historical Method and other Qualitative Methods........63
The Postmodern Challenge to Historical Method........................................64
Issues of Validity and Reliability in Historical Method..................................68
Primary Source Materials ........................................................................72
  Evaluating primary documents..........................................................72
  The primary sources used in this study.............................................75
  A closer look at the sources..............................................................76
Research Procedures .............................................................................79
  Research notes..................................................................................80
  Analysis of sources........................................................................81
  Writing.............................................................................................81
Limitations of the Study..........................................................................82
Intellectual Traditions ............................................................................83
  Curriculum history and education history.................................84
  Women’s history..............................................................................85

Chapter Four: The Foundations of the Curriculum at Colorado Woman’s College, 1909-1920 .............................................................87
  The Origins of Higher Education in Colorado.................................88
  Loretto Heights college.................................................................89
  Distinctive traits of Colorado colleges and universities................91
  The Founding Curriculum: 1909-1920.............................................93
    The home economics requirement at CWC...............................98
    An education not for their brothers.............................................101
    The development of the curriculum..........................................103
    Pedagogy at CWC......................................................................105
    Curriculum comparisons with other women’s colleges............109
  Physical education curriculum at CWC.......................................113
  World War I and its impact on the CWC curriculum.................115
  Student enrollment and course preferences, 1909-1920.................122

Chapter Five: CWC Becomes a Junior College, 1920-1930..........................137
  Adapting to the Two-Year Curriculum: 1920-1930.........................137
    The two-year women’s college..................................................140
    The establishment of the associate in arts degree....................143
    Curricular comparisons..............................................................148
    Pedagogy and new courses.........................................................149
    Home economics in the 1920s at CWC....................................151
    The growth of vocational programs at CWC............................155
  Student Enrollment and Course Preferences, 1920-1930.................161

Chapter Six: The Expansion of Vocational Curricula at CWC and the Implementation of Personality Development, 1930-1940..........................170
  Overview of Basic Curriculum Changes throughout the Decade........171
    New degree types offered............................................................173
Student Reactions to the CWC Foreign Studies Program .................................281
The Personality Development Program in the 1960s .......................................283
Student Enrollment and Course Preferences, 1959-1967 .................................287
CWC Becomes Temple Buell College .............................................................291

Chapter Nine: Summary, Contributions, and Directions for Future Research ....298
Summary ...........................................................................................................298
Chapter four .....................................................................................................299
Chapter five .....................................................................................................299
Chapter six .......................................................................................................301
Chapter seven .................................................................................................302
Chapter eight .................................................................................................303
Contributions of the Study ..............................................................................305
A case study of a non-eastern women’s college ..................................305
Taking seriously two-year women’s colleges ........................................306
The mental-hygiene movement in practice ...........................................306
Women’s colleges at mid-century ..........................................................307
Debates over the purpose of women’s education in the 20th century. 308
Directions for Future Research .................................................................308
Career paths of CWC graduates............................................................308
Extracurricular activities at CWC ............................................................310
The CWC student identity ........................................................................311
Using additional archival materials .......................................................312
The western women’s college.................................................................313
Final Thoughts .............................................................................................314

References ........................................................................................................315

Primary Source Collections Cited .................................................................339

Appendix A ......................................................................................................340
Appendix B ......................................................................................................365
Appendix C ......................................................................................................389
Appendix D ......................................................................................................405
List of Tables

Table 1: Bachelor of Arts Degree, Curriculum Required for Graduation, 1910-1911 ........................................................................................................ 99

Table 2: Bachelor of Arts Degree, Number of Semester Hours Required for Graduation .......................................................................................... 112

Table 3: Degrees Granted at Colorado Woman’s College, 1909-1920 ............... 125

Table 4: Comparing Required Courses for Graduation at CWC and Seven Southern Women’s Colleges, 1926-1927 ............................................................. 150

Table 5: Required Courses in Surveyed Women’s Colleges, Including CWC, 1931-1932 ........................................................................................................ 176
List of Figures

Chapter Four
Figure 1. Advertisement appearing in the College yearbook, Odaroloc, 1916-1917 .......................................................... 120
Figure 2. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1909-1920 .......................................................... 124
Figure 3. Home economics department annual exhibit program, June 7, 1916 .......................................................... 128
Figure 4. First College building, 1910-1911 College catalog .................................................. 131
Figure 5. Map of CWC and other women’s colleges, 1928 .......................................................... 131
Figure 6. Expression class, 1917-1918 College catalog .................................................. 132
Figure 7. Home economics classroom, 1910-1911 College catalog .................................................. 132
Figure 8. Student in CWC dormitory room, 1916-1917 College catalog .................................................. 133
Figure 9. Student drawing from 1913-1914 yearbook .................................................. 133
Figure 10. Students in art class, 1917-1918 College catalog .................................................. 134
Figure 11. Students in chemistry class, 1915-1916 College catalog .................................................. 134
Figure 12. College newspaper staff, 1918-1919 yearbook .................................................. 135
Figure 13. Physical education class, 1916-1917 College catalog .................................................. 135
Figure 14. Student drawing, 1915-1916 yearbook .................................................. 136

Chapter Five
Figure 15. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1920-1930 .................................................. 163
Figure 16. Associate degrees granted at CWC, 1920-1930 .................................................. 164
Figure 17. CWC art students, 1927-1928 yearbook .................................................. 166
Figure 18. Browsers literary club meeting, 1926-1927 yearbook .................................................. 166
Figure 19. Basketball team with its mascot “Boy,” 1928-1929 yearbook .................................................. 167
Figure 20. All College banquet, Hotel Cosmopolitan, 1927-1928 yearbook .................................................. 167
Figure 21. Student drawing depicting life at CWC, 1927-1928 yearbook .................................................. 168
Figure 22. CWC yearbook staff, 1927-1928 yearbook .................................................. 168
Figure 23. Scribblers writing club meeting, 1926-1927 yearbook .................................................. 169
Figure 24. College orchestra, 1925-1926 yearbook .................................................. 169

Chapter Six
Figure 25. Excerpt from personality development textbook .................................................. 193
Figure 26. Excerpt from personality development textbook .................................................. 194
Figure 27. Excerpt from personality development textbook .................................................. 195
Figure 28. Excerpt from personality development textbook .................................................. 196
Figure 29. Excerpt from personality development textbook .................................................. 197
Figure 30. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1930-1940 .................................................. 205
Figure 31. Change in distribution of degree types granted, illustrating growth of associate in science degree, 1930-1940 .................................................. 207
Figure 32. Most popular majors at CWC, as declared by students, 1930-1940 .................................................. 208
Figure 33. Swimming class, YWCA pool, 1933-1934 yearbook .................................................. 210
Figure 34. Personality development voice recording, 1939 College catalog .................................................. 210
Figure 35. Beauty contest winner, 1932-1933 yearbook .................................................. 211
Figure 36. Hygiene counseling with College nurse, 1939 College catalog ..........212
Figure 37. Personality development consultation, 1939 College catalog ....212
Figure 38. Denver College of Music building, 1932-1933 College catalog ..........213
Figure 39. Business machines class, 1939 College catalog .........................................214
Figure 40. Secretarial class, 1939-1940 yearbook .....................................................214
Figure 41. Rhythmic body training class, 1932-1933 College catalog ..............214

Chapter Seven
Figure 42. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1940-1946 ..........234
Figure 43. Most popular majors at CWC, as declared by students, 1940-1946 ..........236
Figure 44. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1946-1959 ....255
Figure 45. Most popular majors at CWC, as declared by students, 1946-1959 ...257
Figure 46. Business honor society Alpha Pi Epsilon, 1940-1941 yearbook ....259
Figure 47. Aviation students, 1944-1945 yearbook .......................................................259
Figure 48. Personality development clinic, 1941 College catalog ..................260
Figure 49. Student voice recording, 1945 Personality pamphlet ..................260
Figure 50. Excerpt from 1945 Personality pamphlet .................................................261
Figure 51. Posture picture session, newspaper, The Western Graphic, September, 1940 ..................................................261
Figure 52. Radio class held at station KLZ, 1945-1946 yearbook ....262
Figure 53. For Victory: Meeting the Demands for Trained Women, 1945 ....262
Figure 54. CWC dance class, 1957-1958 yearbook .......................................................263
Figure 55. CWC photography class, 1957-1958 yearbook .................................263
Figure 56. Campus nursery school, 1956-1957 yearbook ........................................264
Figure 57. Teaching in nursery school, 1957-1958 yearbook ........................................264
Figure 58. CWC classroom, 1953-1954 yearbook .....................................................265
Figure 59. CWC business class, 1957-1958 yearbook ............................................265

Chapter Eight
Figure 60. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1959-1967 ..........288
Figure 61. Most popular majors at CWC, as declared by students, 1959-1967 ..........290
Figure 62. Dr. T. K., Professor of Sanskrit, 1965-1966 yearbook ................292
Figure 63. Study abroad program, Vienna, 1964 CWC Alumnae Bulletin ......292
Figure 64. Vienna students share Austrian culture, 1965-1966 yearbook ...........293
Figure 65. Vienna students attend ball, 1966-1967 yearbook ..................................293
Figure 66. Chemistry laboratory, 1959-1960 yearbook ........................................294
Figure 67. Science class, 1965-1966 yearbook ..............................................................294
Figure 68. Dr. Martha Pingel, literature class, 1959-1960 yearbook ................295
Figure 69. Maid to measure physical education class, 1965-1966 yearbook ..........295
Figure 70. Students protest Denver Post article, 1965-1966 yearbook ..........296
Figure 71. CWC classroom, 1964-1965 yearbook .....................................................296
Figure 72. First senior class since 1920, 1962-1963 yearbook ..................297
Figure 73. Students attend Vietnam War symposium, 1965-1966 yearbook ..........297
Appendix D

Figure D1. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1909-1920 .............405
Figure D2. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1920-1930 .............406
Figure D3. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1930-1940 .............407
Figure D4. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1940-1946 .............408
Figure D5. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1946-1959 .............409
Figure D6. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1959-1967 .............410
Figure D7. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1909-1967 .............411
List of Abbreviations

CHS  Colorado Historical Society, Stephen H. Hart Library, Denver, Colorado

DU Archives  Colorado Women’s College Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Penrose Library, University of Denver (DU), Denver, Colorado

WHC, DPL  Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado
Chapter One: Introduction and Overview of Colorado Women’s College

In the Fall of 1909, Colorado Woman’s College (CWC) opened its doors to students for the first time, making it one of the only women’s colleges in the American West.¹ The College was originally founded and chartered in Denver, Colorado, by Reverend Robert Cameron and the Colorado Baptist Community in 1888, and the cornerstone of the first campus building, Treat Hall, was laid in 1890. Yet, financial and fundraising constraints delayed the official opening of the College by several years.

As a college for women, CWC was unique in that it opened at a time when coeducation had become the norm, especially in the West. For example, throughout the second half of the 19th century many state universities, including Iowa (1855), Wisconsin (1867), Kansas, Indiana, Minnesota (1869), Missouri, Michigan, California (1870), and Colorado (1876) began to admit women students (Solomon, 1985). By the 1880s, most women in college were enrolled in coeducational institutions and “by 1900 there were more than twice as many women in these than in the separate women’s colleges” (Solomon, 1985, p. 58). Even so, “the importance of women’s colleges as a social institution in American life has been much greater than the number of graduates would

¹ The college was known as Colorado Woman’s College before changing its name to Colorado Women’s College in 1973. I will use Colorado Women’s College when making general references to the school (such as in the title of this chapter). In other instances, I will use the name that is appropriate for the historic period I am discussing. I use the CWC definition of the West in this study which encompassed the Rocky Mountain region to the Pacific coast.
suggest” (Schwager, 1990, p. 354). In the early years of coeducation, when gender discrimination was rampant on campuses and there were few women students or faculty in positions of leadership, it was clear that “the one place where women had a guaranteed welcome was at a women’s college” (Solomon, 1985, p. 47).

Although coeducational opportunities were available to Denver women in the 19th century, including at the University of Denver and the University of Colorado (Breck, 1989; Westermeier, 1976), the founders of CWC were not deterred. They were motivated by the desire to establish a “Western Vassar,” where Protestant women in the Rocky Mountain region would have the opportunity to receive a personalized, spiritual education in an all-woman environment (Turner, 1982). Noting the differences between CWC and coeducational colleges, an early promotional pamphlet stated:

> It is no reflection on the large co-educational colleges and universities to say that there are thousands of parents in Colorado and neighboring states who will not send their daughters to those institutions where, for the most part, they must live without the intimate personal care, supervision, and control provided by the smaller college that specializes in the peculiar problems of girlhood.\(^2\)

When the first students arrived at CWC, the curriculum included courses in liberal arts, domestic arts, and fine arts. The College offered four-year degrees, and students could also earn two-year associate degrees in domestic science, the first of which were awarded in 1911.\(^3\) Following the model of earlier women’s colleges such as Mount Holyoke and Vassar, students and faculty lived and studied together in one building,

\(^2\) *The “Why,”* 1928, p. 8, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, CO.

\(^3\) College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1911-1912*, p. 57, Colorado Women’s College Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Penrose Library, University of Denver, CO. (Hereafter cited as DU Archives).
Treat Hall, where all campus activities took place. This arrangement allowed students to be closely monitored and supervised, created an important sense of camaraderie, and promoted the development of a thriving women’s culture (Horowitz, 1993). Women faculty members were numerous throughout the history of CWC, which was not the case at all women’s colleges in the 20th century (Palmieri, 1995). The presence of women faculty helped to establish close ties among students and teachers and created a woman-centered campus environment. Over the years, the campus grew and expanded, opening many new dorms and buildings; yet, the close-knit, familial atmosphere remained.

Throughout its history, CWC built a tradition of popular campus events and rituals, including musical and dramatic performances, beauty queen contests, athletic competitions, the Hanging of the Greens ceremony, the Gypsy Picnic, May Day celebrations, the Melting Pot Banquet, and formal dinners, dances, teas, and all-school lectures.

The Transition to Junior College Status

In 1920, in response to decreasing enrollments in advanced coursework, CWC officially became a two-year junior college for women (Turner, 1982). The decision was made by CWC’s second president, John Bailey, who noted in 1920 that there were “no students above the second college year” in attendance (Turner, 1982, p. 68). As there were few four-year graduates at this time, Bailey persuaded the Board of Trustees to focus CWC’s resources on offering a high quality junior college curriculum. CWC

---

4 The first campus building was officially named Treat Hall in 1930 to honor CWC’s first president, Jay Porter Treat. Before this, the building was referred to as the College Building, the Administration Building, or Main Hall (Turner, 1982).

5 See CWC annual yearbooks, 1910-1967, DU Archives.
retained its mission to offer students a diverse curriculum, even as the trend moved toward vocationally focused junior colleges for women in this era (Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997).

During the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, “women’s colleges faced a new assault as communities of women were charged with being ‘unnatural’ or ‘sexually deviant’ by Freudian critics” (Schwager, 1990, p. 354). In this era known for conformity and repression of difference, many women students preferred coeducation rather than confront the “stereotypes of women’s colleges as spinster factories or bastions of lesbianism” (Peril, 2006, p. 345). These attacks on women’s colleges may well have pushed students away from CWC and into coeducational institutions, explaining the vast differences in the enrollment totals of women students at local coeducational colleges and CWC (Westermeier, 1976).

CWC broadened its curriculum in these years, establishing popular vocational programs in secretarial studies and business education that coexisted alongside liberal arts and domestic coursework. CWC also introduced a comprehensive, mandatory curriculum in personality development training in the 1930s which became central to the College’s identity well into the 1960s. Personality courses emphasized the development of beauty, poise, and grace in all students and required the mastery of proper social etiquette and impeccable posture. The goal of the personality curriculum was to create ideal American women out of all CWC students. The College used this program to

---

6 See Palmieri (1995) for a discussion of such attacks at Wellesley College.

7 See CWC course catalogs for the 1930s, DU Archives.
distinguish the uniqueness of its curriculum, and CWC received national recognition for it.

CWC ultimately found its niche as a junior college. Student enrollments increased and the curriculum expanded yet again as the campus responded to the demands of war in the 1940s. The postwar era of the 1950s brought curricular stability, even as many other women’s colleges redefined their curricular offerings to meet societal expectations and demands for a more domestic education for women (Fass, 1989; Solomon, 1985). Certainly marriage courses and domestic training were popular at CWC, but diversity in the curriculum still reigned. CWC continued to offer students a wide range of courses in the liberal arts, sciences, and fine arts, in addition to domestic education and vocational training for specific careers.\(^8\) Campus life in these years at CWC was full, as extracurricular activities flourished (Turner, 1982).

**The Return of CWC as a Four-Year College**

Building on its 40-year success as a junior college, CWC once again became a four-year college during the 1959-1960 academic year. Students had expressed frustration and confusion with the process of transferring from CWC to a four-year college, and many more students were seeking bachelor’s degrees. Therefore, administrators believed that a shift back to a four-year program would help significantly with the recruitment of new students interested in the baccalaureate degree and would make the campus more appealing to prestigious faculty (Turner, 1982). College officials also hoped to distinguish CWC from the growing numbers of public, coed, two-year community colleges (Lucas, 1994). CWC’s transition to four-year college status reflected

---

\(^8\) See CWC course catalogs for the 1940s and 1950s, DU Archives.
larger patterns in the history of two-year women’s colleges, as significant numbers of junior colleges for women began to offer the bachelor’s degree at this same time (Wolf-Wendel & Pedigo, 1999).

**CWC Becomes Temple Buell College**

Arguably, the most controversial event in CWC history occurred in 1966 when the Board of Trustees voted to change the name of the College from Colorado Woman’s College to Temple Buell College, in recognition of Temple and Virginia Buell’s gift of a $25 million dollar endowment. CWC first officially adopted the name Temple Buell College for the 1967-1968 academic year. Eventually, in 1973, in response to student protest and fundraising difficulties caused by a weakened College identity, the Board decided to reclaim the original name with a slight alteration, and the school became known as Colorado Women’s College (Turner, 1982).

**The Merger with the University of Denver**

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, attendance at women’s colleges declined greatly throughout the country, and CWC was no exception (Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997). Low enrollment due to factors including widespread access to coeducation and changing cultural attitudes led many women’s colleges to become coeducational, join with other schools, or close completely (Harwarth, 1999; Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997; Miller-Bernal, 2006). It is estimated that between 1960 and 1986, “81 women’s colleges closed their doors” (Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997, p. 28). CWC struggled financially in the 1970s, and enrollment dropped to 417 students in 1978, down from peak enrollments of over 1,000 students in the late 1960s (Turner, 1982). Eventually, CWC merged with the University of Denver in 1982, when no other option appeared
viable (Turner, 1982). The Women’s College of the University of Denver (TWC) evolved out of this merger, a now-thriving institution which represents one of only 54 women’s colleges remaining in the United States (Women’s College Coalition, 2008).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this historical study is to document the curriculum at Colorado Women’s College from 1909 to 1967. I describe the degrees and courses offered by the College over this time and the pedagogical techniques employed in the classroom. I also chart enrollment figures and most popular student majors. In addition, this study explores how CWC defined the purpose of education for women through its established curriculum. Where sources allow, I make comparisons between the curriculum at CWC and that offered by other women’s colleges. Whenever feasible, I have also included student responses and reactions to the curriculum offered to them. My overarching goal has been to distinguish CWC as an example of an understudied institution by placing it within the context of the literature on the history of women’s colleges.

I have limited this study to documenting the years between 1909 and 1967, as these years mark the first enrollment at CWC and the moment when it became Temple Buell College. I view this shift in 1967 as representing the end of an era and the beginning of CWC’s transition toward its current form as The Women’s College at the University of Denver. Investigating these years between 1909 and 1967 allows me to study the College’s metamorphosis from a four-year college to a two-year college in 1920, and then back again to a four-year college in 1960.

Utilizing the historical method, I analyze primary archival documents such as College course catalogs, yearbooks, student newspapers, local and national newspapers,
and alumnæ survey questionnaires, all of which provide a window into the world of the curriculum and campus life at Colorado Women’s College. The abundance of historical materials available allows for an in-depth description and analysis of the CWC curriculum and allows women’s voices as students to be included. An extensive description of the historical method and my research process is presented in Chapter 3.

**Significance of the Study**

This historical study of Colorado Women’s College helps to fill an existing gap in the literature on the history of women’s education, and in particular, the history of women’s colleges. A majority of the existing studies have focused on a small number of elite women’s colleges founded in the northeastern United States in the late 19th century. To date, there has been no comprehensive examination of how women’s colleges in the West, such as CWC, may have differed in mission, goals, or curriculum from their east coast counterparts. This study on the curriculum at CWC therefore, provides a rich, detailed description of the particular courses of study available at one women’s college in the West.

My research on Colorado Women’s College also offers an important contribution to the literature in that it highlights the fact that women’s colleges continued to exist even in areas of the country where coeducation was well-established and popular. Most women’s colleges were founded to provide women with opportunities denied to them by colleges for men. Yet, CWC opened at a time when women in Colorado had the option to attend coeducational institutions in the region such as Colorado College, the University of Denver, and the University of Colorado-Boulder (McGiffert, 1964). The land-grant universities of the Midwest and West were actually some of the first universities in the
country to admit women (Radke-Moss, 2008), and I believe that the interest paid to coeducational universities in the West has contributed to the lack of attention received by women’s colleges in the region. I take the stance in this dissertation study that women’s colleges were important and powerful educational institutions for women, but my purpose is not to debate the merits of women’s colleges versus coeducation.

Finally, I believe that “by studying the history of women’s colleges, we can gain a more thorough understanding of their role in American higher education today” (Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997, p. 1). Especially as contemporary women’s colleges continue to decline in number each year, it is important that we study these institutions in order to document why they existed and to understand the unique functions they have served, and continue to serve, in their communities. I certainly agree with Leslie Miller-Bernal (2006) when she writes, “It behooves all of us who are committed to gender equity to study women’s colleges so that we can better understand the particular ways in which they have benefited women” (p. 15).

**Previous Research on Colorado Women’s College**

A review of the literature indicates that very little has been written specifically about Colorado Women’s College. After a thorough bibliographic search, I have been able to locate only one institutional history, written by CWC history professor Wallace Turner in 1962, and revised in 1978 and 1982. Turner’s work focuses on administrative and financial matters at CWC. While he provides an important chronology of the College’s founding and major milestones, Turner’s history is shaped by and oriented around College presidents and administrators and does not include an in-depth analysis of the College curriculum—which is the focus of this study.
There have also been a handful of doctoral dissertations and master’s theses devoted to the topic of CWC, or more commonly, utilizing CWC as a research site. For example, in one of the earliest studies, Paul Baum (1945), a Dean at the College, analyzed the guidance counseling program at CWC and offered suggestions for its reorganization. Other studies have focused on attitudes of CWC graduates (Mast, 1950), specific College courses such as “Speech Fundamentals” (Helgesen, 1951), democracy and student government within the College (Dodge, 1960), College admissions (Springer, 1966), and student rights (Dyer, 1969). The most recent study of CWC by Linda Hargrave (1977) focused on the creation of a BA program for adult women in the early 1970s. Finally, a contemporary study of The Women’s College at DU analyzed student engagement in older, non-traditional women students (Vaccaro, 2005).

While these academic projects have expanded the scholarly understanding of CWC, none has offered a description of the College’s changing curriculum over time as it transitioned from a four-year college to a two-year junior college, and then back again to a four-year college. Neither have they explored how this curriculum compared to that at other women’s colleges or how women students responded or reacted to this curriculum. No existing studies have addressed how CWC responded to debates over the purpose of education for women, as I do in this dissertation, nor have I been able to locate any interpretations of the personality development program that was so central to the College’s curriculum and identity.

**Personal Experiences with Colorado Women’s College/The Women’s College**

Educator Harry Wolcott has suggested that students selecting dissertation topics should be sure to make use of their own peculiar and particular advantages with regard to
these topics (Wolcott, H., personal communication, May 5, 2004). Applying this advice to my own study of the history of Colorado Women’s College, I have realized that while my ties to CWC are fairly loose, I do, indeed, have some unique advantages that have assisted me in pursuing this research topic. For instance, I worked in the archives at the University of Denver’s Penrose Library, which initially helped me to become familiar with the library’s voluminous holdings of the Colorado Women’s College collection, and allowed me to develop a good working relationship with the university archivist and his staff. In addition, I have taught courses at CWC in its current form as The Women’s College at the University of Denver (TWC), which has allowed me to become acquainted with the TWC students, faculty, and staff. I realize that they are eager to learn more about their historical origins as CWC, and this knowledge has only reinforced and strengthened my original desire to write about the history of Colorado Women’s College.

While no study is without bias, or is uninfluenced by preconceived ideas, I have remained aware of my need to stay conscious of my connections to the College so as not to allow my positive feelings and experiences to interfere with my analysis (Creswell, 2009). As Peshkin (1988, 2000) notes, one way that a researcher can minimize the potential for bias in a study is to actively and reflectively seek out and monitor one’s personal subjectivities. I describe the issue of bias in more detail in the Methods section of this dissertation in Chapter 3.

---

9 See Eisenmann (2004) and Leslie (2000) for a discussion of the challenges and complexities that can emerge when writing the history of your own campus or a campus to which you are connected.
Research Questions

This dissertation study is guided by the following fundamental research questions:

1. What was the curriculum for students at CWC and how did it change over time?
2. What function did the personality development program play in the curriculum at CWC?

Organization of the Study

In Chapter 2 of this study I review the academic literature on the history of women’s colleges in America in order to provide context for understanding CWC and to highlight the lack of studies focused on women’s colleges in the western United States. Chapter 3 of the dissertation summarizes the basic tenets of the historical method and outlines my research materials and process. Chapters 4 through 8 are devoted to exploring the research questions outlined above using archival documents and the historical research method. I delineate six eras marked by significant changes in the curriculum. First, in Chapter 4, I describe the foundational curriculum provided at CWC from 1909-1920, noting the ways in which this curriculum differed from that found at eastern and southern women’s colleges. Chapter 5 analyzes CWC’s transition to junior college status and traces the impact of this dramatic change on the College’s curriculum. In Chapter 6 I chart the significant expansion of the vocational curricula at CWC and document the College’s first implementation of its personality development curriculum.

---

10 See Appendices A, B, and C for further background and context on the history of women’s education, where I review the literature on women and coeducation, the history of women as teachers, and the history of education for girls in early America, respectively.
Chapter 7 discusses the influence of World War II on the CWC curriculum and chronicles the path of the curriculum in the postwar years. In Chapter 8 I document the changes to the curriculum precipitated by CWC’s reintroduction of four-year bachelor’s degree programs. Chapter 9 summarizes the conclusions and contributions of the dissertation. In this final chapter I also offer suggestions for future study and research.

Throughout these chapters I argue that CWC always offered a diverse curriculum that served women’s multiple needs and ever-changing social roles. During the early 20th century, debates raged between those who argued for women’s domestic education to prepare them for future roles as wives and mothers, and those who advocated for a liberal arts education for women, comparable to that offered to men (Solomon, 1985). In the midst of these constant debates over the purpose of education for women, CWC elected to offer a curriculum that reflected both sides and prepared women for roles both inside and outside the home. I conclude that throughout its history CWC found ways to balance these competing ideologies so as to never over-emphasize any one position. Indeed, as I argue, the College utilized the personality development program beginning in the 1930s to maintain traditional and modern ideas regarding women and their education.

**Citation of Sources**

As is the standard procedure in the Morgridge College of Education at The University of Denver, I will follow the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)*, (6th edition) for all issues regarding reference citations and general writing style. Therefore, in accordance with APA format, my references will be parenthetical and embedded within the text. The one exception is that I will use numbered footnotes to provide reference citations for primary sources such as historical
documents. (For an example, see Chapter 1, Note 2). These documents cannot be easily and unobtrusively referenced using the parenthetical method of APA, and it is for this reason that I have indicated reference citations for these materials using numbered footnotes. The formatting of these notes follows the *Chicago Manual of Style* (15th edition), which is the standard for historical studies. This allows me to provide in-depth information regarding the title, author, and location of documents without disrupting the flow of my writing with cumbersome and lengthy citations embedded within the text. The use of numbered notes is less distracting to the reader, and allows the reader to more easily distinguish between the primary and secondary sources used in this dissertation. A list of all primary source collections cited appears after the reference list at the end of the dissertation.
Chapter Two: The History of Women’s Colleges in America

The first four-year private women’s colleges emerged in the northeastern United States in the second half of the 19th century, and they quickly made an impact on the higher education landscape (Solomon, 1985). These colleges, including Mount Holyoke (1837), Vassar (1865), Wellesley (1875), Smith (1875), Bryn Mawr (1884), Radcliffe (1879), and Barnard (1889), are frequently referred to as the Seven Sister colleges. In reviewing the research that has been written on the history of women’s higher education, Linda Eisenmann (1997) and Sally Schwager (1987) argue that the elite Seven Sister colleges have received the most scholarly attention. Yet, historian Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz (1994) suggests that within the broad field of the history of higher education, the history of women’s colleges in the U.S. has been ignored, as “most historians of higher education have seen women’s colleges as retrograde institutions” (p. xiii).

In order to summarize the historical research on women’s colleges and better place CWC as an institution, this chapter reviews the literature on the history of women’s colleges and examines several of the themes that emerge throughout the core writings on this topic. My goal is to analyze the major works, with their focus on the Seven Sister

---

1 Solomon (1985) notes that a few women’s colleges appeared as early as the 1850s, but these institutions did not survive.

2 I have elected to look roughly at the years between 1865 and 1950 as these years delineate the bulk of the historical work on women’s colleges and also represent the height of women’s college enrollment and influence.
schools, and to explore writings that discuss lesser-known women’s colleges. The themes addressed in this literature review include the founding missions of women’s colleges, the curriculum, marriage patterns of women’s college graduates, women’s relationships at college, student life, African-American students in the eastern women’s colleges, southern women’s colleges, and comparisons of women’s colleges in England and America. I also discuss recent trends in the literature and gaps in the academic research. The chapter concludes with a review of some of the major studies on contemporary women’s colleges.

**The Founding of the Women’s Colleges**

The educational opportunities available to women and girls expanded greatly in the years following the Revolutionary War in America. There was a growing belief that education was linked to good citizenship, and that women, as the mothers of the new Republic, should be educated in order to properly raise the men of the country. This belief in “Republican Motherhood” led to the establishment of the first institutions of higher learning for women and girls (Kerber, 1980; Norton, 1980; Solomon, 1985). The new schools, often called academies or seminaries, varied greatly by the age of students admitted and the curriculum taught. Most offered high school and college-aged girls at least some of the liberal studies coursework available to young men.

The most influential of these institutions for women were Troy Seminary, founded in 1821 by Emma Hart Willard, Hartford Seminary, established in 1832 by Catherine Beecher, and Mount Holyoke Seminary, founded by Mary Lyon in 1837.

---

3 The few histories of other women’s colleges in the West, such as Mills College, Scripps, and Mount St. Mary’s are discussed for comparative purposes throughout the study.
Barbara Solomon (1985) argues that the best seminaries not only introduced a liberal arts curriculum to women, but also attempted to expand and adapt this curriculum. She notes that “women’s academies have not received enough credit for their innovative pedagogy…especially in the sciences” (p. 23). Most scholars agree that the first true liberal arts colleges for women evolved out of the early seminaries, which flourished until the 1850s. They also agree that Mount Holyoke Seminary, an influential and respected institution that later became a full liberal arts college and member of the Seven Sisters, provided the model for both Vassar and Wellesley colleges (Horowitz, 1993; Palmieri, 1995; Solomon, 1985).

Much of the literature on women’s colleges charts the origins of the colleges and illustrates the founding missions of these schools. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz (1993) provides the best overall history of the founding of the Seven Sisters colleges in her work *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women’s Colleges from their Nineteenth Century Beginnings to the 1930s*. She includes a chapter that outlines the specific history of each individual college, and, therefore, the reader can discern the subtle differences between the founding mission and purpose of each of the early northeastern women’s colleges.

For example, Horowitz (1993) writes that Vassar, founded in 1865 by Matthew Vassar, was the first true women’s college, meaning that it provided a full liberal arts curriculum taught by credentialed faculty in buildings filled with adequate books and equipment. Horowitz argues that Vassar’s plan to establish a female college equal in
stature to Harvard and Yale was consciously bold, and she notes that “all the reservations and constraints college men might throw up about women’s inability to sustain a college course were absent from his mind” (p. 31). Vassar intended for the faculty at Vassar College to be men, but he pushed for the appointment of renowned scholar Maria Mitchell as a professor of astronomy. Other than Mitchell, however, there were few women faculty at Vassar in its early years.

In her discussion of the founding of Wellesley College in 1875, Horowitz (1993) writes that Wellesley was founded on the model of the influential Mount Holyoke Seminary even more so than Vassar, as founder Henry Fowle Durant was a trustee of Mount Holyoke and believed strongly in the tradition of female leadership established there by Mary Lyon. As a result, Durant declared that all faculty at Wellesley would be women and that the first president of the college would be a woman as well. Horowitz suggests that like Matthew Vassar, Durant hoped that Wellesley would provide women students with a liberal arts education equivalent to that found at the best men’s colleges.

Horowitz writes about the founding of women’s colleges within the larger context of the history of women’s college architecture, and this perspective greatly shapes her discussion of how the different colleges compared to one another. She argues that the choice of architecture reflected a college’s ideas about the purpose and nature of education for women. For example, she writes that because they were modeled on Mount Holyoke Seminary, where student activities were rigorously and rigidly prescribed by teachers, Vassar and Wellesley were housed in large one-building campuses built in the

---

5 For a look at one of the only other works to examine the history of women's college architecture, see Vickery (1999).
form of houses. Following in the footsteps of the seminaries, college officials at Vassar and Wellesley were able to closely monitor the activities of students in these buildings and enforce their many rules and codes.

In contrast, Horowitz (1993) argues that Smith College (1875) was founded in reaction to the seminary model. Therefore, the founders built the campus as a system of cottages with different activities designated for each building. This new architectural system freed women from the strict order and rules of the other women’s colleges because students could now roam freely throughout the day, away from watchful eyes. Yet, at the same time, this design eroded the sense of female community created by the seminary model. Smith’s founders feared that students at Wellesley and Vassar were too isolated and were becoming mannish as a result of their participation in all-women cultures. Horowitz (1993) notes that the architectural design of Smith College integrated women into the life of Northampton, Massachusetts. The College’s founders hoped that “protected by the patriarchal order of the New England town, Smith students would keep their femininity” (p. 5). Horowitz argues that in the end, Smith College, endowed by Sophia Smith, wished to make a liberal arts college curriculum available to women, while protecting 19th century ideas about femininity and a woman’s proper place in society.

Founded in 1884 as a college for orthodox Quaker women, Bryn Mawr College was originally intended to follow the more traditional model of Smith College. Instead, under the leadership of woman president M. Carey Thomas, who served from 1893-1922,
Bryn Mawr was the first women’s college to be headed by a feminist and soon became the leader in innovation in the women’s college world.  

Finally, Horowitz argues that the origins of Radcliffe and Barnard were very similar, as Radcliffe became the female annex of Harvard in 1879, while Barnard was established as the women’s extension at Columbia in 1889. She writes that both of these colleges rejected the seminary model, and neither campus erected dormitory buildings for students, allowing them to live at home or in the surrounding cities.

Overall, Horowitz provides a very thorough discussion of the founding missions of the first women’s colleges, and although she emphasizes the value of these colleges for providing women with a rigorous curriculum and opportunities for leadership, she also critiques their conservatism. Horowitz (1993) concludes that all of the women’s colleges, whether modeled on the seminary or not, “regarded protecting the femininity of women seeking higher education as all-important” (p. 68). Her work is also unique in that she briefly addresses the creation of 20th century women’s colleges such as Scripps (CA), Sarah Lawrence (NY), and Bennington (VT), which have received little attention in the literature. Horowitz suggests that these colleges were consciously created in reaction to the Seven Sisters and reflected a response to growing social critiques of women’s education. She writes that these colleges offered women a less-rigid curriculum in a more domestic atmosphere.

In the only existing survey work on women’s higher education, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America*, Barbara Miller Solomon (1985) also comments on the founding missions of America’s first

---

6 Horowitz (1993) notes that Bryn Mawr brought the traditionally male Collegiate Gothic architectural style to women's colleges.
women’s colleges. Solomon places this discussion within the context of the overall history of women’s higher education in the United States. She focuses more on analyzing the rise of the women’s college in the midst of the coeducational institutions that also came into existence in the second half of the 19th century. She writes that coeducation was becoming more common as many state universities were opening their doors to women, particularly in response to the passage of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, which provided public land for the creation of state colleges. Solomon highlights women’s access to various institutions and points out that after the 1870s most women in college were enrolled in coeducational institutions. Yet, she also illuminates the importance and power of the women’s colleges. Like Horowitz, Solomon (1985) concludes that the first 19th century women’s colleges were both revolutionary and confining, as “women’s colleges everywhere adhered to the religious ideal of virtuous, True Womanhood, but within its framework extended woman’s sphere beyond the familial roles” (p. 49).

Patricia Palmieri’s (1995) in-depth study of women faculty at Wellesley College from 1875 to 1930, In Adamless Eden: The Community of Women Faculty at Wellesley, provides an alternative interpretation of Wellesley’s founding mission and purpose. She argues that Wellesley was founded by Henry Durant to be an “educational community that would transform the lives of middle-class New England women and dispel the cult of true womanhood” (p. 7). Palmieri acknowledges that Durant’s religious evangelism and

---

7 It is important to note that Oberlin College was the first school to enroll both men and women in 1833. It was also the first college to enroll African American students. See Gordon (1990) and Ginzberg (1987).
traditionalism was always at the forefront of his vision for Wellesley, yet she argues that
students and faculty often dismissed his religious lectures and teachings.  

Arguing that Wellesley’s founding mission was revolutionary for the times, Palmieri (1995) recognizes and highlights the uniqueness of Wellesley as the only women’s college to have a female faculty and president from its inception. She concludes that Durant provided women a place where they could enjoy fruitful academic careers as faculty and administrators with the founding of Wellesley, and she applauds the fact that there was never any discrimination in the salaries given to women faculty during the first decades of the College’s existence.

Palmieri’s intense focus on one institution leads her to conclusions about the founding mission and purpose of Wellesley that seem to differ rather significantly from those of other historians. While Palmieri may slightly overstate the case for Wellesley’s uniqueness, she rightly illuminates the importance and symbolism of its female leadership. A benefit of her focus on the faculty community at Wellesley, as opposed to the more student-focused work by Horowitz (1993) and Solomon (1985), is that it allows her to highlight the ways that Wellesley offered opportunities to professional women that were not as readily available to academic women at other women’s colleges or in the coeducational schools.

--

8 Historians of the women's colleges note that religion was central to the founding of all of the early women's colleges. See Horowitz (1993) and Solomon (1985).

9 It is interesting to note that Helen Horowitz (1993) downplays the impact of Durant's decision to appoint a female president. She argues that Wellesley’s first president, Ada Howard, had little power, as the school was truly run by Durant himself (p. 53).

10 See also Rossiter (1982) and Dzuback (1993, 2003) for a discussion of women faculty at the northeastern women’s colleges.
Since the publication of these major works, much more attention has been given to the founding of “coordinate” women’s colleges such as Radcliffe at Harvard and Barnard at Columbia. For example, Sally Schwager (2004) outlines the creation of Radcliffe College, tracing its development from the Harvard Annex in 1879—an institution that provided lectures by Harvard faculty to women—to the establishment of a full-scale college for women at Harvard in 1894. Schwager (2004) argues that the history of Radcliffe “is a story of a sustained advocacy on the part of women and a policy of containment on the part of the university” (p. 88). Charting Harvard’s continual resistance to offering coeducation or even the granting of Harvard degrees to women students, Schwager suggests that the Progressive Era at Harvard appears much less reform-minded when viewed through the history of the development of Radcliffe College.

Rosalind Rosenberg (2004) provides the history of Barnard Women’s College as well as the largely female Teachers College, both at Columbia University, in her work on women students, faculty, and staff at Columbia from the 19th through the mid-20th century. Rosenberg describes the origins and founding missions of these schools. One of the most important contributions of this work is the way in which Rosenberg explores the relationship between the women of Columbia University and the urban, ethnically diverse, and cosmopolitan environment of New York City. She argues that New York provided academic women with unprecedented sexual freedom and abundant employment opportunities.

Finally, Harriet Bergmann (2001) reminds us that not all education for women in the 19th century took place in traditional schools and colleges. Her work describes the
Society to Encourage Studies at Home, an organization founded in Boston in 1873 to provide college-level instruction to adult women through the mail. Women students were taught by other women volunteer “correspondents” who selected reading materials and gave written feedback on student work. Instruction was available in history, languages, science, and art. During the group’s existence from 1873 to 1897, more than 500 correspondents worked with roughly 7,000 students. Bergmann (2001) argues that this was a conservative society whose founding mission “was to change women’s lives without altering or impairing the role society had sanctioned for them” (p. 449). On the other hand, she suggests that “despite its founders’ conservative agenda, the society played an important role in the developing movement to educate all women, whether they chose to apply their learning in the home or in the world beyond” (p. 448). While Bergmann does not go so far, Rosenberg (2004) even argues that the Society to Encourage Studies at Home should be viewed as the precursor to the Harvard Annex and Radcliffe College.

Curriculum in the Women’s Colleges

Many scholars argue that what made women’s colleges unique was that they offered women a liberal arts curriculum equal to the curriculum provided by the best men’s colleges such as Harvard and Yale (Horowitz, 1993; Palmieri, 1995; Solomon, 1985). Patricia Palmieri (1995) writes that some historians have criticized the women’s colleges for simply copying the classical liberal arts curriculum of the men’s colleges in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially since this curriculum was beginning to
be considered outdated even at the time.\textsuperscript{11} In response, Palmieri (1995) refutes this claim by arguing that the women of Wellesley did not simply adopt a male curriculum, but instead adapted this curriculum and “espoused a critical feminist pedagogy that makes them precursors to contemporary practitioners of women’s studies” (p. xix).\textsuperscript{12}

She analyzes the teaching styles and curricular reform instituted by Wellesley faculty and writes that while the traditional pedagogy stressed the memorization of details, the Wellesley faculty “combined lectures with discussions, seminars, field trips, and laboratory work” (pp. 161-162). Faculty members such as Katharine Lee Bates and Vida Scudder wrote their own textbooks, and faculty members in the history department revolutionized teaching methods in their field by using primary historical sources instead of textbooks to discuss historical problems. Palmieri (1995) notes that in the sciences Wellesley “surpassed even the men’s colleges in the East in having first-rate laboratories where students could conduct their own investigations” (p. 174).

Barbara Solomon (1985) and Patricia Palmieri (1995) agree that women’s colleges moved beyond the traditional liberal arts curriculum by providing women with professional courses that could help prepare them for careers after graduation. For example, a course taught by Emily Greene Balch on consumption economics at Wellesley featured books written by women, expanding the traditional reading list, and pushed women to explore their roles as mothers, wives, and consumers. This unique

\textsuperscript{11} Palmieri notes that Brubacher and Rudy (1968) and Newcomer (1959) have criticized the curriculum of the women's colleges. Baker (1976) also critiques the early women’s colleges for their lack of curricular originality.

\textsuperscript{12} Barbara Solomon makes a similar argument that early home economics classes and other new social sciences in the women's colleges can be viewed as precursors to the modern women's studies curriculum.
course, which did not exist at any other college, featured a significant amount of fieldwork and prepared women for careers in the social sciences. Finally, Palmieri asserts that Wellesley faculty in the Progressive Era (1890-1920) were social reformers who used the classroom to awaken a sense of social responsibility in their students, thus widening the scope of the traditional college curriculum.

In contrast to Palmieri, Helen Horowitz (1993) argues that the majority of women’s colleges simply adopted the male liberal arts curriculum. However, she is clear that this curricular choice should still be considered a bold move given the fact that the liberal arts had previously been denied to women. She argues that in providing women this education in modern and ancient languages, philosophy, mathematics, and the social and natural sciences, women’s colleges “courageously claimed a male preserve for women” (p. xxiv).

Horowitz (1993, 1994) and Solomon (1985) both argue that the exceptional school in terms of curricular reform was Bryn Mawr, headed by woman president M. Carey Thomas. Following the model set by Johns Hopkins, the first true research university in the U.S., Thomas hired faculty trained in the research universities of Germany. Unlike at most liberal arts colleges, students at Bryn Mawr selected elective courses and focused their studies on two areas of specialization.

In *Taking Women Seriously: Lessons and Legacies for Educating the Majority*, Tidball, Smith, Tidball, and Wolf-Wendel (1999) add to the literature on the curriculum at the early women’s colleges. They argue that “by the 1870s, when Wellesley and Smith were founded, physical education was regularly included as a required part of the curriculum of women’s colleges, while at Harvard and Yale, it was voluntary” (p. 6). The
authors carry this point further by suggesting that perhaps women’s college students excelled in scientific study as they did because students were given an opportunity to learn about the functioning of their bodies through physical education.

Barbara Solomon’s (1985) most important contribution to the discussion of the women’s college curriculum concerns the issue of gender difference in course selection. While this was an issue at coeducational colleges, Solomon argues that the issue of gender difference in course selection simply did not apply to the women’s colleges. When given a choice, women at coed colleges did not enroll in science courses in the same numbers as men. Solomon writes that most women’s college students studied science as a requirement and then continued to select advanced science courses when given the choice of electives. Solomon (1985) argues that this lack of gender difference in course selection most likely resulted in the fact that “of 439 female scientists listed in the first three editions of Men of Science (1906, 1910, 1921), a surprisingly large proportion—41 percent—graduated from women’s colleges” (pp. 82-83).

Other studies of the women’s college curriculum provide details on the academic offerings of specific campuses. For example, Shmurak and Handler (1992) explore the science curriculum at Mount Holyoke College from the 1830s to the 1940s. They conclude that Mount Holyoke’s climate of promoting science instruction and reputation for scientific attainment, along with its collaborative research environment, and its unparalleled network of scientific women role models, all allowed Mount Holyoke to be “uniquely successful in producing women of achievement in Chemistry” (p. 342).

In an analysis of the curriculum at all-women Barnard College and Teachers College of Columbia University at the turn-of-the-century, Bette Weneck (1991) suggests
that Barnard College, along with the other eastern women’s colleges, resisted offering vocational studies for women, even though professional and vocational education was expanding at coeducational colleges and universities. She writes that a conflict between Barnard and Teacher’s College, with its vocational focus, emerged as Barnard College asserted the superiority of its liberal arts curriculum. Weneck argues that this rift between Barnard College and Teacher’s College reflected the larger stratification of the collegiate curriculum for women into two divergent paths in the early 1900s. “Barnard and Teachers College represented the opposite ends of that bifurcation” (p. 25).

**Women and Marriage Patterns in the Women’s Colleges**

One of the constant challenges to women in higher education, and particularly the women’s colleges, was a societal fear of the low marriage rates and delayed marriage of women college graduates. Palmieri (1995), Horowitz (1993), and Solomon (1985) all point out that fears over the perceived delayed marriage of women graduates stemmed from a theory known as “race suicide.” Scholars and opponents of women’s education in the early 1900s argued that women college students, and women’s college graduates in particular, were not marrying at the same rates as their non-educated counterparts. This led to the assumption that if women did not continue to marry and have children, the middle-class, white race would be tainted and overtaken by the offspring of newly arriving immigrants. The statistical studies that were used to back up this racist ideology usually charted the marriage patterns of the first generation of women college graduates (1870-1890), who were the most likely to remain single or delay marriage after spending time on a career. Solomon and Horowitz note that a study of Mount Holyoke graduates revealed that these women did indeed marry later, as they “normally delayed marriage for
five years, marrying at median age twenty-six rather than twenty-one” (Horowitz, 1993, p. 27). Horowitz (1993) adds that “among the early Bryn Mawr classes, 53 percent remained single, in contrast to only 11 percent of American women in the same period who did not marry” (p. 280), and Solomon (1985) shows that a study of Wellesley alumnae illustrated that before 1900 only 58.2% of graduates married. Patricia Palmieri (1995) writes that a study by the Association of Collegiate Alumnae reported in 1885 that only 27.8% of women graduates were married. In addition, a study by the same group found that women’s college graduates had the lowest marriage rates of those surveyed.

Some of the suggestions offered by historians for why women college graduates might have delayed marriage or made the decision to stay single include the fact that as educated women they had more choices and could work to support themselves economically (Solomon, 1985). Horowitz (1993) argues that society forced women to choose between marriage and a career, and, therefore, many explicitly chose careers. She also suggests that some women might have limited their opportunities to find marriage partners by pursuing graduate degrees. Because work and marriage were deemed incompatible at Wellesley, Palmieri (1995) argues that Wellesley faculty in the first generations openly rejected any ideas of marriage. She writes, “To fulfill the role of woman scholar, Wellesley academic women spurned marriage. For this generation, marrying would have meant abandoning a career” (Palmieri, 1995, p. 96).

While marriage rates for the first generations of college-educated women were lower than for non-graduates, in the end, the “majority of college women did marry, but later than most of the noneducated” (Solomon, 1985, p. 121). Solomon argues that at all colleges after 1910 graduates began to marry at a younger age, and Palmieri (1995) notes
that this fact demonstrates the irony of the public outcry in the early Progressive Era over low marriage rates for women.\textsuperscript{13} She argues that this uproar came exactly at the moment when a new kind of student, more interested in marriage and family than careers, entered the women’s college scene. From 1900 to 1920, the Wellesley faculty “lamented that too many young women were attending college merely for what was termed ‘the life’—socializing in exclusive societies or participating in extracurricular activities such as dramatics or glee club” (Palmieri, 1995, p. 200). Horowitz (1993) remarks, too, that by the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, “the women’s colleges attracted a new clientele—young, well-educated women of the wealthy strata who had no thought of a career after college” (p. 147).

In one of the very few studies to examine the marriage patterns of middle and working-class women’s college graduates in the Progressive Era, Kathleen Dunn (1990) argues that graduates of Simmons College, a vocational women’s college in Boston, typically secured employment before entering marriage. She writes that among the roughly 200 students she surveyed who graduated between 1906 and 1926, approximately 70\% married, which she argues is similar to the Wellesley College rate for the same years. Over half of the women worked after marriage and one-third raised children while working. She writes that “many women attributed to financial reasons their decision to return to work after having children, but many also mentioned wanting to continue careers for reasons of interest and pleasure” (Dunn, 1990, p. 176).

Palmieri (1987, 1995) concludes that ultimately, it was the success of women in higher education that led to public fears over women’s college graduates and their

\textsuperscript{13} Gordon (1990) notes that while marriage rates increased, low fertility rates continued for women college graduates through the 1930s.
marriage patterns. She writes that during the years between 1900 and 1915, the number of women attending college quadrupled. Palmieri argues that as a result, public attacks against women’s colleges evolved out of a fear that the education of women would become the norm, as much as out of claims of “race suicide.”

**Women and Relationships in the Women’s Colleges**

One of the most controversial topics found in the literature on the history of women’s colleges concerns the intense, romantic relationships that many women developed with each other at the colleges. Historians debate how to categorize these relationships that emerged at a time when the term “lesbian” did not exist. Some argue that any relationship involving two women should be characterized as “lesbian,” while others note that it is difficult to apply this label to women who did not apply it to themselves (Palmieri, 1995).

Patricia Palmieri (1995) asserts that “lifelong relationships of deep significance were commonplace at Wellesley, fostering verbal and physical expressions of love” (p. 137). The women of Wellesley often referred to these relationships as “Wellesley Marriages,” and Palmieri defines the women in these relationships as “women-committed women.” Her argument for this label is that “this approach acknowledges the elements of love, physical affection, and openly sexual behavior in some Wellesley marriages and reserves the term lesbian for women who have consciously claimed that identity” (p. 138). Palmieri focuses on the relationships that developed between women faculty members, such as English Professor Katharine Lee Bates’ long-term relationship with History professor Katharine Coman, but she also acknowledges that romantic
relationships also developed between teachers and students, citing the example of Professor Vida Scudder and her relationship with student Florence Converse.

Furthering the discussion on women’s relationships in the women’s colleges, Helen Horowitz (1993), Lynn Gordon (1990), and Barbara Solomon (1985) all examine the relationship phenomena among students known as “smashing” and “crushing.” At most women’s colleges in the late 19th and early 20th centuries a “smash” defined a deeply emotional relationship between two young women, while a “crush” was an attachment between a first-year student and a senior.¹⁴ Horowitz (1993) makes the argument that in these “crushes,” gendered power dynamics often entered the picture as the seniors played the role of “men.” She writes, “In the single-sex society of the women’s college, women re-created the social roles of men and women with their hierarchical relationships. But women took both parts, assuming masculine prerogatives as upper-class students” (Horowitz, 1993, p. 169).

Solomon, Palmieri, and Horowitz all argue that in the 19th and early 20th centuries, these relationships between women were accepted by society and were not stigmatized or labeled deviant until decades later when the impact of Freud was felt. Horowitz writes that faculty only criticized student relationships for the disruption they caused to a student’s focus on academics, and illustrates that girls often openly wrote about their “smashes” and “crushes” in letters home to parents.

Barbara Solomon (1985) argues that not all young women involved in college “smashes” and “crushes” rejected men as romantic partners throughout their lives. For

¹⁴ Barbara Solomon (1985) argues that “romantic friendships” also existed between women at coed schools, but they were not as central to the college culture as at women's colleges (p. 99).
example, she writes that “some experimented with female lovemaking but also had male suitors, became engaged, and eventually married” (p. 100). She also notes that often even women who did not participate in “smashing” and “crushing” while in college eventually “in the decades after graduation, found intimate female companions and settled into permanent relationships” (Solomon, 1985, p. 100).

By the 1930s, women’s relationships were no longer openly accepted at most women’s colleges, and in *Wolf Girls at Vassar*, MacKay (1992) argues that there were systematic attempts to remove lesbian students at Vassar throughout the 1950s. Her work offers the only in-depth look at the experiences of self-identified lesbian women’s college students, providing personal reflections from students at Vassar from 1930 to 1990.

**Student Life in the Women’s Colleges**

Writing about the second generation of women college students, those who attended between 1890 and 1920, Lynn Gordon (1990) states that “the choice of a single-sex versus coeducational college was, as it had been for the first generation, the most significant predictor of a woman’s campus experiences” (p. 40). 15 These words reflect the general consensus among historians of women college students that women’s colleges in the late 19th and early 20th century were institutions where unique all-women campus cultures and student life, known as “college life” flourished (Gordon, 1990; Horowitz, 1987, 1993; Palmieri, 1995; Solomon, 1985). In her review of undergraduate student subcultures, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth*

---

15 Solomon (1985) identifies three early generations of college women: 1860-1889, 1890-1909, and 1910-1920, but Gordon’s delineation of only two generations: 1870-1890, 1890-1920 is more commonly used, perhaps because it better represents the continuities of student life.
Century to the Present, Horowitz (1987) argues that early women’s college students patterned their student life after the private male campuses, sorting themselves into the typical campus categories including “swells,” “all-around girls,” “grinds,” and “freaks” (p. 197). Yet, she suggests that extracurricular activities at women’s colleges, in contrast with male and coeducational colleges, offered more value to students in the form of leadership opportunities, female bonding, empowerment, and “the chance to define themselves on their own terms” (Horowitz, 1987, p. 195).

There is also general agreement among historians that the main activities dominating campus life at the early women’s colleges—besides the rituals of female friendships already discussed—included athletics, drama, participation in campus clubs and organizations, and eating (Gordon, 1990; Horowitz, 1993; Palmieri, 1995; Solomon, 1985). With her emphasis on campus architecture and physical space, Horowitz (1993) highlights the ways that women’s college students claimed space for themselves on campus and adapted their environments through the institution of college ceremonies and rituals, which “linked the students to the college landscape” (p. 174).

A minor debate within this area of the literature concerns the degree of change within the student composition at the women’s colleges between the first and second generations of students. Horowitz (1993), Palmieri (1995), and Wein (1992) identify a marked change in the second generation’s elevated social standing, lack of career motivation or zeal for social reform, and overall complacency. Yet, Gordon (1990) claims that there was more continuity than change between the two generations of students. She argues that women of the second generation, during the Progressive Era, were just as serious and reform-minded as earlier students, even while enjoying a wide
array of social activities. To prove this point, in her discussion of student life at Vassar, Gordon focuses on student participation in progressive Settlement House Associations and intercollegiate debating clubs.

Drama and athletics were a mainstay of student life at all of the women’s colleges. In her study of Radcliffe College in the late 19th century, Bruce (2004) illustrates how these activities allowed women to define themselves as educated. Acting in plays gave women the chance to try on new identities and to create “their own gender structure in which certain women usually played men and won great praise for doing so” (p. 141). Participating in athletics provided an opportunity for self-expression and the development of camaraderie among teammates. In addition to these personal benefits to students, Bruce (2004) argues that drama and sports also served the purpose of “portraying Radcliffe women as well rounded, socially attractive, and healthy females ready to become the wives, mothers, educators, and career women of the twentieth century” (p. 145).

Offering a unique approach to the study of student life, Margaret Lowe (2003) explores the relationships which college women forged with their bodies in the early women’s colleges. Analyzing sources from Smith College, Spelman College, and Cornell University, she argues that women’s bodies became a central focus of campus life, especially in the women’s colleges, as students and faculty had to refute claims that higher education could physically harm women. She writes that college women of the late 19th and early 20th centuries equated weight gain with a healthy and vigorous transition to college life, and therefore, they purposefully emphasized their weight gain. Lowe illustrates that student letters home to parents often related information about foods
eaten and pounds added. She concludes that women gained pleasure on campus through bodily acts such as eating, playing sports, dancing, and even bobbing their hair. Lowe (2003) argues that college women “used their bodies in particular ways not solely for individual gain but to win social debates about their place in American society” (p. 78).

Food was certainly a central component of social life in the women’s colleges and many historians have written about the elaborate teas, dinners on campus, and the late-night food parties, called “spreads” that often took place in women’s dorm rooms (Gordon, 1990; Horowitz, 1993). Lowe argues that in addition to allowing women to take pleasure in food, the spreads also illuminated social-class and regional differences among women. She notes that the “bacon bat,” a mixed-sex, off-campus picnic, replaced the “spread” as the feature of social life in the 1920s, when mixed-sex social activities became common on women’s college campuses.

Lowe’s attention to colleges for both White and African American students allows her to explore how food and body-image functioned differently by race. She argues that unlike at White women’s colleges, “Spelman students found their relationship with appetite, food, and dining dominated by concerns about moral propriety” (Lowe, 2003, p. 38). For example, she writes that student diets were restricted in order to teach Christian order and restraint. White administrators emphasized proper table manners and middle-class tastes and food customs in order to mold African American students into their vision of the properly educated woman.

Lowe (2003) writes that fashion also played an important role on campus, as women’s college students used clothing to distinguish themselves as college women, and also helped to shape the “college look” that was adopted by young women around the
country in the early 20th century. She argues that “fussing” or dating also became a common social activity at all campuses by the turn-of-the-century, which led women students to pay more attention to clothing and appearance.

Another contribution to the literature on student life and campus culture at the early women’s colleges is Lynn Gordon’s essay *The Gibson Girl Goes to College: Popular Culture and Women’s Higher Education in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (Gordon, 1987). Exploring student life through its depiction in national magazines, newspapers, and college novels, Gordon (1987) notes that popular culture in the Progressive Era represented college women through the fashionable image of the healthy and vibrant “Gibson Girl.” She writes that American culture became fascinated with the image and idea of the college girl and campus life in this era, and she notes that “articles about college girls focused on single-sex institutions as the best places to uphold traditional Victorian values” (Gordon, 1987, p. 216). Gordon argues that the women’s colleges were not the traditional bastions of femininity and innocuous socializing that the media depicted them to be. She suggests that journalists ignored and neglected the complexities of women’s college life, including serious academics, that did not fit their visions of the schools. Gordon (1987) concludes that “through the symbolism of the Gibson Girl and her successors—the flapper et al.—popular culture accepted the reality of women’s higher education, but showed how it need not lead to social change” (p. 226).

---


17 Inness (1995) similarly concludes that representations of women’s colleges in novels reflected the larger society’s denial of social change for college women.
African American Students in the Eastern Women’s Colleges

Helen Horowitz (1993) writes that “in all women’s colleges at the turn of the century, Negroes were outsiders” (p. 155), even though, as Barbara Solomon (1985) indicates, women’s colleges were becoming more diverse in the early 1900s with the entrance of immigrant daughters. The history of the few African American women who attended northeastern women’s colleges in the late 19th and early 20th centuries has largely gone untold.

In her groundbreaking article The African American Female Elite: The Early History of African American Women in the Seven Sister Colleges, 1880-1960, Linda Perkins (1997) begins to bring this history into focus. She writes that until the 1950s, “the number of African American women attending all the Seven Sisters combined was rarely more than one or two per class” (p. 720) and indicates that only approximately 500 Black women attended these women’s colleges before 1960. Even so, Perkins (1997) argues that the influence of these graduates was significant, as “they went on to serve on faculties of African American high schools and colleges, and became prominent lawyers, physicians, and scientists” (p. 723).

Horowitz (1993) and Perkins (1997) both argue that the African American women who attended the Seven Sisters were typically elite daughters of educated parents. The first students attended Wellesley, Radcliffe, and Smith in the 1880s. Some Black women entered Mount Holyoke and Vassar in the 19th century, but they were not admitted consciously, as Perkins (1997) says, “these students were not known to be African Americans until after they arrived” (p. 723). Perkins argues that Wellesley and Smith were the most welcoming to African American students, especially since Wellesley was
the only Seven Sister college that allowed Black women to live on campus. Barnard, Bryn Mawr, and Vassar were the last to consciously admit Black women and only did so in the 1930s under pressure from social critics including W. E. B. DuBois. Perkins notes that at Bryn Mawr, Black women were excluded due to the explicitly racist policies of M. Carey Thomas. Perkins (1997) shares that surprisingly, “despite the resistance they faced, the small number of African American women who attended and graduated from the Seven Sister colleges overwhelmingly asserted that they would attend the same institution again” (p. 745). Perkins’ article is exciting because it provides an important look at the varied attitudes that each of the Seven Sister colleges took on the issue of race and offers a needed model for further work in this area.

**Southern Women’s Colleges**

As this review chapter has illustrated, the vast majority of the literature on the history of women’s colleges has focused on the private women’s colleges of the northeastern United States. Yet, as Amy Thompson McCandless (1999) observes, “at the beginning of the twentieth century, 66 percent of the nation’s women’s colleges were in the South” (p. 84). Her work on the education of Black and White women in the American South in the 20th century helps to fill an important gap in the literature and marks an important contribution to the field.

---

18 It is interesting to note that Patricia Palmieri (1995) does not include any discussion of Black students in her study of Wellesley. This is likely due to her focus on the faculty community, but it indicates the overall lack of attention that Black women’s experiences in the northeastern women's colleges have received.

19 In her biography of M. Carey Thomas, Helen Horowitz (1994) also argues that Thomas purposely barred Black women from attending Bryn Mawr.
McCandless (1999) argues that opposition to coeducation for White women was far greater in the South than in the rest of the country. For this reason, women’s colleges, including public women’s colleges, for White women flourished after 1890. She writes that opposition to coeducation was fueled by fears of racial integration, as White southern educators worried that concessions granted to White women would also spur similar demands by Black students. McCandless (1999) also argues that “the predominance of segregated institutions and the influence of a traditional, rural culture made campus life distinctly different for college women in the South” (p. 157). The curriculum and highly regulated student life of southern White women’s colleges in the early 20th century reinforced woman’s domestic role, but McCandless suggests that the creation of a female culture fostered empowerment and prepared some women to work for change in their society.

While White women were most likely to attend a women’s college, as few White coeducational facilities existed, McCandless (1999) argues:

the majority of African American women seeking a higher education in the South attended a coeducational school rather than a women’s college, received vocational or normal training rather than a liberal arts education, and enrolled in a private denominational college rather than a public and nondenominational school. (p. 45)

McCandless writes that the Black community simply could not afford a separate system of women’s colleges. At the few Black women’s colleges that did exist, such as Spelman College in Georgia and Bennett in North Carolina, McCandless (1999) suggests that the
curriculum differed greatly from that at most White women’s colleges, emphasizing “manners,” “character,” and “women’s traditional duties and responsibilities” (p. 68).  

In *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era*, Lynn Gordon (1990) devotes a rare chapter to women’s experiences at Sophie Newcomb and Agnes Scott Colleges, which were White women’s colleges in Louisiana and Georgia founded in the late 19th century. Comparing these students to the women she studied at Vassar College between the 1880s and 1920, Gordon (1990) argues that “students of Agnes Scott and Sophie Newcomb had fewer ties to faculty, less enthusiasm for careers, and little interest in suffrage” (p. 51). She also points out that these schools, like all the southern women’s colleges, were homogeneous in their make-up, as no racial integration took place before the 1960s.

**Comparisons of Women’s Colleges in England and America**

A minor strand in the literature on the history of women’s education compares the educational scene in England and America. For example, in her book *The Higher Education of Women in England and America, 1865-1920*, Elizabeth Eschbach (1993) compares and contrasts the movements for women’s education in England and the United States in order to demonstrate that “the path towards intellectual emancipation was not a smooth one in either country” (p. xiv). By analyzing the two countries side by side, she is able to reveal the similarities and differences between women’s educational experiences in each nation. Eschbach (1993) concludes that by the end of the 19th century women in

---

20 To date there is no comprehensive history of the Black women's colleges, but their individual stories can be found in institutional histories and auto/biographies. See for example, Guy-Sheftall & Stewart (1981). See also Eschbach (1993) for her chapter on women’s colleges for Black and White women in the South.
America could “boast of an array of heterogeneous institutions offering a variety of curricula,” while “English women were compelled to take slow, deliberate, but forceful steps to participate in higher education” (p. xiv).

Eschbach’s study begins with an examination of the 18th century legacies of higher education for women, and she notes that the American Revolutionary War brought significant changes to how women were educated in America. On the other hand, Eschbach (1993) argues that “late eighteenth-century England saw no such surge in the education of young women, in quality or numbers” (p. 18), as there was no similar break in the political and social order.

By the 19th century, the Victorian ideology of separate spheres for women and men was a powerful force in both countries, but Eschbach argues that the limitations imposed on English women were much more severe. Yet even with such barriers to their success, the establishment of many new women’s colleges became a reality in both England and the U.S. in the 19th century. For example, England’s Emily Davies founded Girton College in 1869, and in 1871 Cambridge University opened Newnham Hall for women. By 1880, Oxford also had two colleges for women, Lady Margaret and Mary Somerville Halls. In America, Vassar College opened in 1865, followed by Smith and Wellesley in 1875. Eschbach (1993) argues that these women’s colleges had major similarities, but were also distinctly different institutions. They all provided a sense of independence and offered middle-class women “an attractive and viable alternative to domesticity” (p. 75). They also shared the problem that many young women were ill-prepared for college-level instruction. The important differences were that the American colleges were independent degree-granting schools, while the English women’s colleges
were attached to Oxford and Cambridge Universities. These prestigious and tradition-laden universities refused to grant degrees to women until 1920 at Oxford and 1947 at Cambridge. Eschbach argues that one reason for the delay was that the granting of degrees was taken more seriously in England than in the U.S., as college graduates became voting members of their universities. Even though English women benefited educationally from their connection to these established universities, Eschbach finds it ironic that many still had trouble finding professional employment due to their lack of official university degrees.

Eschbach (1993) writes that women’s college students faced harsh criticism in both countries. They responded to this by doing everything possible to retain a lady-like sense of respectability. Knowing that students were vulnerable to attack, women’s colleges enforced strict rules governing appropriate dress and behavior. For example, at Oxford University, women students were even chaperoned by older women to their lectures. One of Eschbach’s most interesting contributions to the literature is her argument that women’s colleges in England and America shied away from the radical issue of women’s suffrage because they felt it would fuel their opposition. She writes that Vassar College even explicitly forbade the discussion of suffrage on campus in the 1870s.

During the second half of the 19th century, many coeducational colleges opened in the U.S., particularly in the western states. By the turn-of-the century, the majority of women college students in America attended these coeducational state colleges, such as the Universities of California, Iowa, and Michigan. English women did not have the same diversity of educational opportunities as American women by the early 20th century. Yet, Eschbach (1993) concludes that with the flourishing of the new coeducational colleges in
the U.S. came the almost complete segregation of women students on campus into traditionally feminine fields of study such as domestic science and home economics. She argues that English women benefited from the fact that domestic science was not popular and social science was not a feminized discipline.

James Albisetti (2000) provides another comparative study, as he explores the ways in which English perceptions of American education for women, in the form of coeducational secondary schools and women’s colleges, influenced debates over women’s education in England. He writes that during the 19th century British educators traveled to the U.S. as investigators for British commissions, such as the Schools Inquiry Commission and the Bryce Commission and as members of study groups. They visited both secondary schools and women’s colleges, bringing back to England positive reports and accounts. Albisetti’s goal is to understand what the British “learned, and sometimes ‘unlearned’ from these observations” in America (p. 475).

He argues that throughout the 19th century, coeducation at the secondary level and single-sex education at women’s colleges was the norm for women in America. In contrast, English educational reformers preferred single-sex secondary schools and coeducation at the college level, as exemplified by the vote against granting degrees at Royal Holloway Women’s College in 1897. Albisetti (2000) argues that “few British scholars have seen the almost simultaneous rejection of secondary coeducation and of degree-granting women’s colleges as a problem requiring explanation” (pp. 473-474). Albisetti (2000) states that English reformers stressed the differences between the sexes in order to argue for single-sex secondary schools for girls, but “no one either extended this argument to the college level or explained why it had no relevance there” (p. 489).
Albisetti (2000) argues that women teachers and administrators in England supported single-sex schooling due to concerns regarding their possible loss of status in a coeducational system. In addition, he finds that women reformers preferred coeducational higher education due to fears that providing degrees at women’s colleges, such as Royal Holloway, “would delay or prevent degrees at Oxbridge” (p. 489). Albisetti concludes that these fears led to a “strategic forgetting” of the lessons learned from the American examples of coeducation for girls and women’s colleges at the collegiate level.\(^{21}\)

**New Trends in the Literature**

As this survey of the literature on the history of the early women’s colleges in America suggests, there are several core themes that permeate this body of work. In addition to these themes explored in the major works of the field, new paths of inquiry have recently emerged that I will now briefly review.

**Women’s colleges in the post-World War II Era.**

In 1989, Paula Fass provided an account of how the northeastern women’s colleges reacted to attacks on the liberal arts curriculum for women in the postwar era of the 1940s and 1950s. She argues that while some women’s colleges responded to public pressure and created a domestic curriculum that would prepare women for their future roles, others, and in particular Wellesley College, refused to alter the curriculum for women. Following Fass’s study, scholars paid little attention to post-World War II education for women, but recently this area of study has seen a resurgence.

\(^{21}\) See also Stock (1978) for a brief comparison of American and English higher education for women.
For example, Olsen (2000) analyzes how Mount Holyoke, Smith, and Wellesley Colleges reacted to this backlash against their non-domestic curriculum for women in the postwar era by rewriting their promotional materials to reflect a revised image. She argues that the new materials were created to be less threatening and to convey “a light-hearted informal tone that downplayed the seriousness and the dangers of educating women” (Olsen, 2000, p. 430). Some of the techniques used to shape this new message included the addition of more heterosexual images of women and men in social interaction, along with depictions of women in domestic situations, women engaged in sports, and images of men faculty instructing women students.

Rosenberg (2004) charts the successes of women in the social and natural sciences at Columbia in the 1940s, arguing that “the war offered Barnard students an unprecedented chance to find work as physicists, chemists, mathematicians, and social scientists” (p. 180). Most recently, Eisenmann (2006) has called for a renewed study of the postwar period. In her new book *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America, 1945-1965*, Eisenmann argues that the postwar period should not be viewed as an era of feminist retrenchment, as scholars often assume, but rather as a period of quiet activism for women’s education. In regard to women’s colleges, she describes continuing education programs for women established at Sarah Lawrence and Radcliffe in order to provide assistance to professional women looking for ways to combine careers and family.

**Women’s colleges and the periodization of higher education in the U.S.**

A second new line of writing about women’s colleges illustrates how the history of the first women’s liberal arts colleges in the 19th century disrupts the dominant
narrative of the emergence of the American research university, a story largely
established by Laurence Veysey’s *The Emergence of the American University* (1965). In
two separate essays, Horowitz (1995, 2005) argues that pedagogical and curricular
changes adopted at the women’s colleges, in addition to the flourishing campus cultures
and wide range of extracurricular opportunities provided to students, complicates the
notion that the liberal arts college had become a stagnant institution by the late 19th
century in need of replacement by rising research universities. In short, Horowitz (1995)
argues that historians of the women’s colleges “have spurned the ruling paradigm that
moved the story along a unilinear path from the denominational college to the research
university” (p. 344).\(^{22}\)

In a similar vein, Mary Ann Dzuback (2003) explores how the study of women’s
colleges can help historians of higher education rethink the narratives of their field. She
writes that historians of higher education have ignored gender as an overarching category
of analysis, acknowledging gender only when studying the presence of women on
campus. She suggests that gender is the most important factor in the history of higher
education and argues that analyzing gender reframes the history of higher education into
a story of how power has functioned within educational settings. As an example, she
explores how women faculty used women’s colleges to establish a place for themselves
within the male academic community and slowly reshaped the gendered culture of higher
education.

\(^{22}\) See also Palmieri (1995) and Schwager (1987) for brief discussions of how the
women’s colleges challenge the traditional periodization of higher education.
Catholic women’s colleges.

A third area of recent scholarship includes the study of Catholic women’s colleges in America. A new collection of essays edited by Tracy Schier and Cynthia Russett (2002) argues that these colleges, “which have educated many more women than the renowned Seven Sisters” (Schier & Russett, 2002, p. 1) have been ignored in the literature partially because they were founded later than the Seven Sisters, with most created between World War I and 1960. Of particular interest is the chapter on the origins of Catholic women’s colleges, in which Mahoney (2002) outlines the development of the first Catholic Women’s College, the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, in 1896 and reports that there were more than 170 such colleges by 1968. She argues that a significant number of Catholic women attended the Protestant women’s colleges in the 19th century and suggests that “the inability of the American Catholic church to provide Catholic women with an advanced education became an embarrassment and subsequent motivation for the development of Catholic higher education for females” (Mahoney, 2002, p. 51).

Jill Ker Conway’s essay in this collection, “Faith, Knowledge, and Gender” (2002), is important for the way it highlights the contributions of Catholic nuns, who administered the colleges. Looking at the Catholic women’s colleges in the early 20th century thus provides an opportunity to study women faculty at work in a time when few colleges hired a significant number of women.

Research Gaps in the Literature

Educational historians Donato and Lazerson (2000) write that “at the beginning of the 21st century, we have come to a fuller, though still incomplete, historical
understanding of women’s education” (p. 6). Clearly much work remains to be done regarding the history of women’s colleges in the U.S. Over the past 20 years, many scholars have outlined areas of weakness in the literature and suggested ideas for future research.

For example, scholars suggest that the stories of diverse student populations must be told and that student experience should be highlighted. Antler (1982) writes that “to date scholarship has tended to emphasize the contributions of college founders and administrators at the expense of students themselves” (p. 34). Donato and Lazerson (2000) make the case that what is needed are studies that highlight women’s experiences and their “lived life in schools” (p. 12). They conclude that “a view of the educational past from within schools and communities, one that evolves from the nature of women’s experiences, may well be the most transforming of the historical scholarship on the horizon” (p. 12). Eisenmann (1997) emphasizes the need for additional studies that explore women as faculty members.

Of specific relevance to this study, scholars including Antler (1982), Chamberlain (1988b), Schwager (1987), Eisenmann (1997), Harwarth (1999), Donato and Lazerson (2000), Nash (2008), and Ogren (2008) all agree that more attention must be given to non-elite institutions in varied geographic regions. In particular, Harwarth (1999) has suggested that researchers should present case studies of the “lesser-known women’s colleges that do not often get studied” (Harwarth, 1999, p. 17).

Drawn from the literature and these calls for future research to fill the existing gaps, this dissertation study of the curriculum at Colorado Women’s College, a lesser-
known women’s college in Denver, Colorado, helps to expand our understanding of women’s educational options and opportunities in the 20th century American West.

**Contemporary Studies of Women’s Colleges**

Before concluding this review of the history of women’s colleges, I will briefly address some of the research on contemporary women’s colleges. This discussion provides a context for understanding the current state of women’s colleges in the United States, which I believe allows for a more nuanced understanding of their historical foundations.

Despite the dramatic decrease in the overall number of women’s colleges over the last 40 years, scholars have remained intrigued by the persistence and resilience of those women’s colleges in the United States that have survived. These schools continue to be the focus of a significant amount of research. In part, this is due to the often-reported claim that women’s colleges provide a better learning environment for women (Miller-Bernal 1993, 2000; Smith, 1990; Tidball, 1973; Wolf-Wendel, 1998). It is also likely due to the fact that women’s colleges have remained highly visible in the higher education landscape, even though they comprise only 1% of all colleges (Harwarth, 1999). For example, while only 54 women’s colleges remain, six of these schools are rated among the top 30 liberal arts colleges in the nation (Miller-Bernal & Poulson, 2006b).

The first studies to examine the contemporary impact and role of women’s colleges in the U.S. focused on the outcomes of women’s college attendance, such as career and financial success. In her now classic studies, Tidball (1973, 1980) reported that women’s colleges produced more women “achievers” than coeducational institutions, as defined by a woman’s inclusion (based on professional success) in the
reference book *Who’s Who of American Women*. Her major conclusion was that the greater presence of female faculty at women’s colleges explained the high number of women “achievers” educated at these colleges. More recent literature has refuted this claim (Kim & Alvarez, 1995; Miller-Bernal, 1993). Miller-Bernal (1993) argues that “students’ identification with women faculty is not sufficient to produce beneficial outcomes, but what is important is for students to study a curriculum that makes women a central concern” (p. 48).

Tidball’s work has been critiqued by several scholars such as Oates and Williamson (1978) and Stoecker and Pascarella (1991) for not adequately controlling for the socio-economic status and background characteristics of women’s college students. Yet, there has been continued interest in studies that correlate degree origin with career success, known as baccalaureate origin studies. For example, Rice and Hemmings (1988) replicated Tidball’s research using more current *Who’s Who in America* lists from the 1980s and found some support for the idea that women’s colleges graduate more “achievers” than coeducational institutions. They also found that a large percentage of women’s college graduates had attended the highly selective and private Seven Sister colleges, further opening these studies to critique concerning their inability to control for student background. In response to these critiques, Wolf-Wendel (1998) updated Tidball’s original research by controlling for college selectivity as a substitute for student background. The groundbreaking component of this research, aside from controlling for student characteristics, was that Wolf-Wendel also performed separate analyses for

---

23 Ledman, Miller, and Brown (1995) have also expressed concern that graduate education has not been accounted for as a possible intervening variable in the relationship between degree origin and career success.
women of different racial and ethnic groups, including European Americans, African Americans, and Latinas. She concluded that regardless of college selectivity, women’s colleges produced more highly achieving women in all racial groups than coeducational institutions.

Other researchers have moved away from baccalaureate origin studies, while still analyzing the beneficial outcomes of attending a women’s college. For example, Riordan (1994) utilized longitudinal survey data from the high school class of 1972 to conclude that for every year of attendance at a women’s college, “students obtain significantly greater amounts of occupational prestige and personal income” (p. 504).

Miller-Bernal (1989) was one of the first scholars to focus on the experiences of women students while they were still in college, as opposed to looking only at later career and success outcomes. Based on surveys from students at two private liberal arts colleges in the state of New York, one a women’s college and the other coeducational, Miller-Bernal concluded that “women’s colleges provide a favorable climate for the development of women’s abilities” (p. 384).

**Recent themes in the literature.**

Some of the most recent studies on contemporary women’s colleges have followed Miller-Bernal’s example of surveying and analyzing women students while they are still in the process of attending college. Most of these studies have compared the experiences of women students at women’s colleges and coeducational institutions. These current strands of research include the analysis of leadership opportunities for

---

Fleming (1984) is one of the only other scholars to analyze the differential experiences of women of color at women’s colleges.
women at women’s colleges (Miller-Bernal, 1993, 2000; Whitt, 1994), the study of the institutional effectiveness of women’s colleges (Kim, 2001; Kim & Alvarez, 1995), and the exploration of student satisfaction with the women’s college experience (Langdon, 1999; Smith, 1990; Smith, Wolf, & Morrison, 1995). Whitt’s (1994) study of leadership in women’s colleges is unique because it is one of the few qualitative studies in the literature. Her research was based on 200 interviews from students at three women’s colleges, and she concluded that these colleges were highly intentional in their development of student leaders. Kim’s (2001) study is also notable because she is the first scholar to conclude that women’s colleges contribute to their students’ desire to influence social conditions. In terms of student satisfaction, both Langdon (1999) and Smith (1990) found that contemporary women’s college students report being more satisfied with their college experience, except in the area of social life, than women students at coeducational schools.

Some of the very recent scholarship has explored the ways that women’s colleges and their students have adapted to a coeducational world by adopting coeducation or changing their curriculum and institutional missions to attract new, more-diverse student populations (Miller-Bernal & Poulson, 2004, 2006a). These studies have concluded that only a few of the most prestigious institutions with large endowments have been able to continue successfully without reacting to the challenges of coeducation. It is the case that very few women’s colleges now resemble their historic, foundational, institutional forms.

---

Baker (1976) offered an early study of the decline of women’s colleges and their mergers and moves toward coeducation.
Women’s colleges and nontraditional students.

While this review of the literature indicates that scholars have studied varied aspects of contemporary women’s colleges, it is clear that there is still much work to be done. At a 1998 symposium featuring leaders in the field of women’s education, researchers noted that nontraditional-aged college students have been almost completely ignored in the research on contemporary women’s colleges (Harwarth, 1999). In particular, it was suggested that the survey data used by many researchers (Kim, 2001; Kim & Alvarez, 1995; Langdon, 1999; Smith, 1990; Smith, Wolf, & Morrison, 1995), collected by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at UCLA, does not reflect the experiences of nontraditional-aged women. The CIRP surveys are conducted during college orientation, which many nontraditional students do not attend, nor does the data set include information from “weekend college” programs, which attract large numbers of nontraditional students (Harwarth, 1999).

It is especially surprising that this population has not been thoroughly studied, as the enrollment of nontraditional students, defined as age 25 and over, has increased significantly at women’s colleges throughout the 1990s to the present day (Guy-Sheftall, 1999; Harwarth, 1999; Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997; Miller-Bernal, 2006). In addition, many women’s colleges have remained financially viable by appealing specifically to nontraditional students (Harwarth, 1999; Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997; Miller-Bernal, 2006; Wolf-Wendel, 1999). In fact, women’s colleges, and especially Catholic women’s colleges, are beginning to be known as leaders in the area of serving nontraditional students (Harwarth, 1999). The modern incarnation of CWC, The Women’s College of the University of Denver, reflects this trend through its mission to
provide a liberal-arts education to adult working women in a non-traditional weekend and evening format.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have reviewed the core literature on the history of women’s colleges, focusing on how this literature has characterized the founding of the women’s colleges, their curriculum, and student life within the colleges. I have also outlined what scholars have said regarding the marriage rates of women’s college graduates and the kinds of relationships that women students and faculty fostered on campus. Issues of race and the low enrollment of African American students at elite, eastern women’s colleges were addressed, as well as the regional differences found at southern women’s colleges for both White and Black women. I have delineated some of the recent trends in the literature, which include a heightened interest in Catholic women’s colleges and women’s colleges in the post-World War II era. I have also summarized the research that explores how the history of women’s colleges has challenged our understandings of the traditional periodization of higher education in the United States. Finally, I examined the current state of women’s colleges in the U.S. and outlined the fundamental studies that provide insight into the role and impact that contemporary women’s colleges play in today’s higher education environment.

This chapter provides the background and context for my historical study of the curriculum at Colorado Women’s College in the 20th century. It highlights the literature that has already been written about the history of women’s colleges, and those topics that still remain to be adequately addressed. The need for more in-depth studies of lesser-known, regionally diverse, women’s colleges is clear. The next chapter outlines the
research process that I followed to conduct such a study and describes the basic tenets of the historical method, which I utilized for this dissertation.
Chapter Three: Historical Method and Primary Sources

This dissertation utilizes historical methods of inquiry to describe and interpret the curriculum at Colorado Women’s College from the early to mid-20th century. The historical method is one of many qualitative approaches to research, and although it might not be the most common method used in educational research, the historical method has a long and well-established tradition of use within the field of education. In fact, the historical method is included in many of the introductory textbooks on research methods in education (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006; Lancy, 1993) and most of the major texts on qualitative research in the social sciences, including Harry Wolcott’s Writing Up Qualitative Research (2001) and Denzin and Lincoln’s Handbook of Qualitative Research (2000). Educational historian John Rury (1993) suggests that “historical research may be the oldest form of qualitative inquiry currently in use” (p. 247).

In this chapter, I explore the connections between educational and historical research and provide an overview of the historical method. I address issues regarding the postmodern critique of historical assumptions and procedures and discuss the concepts of validity and reliability and their meaning in the context of historical research. I describe the major primary sources that I have employed in this study and I delineate the benefits and challenges to using these sources. In addition, I include strategies for evaluating
primary sources. The chapter concludes with a detailed outline of the research procedures that I followed, a description of the limitations of the study, and a brief overview of the various literatures to which I believe this dissertation study contributes.

**The Uses of History in the Field of Education**

The discipline of history has been defined in many ways. For example, Wilson (2005) writes that “history is best defined as a continual, open-ended process of argument” (p. 3), while others view history more straightforwardly as the study of continuity and change over time in the past (Storey, 2009; Williams, 2007). This process of understanding past events through the construction of historical arguments has been highly useful to educators and “the particular value of historical research in the field of education is unquestioned” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 191). Scholars argue that historical research in education can help us understand the origins of current educational systems, structures, and practices. Further, these studies can illuminate the development of particular educational institutions over time (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Eisenmann, 2004; Lancy, 1993). Eisenmann (2004) writes that “we can also inform our understanding of how different groups of students have experienced college by investigating their treatment in the past” (p. 17).

In addition, historical research can help us realize that our present ideas about schools and education should not be taken for granted or blindly accepted, as they are “historical creations that came into being and became established for specific reasons that have much to do with their cultural surroundings” (McCulloch & Richardson, 2000, p. 6). Some historians, such as Elton (2002), have argued that any such use of history to better
understand current issues is dangerous and overly “presentist.” While this dissertation study focuses on an analysis of events in the past, I agree that for the field of education, “historical research is an important means of understanding and addressing contemporary concerns” (McCulloch & Richardson, 2000, p. 5).

**Overview of Historical Methods**

History as a discipline lies on the border between the humanities and the social sciences (Bender, Katz, Palmer, & the AHA Committee on Graduate Education, 2004), and, therefore, its methodological approaches are diverse, eclectic, and pragmatic (Jordanova, 2006; Kaestle, 1997). McDowell (2002) writes that there is “no single correct approach” to doing history (p. 11), and Kaestle (1992; 1997) suggests that there is no methodological consensus in the field. Even with all of its variety, however, there are basic standards and procedures for conducting a historical study which emerge from a broad review of the literature on historical methods. This section briefly traces the origins of the historical method and provides an overview of its procedures.

The practice of history goes back to ancient times, but the modern professionalization of the discipline took place in the late 19th century. The German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) is generally credited with founding modern “scientific” methods of historical scholarship (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994; Howell & Prevenier, 2001; Novick, 1988), and Ranke’s principles and techniques continue to serve as the foundation of professional history today (Evans, 1999; Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Drawing upon Enlightenment philosophies of science, Ranke proposed that sources, typically written documents located in archives, could be carefully analyzed and
evaluated in order to uncover the truths of the past. He gave preference to unpublished, primary sources, as these were considered more reliable and closer to the site of historical activity. Ranke believed that “out there, in the documents, lay the facts, waiting to be discovered by historians…all historians had to do was apply the proper scientific method, eliminate their own personality from the investigation, and the facts would come to light” (Evans, 1999, p. 17). In Ranke’s view, the archive and library were like laboratories where scientific studies of history were conducted and could be repeated and tested by any other researcher who had analyzed the same documents (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994).

While very few 21st century practitioners of history would agree with Ranke’s oversimplified belief in the objective facts of history or his understanding of documents as perfect windows to the past, historians still generally follow his method of gathering sources and critically evaluating them (Evans, 1999; Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Evans (1999) writes that historians almost always engage in the rudimentary Rankean work of “investigating the provenance of documents, of inquiring about the motives of those who wrote them, the circumstances in which they were written, and the ways in which they relate to other documents on the same subject” (p. 16).

While particular language is favored by different scholars, the academic literature essentially describes the historical method as a three-part process (Brundage, 2008; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Howell & Prevenier, 2001; Jordanova, 2006; McDowell, 2002; Rury, 2006; Storey, 2009; Wilson, 2005). The stages of this process consist of: (1) identifying and gathering primary sources, also referred to as evidence or
data; (2) evaluating, analyzing, and interpreting these sources; and, (3) constructing written arguments using the sources. Primary sources are the key to traditional historical research, and they are defined as “all original documents produced at the time one is studying, and the implication is that these bear direct witness to the events, people, processes, and so on, of that moment” (Jordanova, 2006, p. 95). I provide a detailed discussion of the primary sources that I used in this study and how they were evaluated later in this chapter.

Historians also read widely in the secondary sources that pertain to their topics. These secondary sources are described as “the writings of other scholars, not necessarily historians, but anyone who has commented upon a historical situation, possibly using primary sources, without being a participant in it” (Jordanova, 2006, p. 95). Brundage (2008) clarifies that the works produced by historians with primary sources become the secondary sources for the next generation of researchers. Scholars use secondary sources to shape and focus their research questions and to provide context for their studies. The reading of secondary sources is often done simultaneously as primary sources are being consulted so that they can mutually inform and enrich each other (McDowell, 2002; Rury, 1993, 2006).

Like most qualitative forms of inquiry, the historical method follows an inductive, emergent process where the themes and topics of research emerge as the study is conducted and are not preset or rigidly preplanned (Jordanova, 2006; McDowell, 2002).

---

1 Jordanova (2006) is clear that while this basic division between primary and secondary sources generally holds true, the distinction can actually be more complicated. For some historical studies, especially those that explore the media and representation, secondary sources are the main focus and can act as primary sources.
Also, like other qualitative researchers, historians constantly move in a dialectical fashion among all three stages of the research process, and “it is unhelpful to think about historical research in terms of a simple sequence of tasks that should be performed in a given order” (Jordanova, 2006, p. 159). As Rury (1993) suggests, conducting historical research involves “a constant interplay between evidence and interpretation” (p. 259).

Some of the key points about historical method that appear repeatedly in the literature include the fact that good historical arguments are based on multiple types of sources and accounts, and that all histories should be considered provisional and open to new interpretations of the evidence (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994; Brundage, 2008; Jordanova, 2006; Williams, 2007). Scholars also note that grand, uncomplicated narratives that indicate a linear movement toward progress should be avoided. In particular, Wilson (2005) and Bennett (2006) indicate that the study of women in history has taught us that history does not always move from a state of repression to one of liberation.

Historians also caution that all key terms must be well-defined and that researchers should not assume that present-day definitions of words had the same meanings and connotations in the past (Kaestle, 1997; Storey, 2009). In addition, Storey (2009) suggests that “historians must also respect the outlook of people who lived in the past” (p. 67) and should never make anachronistic interpretations that put historical actors in positions that they would not themselves have recognized. The literature is also clear that when making historical arguments, researchers must be careful not to assume that
because two events occurred at the same time, one must have caused the other (Kaestle, 1997).

**Differences Between the Historical Method and other Qualitative Methods**

The historical method is similar to other qualitative methods of research with its focus on collecting, interpreting, and reporting data. Yet, there are also a few important differences that should be noted. Perhaps the most important distinction between historical research and other forms of qualitative inquiry is the fact that historians must rely on pre-existing, finite sources, or data, that must be discovered by the researcher. These sources are naturally fragmentary and contain arbitrary gaps in information, which makes the interpretation of sources immensely complicated (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Gordon, 1986, 1991; Jordanova, 2006; Rury, 1993, 2006). Rury (2006) explains that unlike other qualitative social science researchers, “historians cannot gather evidence up to the point that they feel important questions have been addressed” (p. 325). Women’s historian Linda Gordon (1986) also suggests that historians cannot simply “enlarge the available evidence through hard work” (p. 22). Instead, they must interpret and make sense only of the sources that have survived, which can be a great obstacle to overcome, but this challenge also grants historians the freedom to allow sources to speak to them in personal ways (Gordon, 1991). As Rury (2006) concludes, the elusive nature of historical sources “gives historians a license to exercise their own judgment that other social scientists may not have” (p. 326).

A second major difference between historical research and other qualitative research methods is that historical studies tend to imbed interpretation and argument
within a larger narrative or descriptive style, which often results in a more engaging and readable written document (Gordon, 1991; Jordanova, 2006; Rury, 1993, 2006).

Historians are also less explicit about the research process in the writing-up of their studies, even as they are attentive to methodological issues during the practice of history.

**The Postmodern Challenge to Historical Method**

Over the past three decades, many of the fundamental assumptions and beliefs within the discipline of history have been widely and vigorously challenged by adherents of a broad literary and cultural philosophy known as postmodernism (Bender et al., 2004; Evans, 1999; Jordanova, 2006). This set of theories and philosophies was developed in Europe by authors including Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan. It is often referred to as the “linguistic turn” in history, as it emphasizes the complexity and power of language and the need for all forms of discourse to be “deconstructed” (Brundage, 2008).

The basic thrust of the postmodern critique of history revolves around the interpretation of sources. Postmodernists argue that the sources, or “texts,” that historians use to make claims do not actually provide access to a past reality. Instead, sources offer only a “reality” constructed and mediated by their creators. In other words, “texts do not offer access to what was, only to what was said about it” (Jordanova, 2006, p. 79).

Postmodern theorists suggest that in the end, language does not refer to an external, material world (Evans, 1999; Howell & Prevenier, 2001; Jordanova, 2006; Novick, 1988). These arguments have led some theorists to “deny that there is any such thing as historical truth or objectivity,” and therefore, historical research “based on the rigorous
investigation of primary sources, has been widely attacked” (Evans, 1999, p. 3). Some postmodern theorists argue that because primary sources do not reveal an objective reality in the past, all histories are fictions, and, therefore, no historical argument is more valid than another (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994; Evans, 1999; Gilderhus, 2003). The two sides in this debate are represented by ultra-traditionalists who believe that sources provide a direct link to the objective truths of the past and postmodernists who argue that “texts are all we have and we can only do history on that basis” (Jordanova, 2006, p. 79, quote; Novick, 1988).  

Most historians hold more moderate views on the question of historical objectivity. As Gordon (1991) writes, “few historians believe that they play no interpretive role; few believe that any interpretation is as good as any other” (p. 684). In recent years, some of the most radical critiques of history as purely “literature” or fiction have been tempered by arguments that historians have a professional and moral obligation to distinguish between fact and fiction when describing powerful world events such as the Holocaust, especially in light of the Holocaust denial movement (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacobs, 1994; Evans, 1999; Gilderhus, 2003; Iggers, 1997; Jordanova, 2006; Lipstadt, 1994; Williams, 2007; Wilson, 2005).

While postmodern theory has created significant controversy within the discipline of history over the last 30 years, it has largely been limited to the realm of theoretical discussion and has not disrupted the work of most professional historians (Evans, 1999; Gilderhus, 2003; Iggers, 1997; Jordanova, 2006; Williams, 2007). Writing about the

---

2 For a more extensive discussion of the postmodern challenge to historical truth and objectivity, see Novick, 1988; Jenkins, 1997; Rosenau, 1992; Windschuttle, 1996.
influence of postmodernism on the field of women’s history, Alberti (2002) argues that even during the height of the postmodern debate in the 1990s, what endured was a faith in source materials and “a deep attachment to the archives and to the traditional methods of history” (p. 139).

At the same time, specific elements and ideas from postmodern theory have penetrated all realms of historical research and have impacted the discipline in several ways (Breisach, 2003). Most importantly, historians have become much more self-reflective and conscious about the methodologies that they use, and they are more open about the limits of primary sources and the claims that can be made with them (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994; Evans, 1999; Howell & Prevenier, 2001; Iggers, 1997). Historians are now more cautious about making simplistic causal arguments in their studies, and instead there is a trend toward tracing multiple causes and acknowledging the complexity of the past (Howell & Prevenier, 2001; Jordanova, 2006).

Scholars also have less confidence in linear narratives and historical progress as a result of postmodern influences (Bender et al., 2004). Postmodernist critiques of objectivity have persuaded many more historians to consider the influence of their own personal biases and subjectivities, and new areas of study have opened up as scholars have attempted to find new, postmodern ways of approaching historical topics (Breisach, 2003; Evans, 1999).

Alberti (2002) notes that women’s historians, who had always been critical of traditional history, were some of the first scholars to take seriously the postmodern challenges (p. 139).
Scholars identify that a literary style is returning to historical writing, and many studies no longer utilize sources for what they can tell us about the events of the past, but to discursively analyze how certain ideas were represented by others in the past (Evans, 1999; Scott, Evans, Cahn, & Faue, 1999b). This has particularly been the case in the fields of women’s history and gender history. For example, Lerner (2004) notes in her study of women’s history scholarship over the last decade that there has been a shift away from social history, and “instead, there is a literary focus and a great interest in issues of representation, identity, and culture” (p. 17).

On the issue of historical truth and objectivity, I agree with the many historians who argue that objectivity is not possible to achieve, and one finite historical truth can never exist. Yet, all historical arguments and interpretations are not equal, and, therefore, historical studies should be conducted with rigor and sophistication (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994; Brundage, 2008; Evans, 1999; Gilderhus, 2003, Iggers, 1997; Howell & Prevenier, 2001; Jordanova, 2006; Kaestle, 1997; Lerner, 1997; McDowell, 2002; Rury, 1993, 2006; Williams, 2007). I would argue that what most distinguishes one historical interpretation as stronger, better, or more “true” than another is the quality and quantity of sources used (Evans, 1999; Jordanova, 2006; Rury, 1993, 2006).

In this study, I interpreted traditional historical sources to document the past, as I agree with Howell and Prevenier (2001) that “sources are all we have” and “we can learn something by reading them carefully” (p. 149). I believe that historians can engage with the material worlds of the past, however tentatively, without believing in a “smooth, thoughtless, naïve transition between the sources and the claims historians make”
(Jordanova, 2000, p. 200). I am keenly aware of the complexities inherent in historical sources and subjective interpretation, yet I agree with Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob (1994) that complete skepticism is debilitating. Like Evans (1999), I believe that:

through the sources we use, and the methods with which we handle them, we can, if we are very careful and thorough, approach to a reconstruction of past reality that may be partial and provisional, and certainly will not be totally neutral, but is nevertheless true. (p. 217)

As he states, the histories that we tell will be “true,” “even if the truth they tell is our own, and even if other people can and will tell them differently” (Evans, 1999, p. 217). I have taken a pragmatic approach in this project, striving for probable, “workable truths” that aim for completeness and accuracy, while acknowledging the imperfections of traditional historical research methods (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994, p. 283). Some of the strategies that historians can use to enhance the “truthfulness” and credibility of their studies are explored in the next section.

**Issues of Validity and Reliability in Historical Method**

The statistical concepts of validity and reliability have been used widely in the social sciences to assure the quality of research results. In the quantitative social sciences, validity refers to the overall accuracy of research, while reliability relates to the consistency and stability of researcher findings. It is generally acknowledged that reliability does not play a prominent role in qualitative studies, but some qualitative researchers do attempt to address issues of validity (Creswell, 2009). In fact, Eisner (1998) writes that “one of the persistent sources of difficulty for those using qualitative methods of research and evaluation pertains to questions about the validity of their work” (p. 107). Like many scholars, I am not convinced that validity is a useful concept for
qualitative researchers to consider or that it should be applied to qualitative work
(Donmoyer, 1990; Eisner, 1998; Uhrmacher, 1988; Wolcott, 1990), as the purpose of
qualitative research is not to achieve objective, statistically “valid” knowledge. Yet I
believe that qualitative researchers must make an effort to enhance the accuracy and
overall quality of their research, even while admitting to the tentative nature of their
conclusions. For example, I agree with Glesne (1999), when she writes: “that your
understanding is incomplete does not make it unimportant, nor does it mean that you
scatter methodological discipline and rigor to the wind” (p. 179).

Educational researcher John Creswell (2009) suggests that many other terms such
as “credibility,” “trustworthiness,” and “authenticity” can be substituted for the
quantitative, statistical concept of validity and are more appropriate for qualitative
research. He outlines eight primary strategies that qualitative researchers can use to
enhance the credibility of their findings, and of these five are applicable to historical
methods and my dissertation study. These include:

1. Triangulating data.

Triangulating refers to using multiple sources of data to make claims. The
literature on historical method does not directly discuss the issue of statistical “validity,”
but it does address ways that historians can strengthen their work. Similar to
“triangulating data,” historians emphasize the need to provide multiple examples, to
corroborate information using several types of sources, and to cross-check information.

---

4 In a similar vein, historian Ludmilla Jordanova (2006) suggests that the terms “trust,”
“judicious,” and “reliable” are more productive than the concept of “truth” in historical
research, as truth implies a completeness that cannot be achieved (pp. 89-91).
from primary sources with the secondary literature (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Jordanova, 2006; Storey, 2009).

2. Using rich, thick description.

Creswell (2009) notes that this strategy can help readers feel more connected to a research study, and social scientists argue that it is important to provide rich data in order to allow readers to judge for themselves the interpretations that are made by the researcher (Donmoyer, 1990). The history literature also makes it clear that good histories are those that are well-written and can evoke vivid images that transport the reader to a past world (Jordanova, 2006).

3. Clarifying the bias the researcher brings to the study.

Researchers typically address their potential biases through the inclusion of a self-reflective personal statement, such as my own statement in the introductory chapter regarding my past encounters with TWC/CWC.

4. Presenting negative or discrepant information.

Creswell (2009) argues that by discussing data that refutes one’s own claims, the researcher can gain credibility with the reader. Therefore, qualitative social scientists suggest that researchers should report their data as fully and accurately as possible, being sure to consider alternative interpretations (Wolcott, 1990). More specifically, historians concur that fully and fairly representing all the data, considering counter arguments, and including competing interpretations are important ways of increasing the authenticity of research (Brundage, 2008; Howell & Prevenier, 2001; Jordanova, 2006; Storey, 2009). Gordon (1986) goes further to suggest that historians must take their own equivalent of
the Hippocratic Oath to present a representative sample of the relevant evidence and to purposefully seek out evidence that defeats their arguments. She concludes that historians “are not at ethical liberty to pick and choose among the shards available” (Gordon, 1986, p. 22).

5. Spending prolonged time in the field.

Creswell (2009) suggests that by spending a significant amount of time in the field “the researcher develops an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study” (p. 192). On the same note, in historical research, scholars advise spending adequate time in archives locating all relevant sources and understanding the unique contexts of sources and their relationships to each other (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Only when historians fully understand the complex nature of their sources can they strive for accuracy in their interpretations.

Additional strategies for enhancing the accuracy and credibility of historical research emerge from the literature on historical method. These strategies include making research procedures and sources transparent and open to critique and scrutiny, drawing upon published works of proven quality, and setting up research problems and questions from the outset in an open-ended manner so that researchers do not run the risk of simply confirming their original beliefs and preconceptions (Brundage, 2008; Jordanova, 2006). In my dissertation research I utilized the strategies outlined to write an historical account that is as accurate as possible, and that will be received as credible and trustworthy. My intention overall has been to heed the call by Jordanova (2006) to “think, feel and write about the past in a self-aware and intellectually robust manner” (p. 195).
Primary Source Materials

Primary sources are the foundation of traditional research methods within the discipline of history. As Rury (1993) indicates, “the quality of the documentation, after all, will determine to a certain extent, the value of the insights one can achieve” (p. 267). Due to the fundamental importance of sources, historians stress the value of critically evaluating and analyzing them. While historians examine many kinds of sources in their research, including documents, oral histories, photographs, paintings, and even everyday material artifacts and objects, this dissertation is based primarily on documents, and, therefore, evaluating documents is the subject to which I now turn.

Evaluating primary documents.

The first level of document analysis typically involves establishing the authenticity of source documents to ensure that they have not been forged or created to purposefully misrepresent information (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Howell & Prevenier, 2001; McDowell, 2002). Then historians begin the process of understanding source documents within their historical contexts. I believe that it is important to be mindful that each researcher brings an individual interpretive lens to the documents and therefore, multiple interpretations are possible for any given document (Hodder, 2000). Sources are never transparent records of the past (Jordanova, 2006), and as Elliot Eisner (1998) says, all types of sources “both reveal and conceal” certain forms of information (p. 46). Documents are complex, multileveled, and mediated by their creators. They require scholars to move beyond the surface content in order to fully understand their meanings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Jordanova, 2006; Prior, 2003). As Cohen,
Manion, and Morrison (2007) note, documents are “social products, located in specific contexts, and as such, have to be interrogated and interpreted rather than simply accepted” (p. 203).

Some of the most important issues that must be considered when examining, analyzing, and interpreting documents include questions concerning their production, consumption, and content (Prior, 2003). Other historians organize their questioning around the author, researcher, and context of the document (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). I believe that all of these concepts are important; however, I think that it is easiest to understand documents in terms of their author, audience, and context. For example, questions must be asked about the author of a document such as:

- “Who wrote the document?”
- “What does the document say about its author(s)?”
- “What were the interests of the writer?” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 202)

Important questions regarding the audience of a document would include:

- “Who were the original intended audiences of the document?”
- “How was the document used/intended to be used?”
- “How was the document actually used?” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 202)

Regarding the context of the document, it is important to ask questions such as:

- “When was the document written?”
• “What was the original intention and purposes (explicit and/or latent) of the
document?”
• “What were the intended outcomes of the document?”
• “What were the political and social contexts surrounding the document?”
• “What does the document both include and exclude?”
• “How should the document be read?”
• “What are you, the reader/researcher bringing to the document in trying to make
sense of it?”
• “What is the place of the document in the overall research project?” (Cohen,

In addition to these (among many other) questions suggested by Cohen, Manion,
and Morrison, it is also important to consider the limitations of a document (Jordanova,
2006), whether a document was written to be viewed by the public, whether the writer
was willing or able to tell the truth, and “whether the document was written at some
physical or temporal distance from the events it describes” (McDowell, 2002, p. 113).

Scholars pursuing historical research using primary documents must also not forget that
there is always an element of serendipity and chance regarding which documents exist in
an archive and which documents were lost, deliberately destroyed, or never deemed
worthy of saving in the first place (Evans, 1999; Jordanova, 2006). For this reason,
historians must carefully assess whether or not the sources they use are fair,
representative, and sufficient for the research questions at hand, while acknowledging
that they rarely have all of the sources that they need.
Creswell (2009) concludes that there are both pros and cons to using documents in qualitative research, but he emphasizes the practical advantages to the researcher. He notes that using documents as evidence saves the researcher the time and expense of transcribing and eliminates the logistical struggles involved with organizing research participants. In this way, he considers document analysis to be a less obtrusive method for collecting data.

The primary sources used in this study.

In this dissertation I use existing documentary materials such as CWC course catalogs, College yearbooks, local and national newspapers, student newspapers, student survey questionnaire responses, oral history transcripts, and scrapbooks to address my research questions regarding the curriculum at Colorado Women’s College in the 20th century. The majority of these documents are located in the department of Special Collections and Archives at the University of Denver’s Penrose Library. The Colorado Women’s College archives have been housed in this location since the merger of the two colleges in 1982. In addition to the kinds of documents described above, the University of Denver library also holds approximately 175 boxes of archival materials related to CWC, including administrative documents, marketing materials, and the personal papers of professors, deans, and presidents. These documents are also important for understanding CWC, and I used administrative materials such as annual reports and marketing pamphlets for this study.

Other archival repositories that contain documents related to CWC include the Colorado Historical Society, the Western History Department at the Denver Public
Library, the University of Colorado at Denver’s Auraria Library, Colorado State University’s Morgan Library, and the University of Northern Colorado’s Michener Library. I reviewed these collections and found that most of their materials duplicate those found at the University of Denver. I collected and analyzed unique documents from these collections when relevant.

**A closer look at the sources.**

College catalogs are important sources for documenting college policies and required curricula. I used them to describe the curriculum at CWC and to better understand how this curriculum reflected 20th century tensions and debates regarding the best collegiate curriculum for women. I also used these catalogs to examine what the curriculum revealed about the purpose of education for women at CWC. One of the difficulties inherent in analyzing college catalogs is that they may be inaccurate, outdated, or unconnected from the daily life and actions of students and teachers (Rudolph, 1977). They sometimes reflect a college’s desires and not the reality of courses offered. In addition, they do not always indicate the depth or rigor to which particular subjects could be pursued by students. Yet, college course catalogs offer the only straightforward way to chart changes in collegiate curriculum, and therefore they are very valuable sources of data (Nash, 2005).

Out of a desire to utilize sources that reflect student voices and perspectives, I analyzed student newspapers, College yearbooks, student scrapbooks, student survey responses, and oral history interview transcripts. Radke (2002) suggests that student newspapers offer one of the most direct windows into the collective and individual
personalities of students, and that college yearbooks can aid in recreating the “political and social awareness” of students (p. 9). I examined these documents to gain an understanding of the campus climate and culture and to illustrate student reactions and responses to the curriculum at CWC. Student newspapers also provided an important means of corroborating and triangulating information found in the College yearbooks and course catalogs.

In early 2000, the Writers Club, a student group at The Women’s College distributed a written survey to all known CWC alumnae and received more than 150 responses. In this survey, women were asked to reflect on the following five questions: “What is your most vivid memory of CWC?,” “What was your favorite place on campus and why?,” “Which members of the faculty, staff, or administration most influenced your college years as a coach or mentor and how?,” “In what way(s) is your life different because of CWC?,” and “What would you like others to know or remember about CWC?”

The responses to these survey questions offer a glimpse into women’s lives in their own words. They represent the experiences and memories of CWC students from as early as 1919 through to the 1980s. These student questionnaire responses, along with additional student-focused sources, allowed me to examine how students responded to the curriculum available to them at CWC. It is important to remember that these survey questionnaires were collected, in most cases, decades removed from the experiences that

---

5 *CWC Memory Book Questionnaire*, Colorado Women’s College Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Penrose Library, University of Denver, CO.
they capture. Therefore, whenever possible I corroborated factual information with other sources, as memories can be elusive and fleeting (Cutler, 1996).

In addition to sources relating specifically to life at CWC, I also analyzed local, regional, and national newspapers in order to better understand CWC’s role and relationships within the Denver and Colorado community. McDowell (2002) argues that newspapers can provide historians with information about the “social and cultural milieu of a given period” (p. 67). In this study, newspapers allowed me to explore how CWC and its curriculum were received by the local community. They also provided information about the curricular programs at CWC that received attention in the national spotlight.

McDowell also notes that “the degree of importance which newspapers place on particular topics can normally be gauged by examining where these items appear in the newspaper, what size of typeface is used and how many columns are allocated to covering them” (McDowell, 2002, p. 67). These analytic strategies were also useful to me when analyzing student, local, and national newspapers. It is always important to critically evaluate the limitations of newspapers as a source and assess each newspaper’s target audience and potential editorial bias.

On a final note about primary sources, educational historian Kaestle (1997) warns that when writing educational history, it is important to distinguish between sources that describe how people should behave and sources that provide information about how people actually behaved in the past. He writes that “too often we lack evidence of actual behavior and let prescriptive evidence stand in its place; that is, we assume that people
did as they were told” (Kaestle, 1997, p. 128). As I analyzed documents produced by CWC, such as College catalogs, I was largely able to verify that course requirements and College policies reflected actual practice. For example, College yearbooks, produced by students, reflect student participation in College courses and activities as described in the catalogs.

**Research Procedures**

As I discussed earlier in this chapter in the overview of historical methods, the three basic steps for conducting historical research include identifying and gathering primary sources; evaluating, analyzing, and interpreting these sources; and, constructing written arguments using the sources. I have “purposefully selected” Colorado Women’s College to be the focus of my research because it provides a historical perspective on women’s colleges in the American West (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, I started the research process by gathering sources related to my research questions concerning the curriculum at Colorado Women’s College. This work involved visiting the Penrose Library archives, as well as other local archival repositories, in order to gain access to relevant documents related to the history of Colorado Women’s College.

I spent approximately six months in total identifying and collecting documentary sources, and another 12 months reading, analyzing, and interpreting these sources. The majority of the research involved reading every available College yearbook and course catalog from 1909 to 1967. I also read every issue of the student newspaper from 1916 to 1967, and located more than a dozen local and national newspaper articles referring to CWC. I analyzed all 177 questionnaire responses to the student survey conducted by The
Women’s College Writers Club. During the course of my research I browsed student scrapbooks and photos, and sorted through dozens of boxes of administrative files and papers. Over the course of my research I identified relevant photos to include as supplementary material in my dissertation. My aim was to include images in the dissertation from College catalogs and yearbooks that have not been widely published or viewed. In this way I am able to convey some small sense to the reader of the nature of the primary materials I have utilized.

**Research notes.**

During the first phase of research, I took notes in the archives on a laptop computer so that I could have access to my notes in electronic format, which offered more convenience in analyzing the data. Taking notes on a laptop also allowed for greater ease in storing and organizing my data (Creswell, 2009; McDowell, 2002; Marius & Page, 2002). My notes summarized information about the contents of sources and emerging interpretations of sources. I added short coded phrases and terms in my notes that related to key themes and topics of the research questions. I included proper citations for all sources in my notes and clearly placed direct quotations in quotation marks, so as to avoid confusion during the write-up phase of research (Storey, 2009).

While some historians suggest using specialized qualitative research software for note taking, I preferred to use my own simple word-processing software, Microsoft Word. This allowed me to avoid the potential problems associated with being unfamiliar with a new software program. In all, I generated 251 single-spaced pages of notes in this
manner. I also created spreadsheets to organize data collected from sources on student enrollment, most popular academic majors, and campus events and activities.

As I took notes on my laptop, I also took a second set of notes by hand in spiral bound notebooks (four in all). These notes included my ongoing thoughts about the project, new avenues of research to pursue, summaries of sources and references, and other miscellaneous ideas regarding my dissertation project (Wolcott, 2001).

**Analysis of sources.**

To begin the analysis of the sources that I collected, I sorted through my materials, reading and sifting through the evidence to find themes and content related to my research questions (Creswell, 2009). Using my word-processing software, I had the capacity to search by coded keywords and phrases. In line with the recursive, dialectical nature of the historical research process, discussed earlier in this chapter, I began my source analysis early in the project, not waiting until all data had been collected to consider interpretations. This allowed me to make more informed choices as I collected further data. My more detailed analysis of the sources began after I had collected information from all College yearbooks, course catalogs, and student newspapers.

**Writing.**

Rury (1993) suggests that researchers are ready to begin constructing arguments and writing up interpretations and findings when they feel that they have achieved an “interpretive stance, and a degree of description, which seems adequate” (p. 268). I took his advice for this dissertation project. I started the writing process when I felt that I had appropriate evidence to persuasively and confidently address my research questions and
the ability to offer substantial interpretations and arguments. As Rury suggests, there is no “cookbook” approach to historical research and writing, and, therefore, it is up to the researcher to determine when a sufficient amount of evidence has been collected and interpreted. Jordanova (2006) cautions that historians are never able to read every last possible source on a topic; therefore, this is not the measure for when a study should be considered complete. She suggests that historians should move beyond this “crippling ideal” of comprehensiveness (pp. 96-97) and focus not on completeness, but instead on the overall quality of the historical work conducted.

Limitations of the Study

One possible limitation of this study is that I have described only one college as opposed to several women’s colleges in the western United States. Yet, I defend this decision based on Wolcott’s (2001) assertion that much can be learned from “studying only one or one aspect of anything” (p. 137). Other scholars who agree with Wolcott on this point include Creswell (2009) and Eisenmann (2004) who suggests that “sometimes the analysis of an individual campus deepens or corrects contemporary understandings” (Eisenmann, 2004, p. 12). I am further reassured of the significance of a study of a single college by my library research, which has revealed a rich tradition of studies that provide a detailed history of an individual women’s college or university. In fact, this dissertation project follows in the path of dissertations completed by such eminent scholars in the field of the history of women’s education as Palmieri (1981), Schwager (1982), Brickley (1985), and Eisenmann (1988).
Another perceived limitation of this study is that my conclusions are not generalizeable, in the statistical sense, beyond the particular case of Colorado Women’s College to other women’s colleges. For the most part, generalizability is not the purpose of qualitative research and is not an appropriate concept to apply. Yet, I would agree with those scholars who suggest that what is learned through the particulars of one case can sometimes be transferred to other cases with similar contexts and conditions (Creswell, 2009; Donmoyer, 1990).

Finally, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, historical studies are always limited by the range of existing sources that are available, and historians are not able to collect new data in order to fill in the necessary gaps. I have addressed this concern by aligning my research questions with the known available sources. I have also placed parameters on the scope of this project in order to make it more defined and centered. Therefore, this study is limited to an analysis of CWC in the years between 1909 and 1967.

**Intellectual Traditions**

I am inspired by the idea that “even the smallest project of historical inquiry is part of a larger intellectual odyssey” (Brundage, 2008, p. 120). In the case of this dissertation, I took the opportunity to not only explore the world of CWC, but also to contribute to several literatures and intellectual traditions. In this section I conclude by outlining the intellectual traditions to which I speak in this dissertation study. Overall, I view this study as intersecting the literatures on curriculum history, education history, and women’s history.
**Curriculum history and education history.**

The field of curriculum history has traced the development of the American collegiate curriculum beginning with the founding of the colonial colleges in the 17th and 18th centuries. The focus of curriculum history has been on analyzing the formal structures and practices of education and the lives and experiences of students inside the schoolhouse (Kimball, 1989; Kridel & Newman, 2003). This field is noted for being open, inclusive, and interdisciplinary, and thus scholars have utilized a wide variety of strategies to understand the curriculum and student experiences with it. For example, biographical research, oral history, memoir, and case study research are all common approaches (Kridel & Newman, 2003). A strand of curriculum history has also worked to champion “voices of the disenfranchised” by exploring the interactions of women and minority groups with dominant curricular patterns and trends (Kridel & Newman, 2003, p. 645). In particular, I believe that this study adds to this growing body of literature on curriculum history as providing a voice to students who have been ignored in the past. It also speaks to those scholars adopting a case study approach, who examine “the lived experiences of learners in specific educational settings” (Kridel & Newman, 2003, p. 643).

Curriculum history is sometimes viewed as a sub-field of the much broader field of education history, which itself is often associated with the even more encompassing areas of social and intellectual history (Kridel & Newman, 2003). The major distinction between educational history and curriculum history has been that scholars of American educational history have tended to define education more widely as the transfer of culture
(Kimball, 1989). My focus in this dissertation on the study of the curriculum’s relationships to women’s social roles in American culture speaks to the more diverse approaches found in educational history.

**Women’s history.**

As a work of women’s history, this dissertation seeks to “make women visible, to put women on the historical record, to enable women’s voices to be heard, to listen to their voices, and to show their points of view” (Cott, Lerner, Sklar, DuBois, & Hewitt, 2003, p. 145). “Producing new evidence” has always been an important goal of women’s history (Cott, 1992), and I contribute to this mission by uncovering documentary sources which allow us to know more about the curricular offerings available to women students.

With the development of gender history as an important field of study that operates closely alongside women’s history (Cott et al., 2003; Cott, 1992), many scholars now focus more on understanding gender structures and systems than on documenting women’s lives with primary sources (Scott, Evans, Cahn, & Faue, 1999a, 1999b). This study uses traditional historical sources and methods to document a curriculum for women and to understand how views about women’s social roles shaped this curriculum.

There is also much caution in the field about viewing the category “women” as a stable, unified concept (Alberti, 2002). On this issue I agree with Lerner that arguments grounded in the biological difference of women should be avoided, but that an understanding of “the historically grounded difference between the sexes” is very important for understanding women’s lives (Lerner, 1997, p. 209). I agree with Bennett
(2006) who argues that because the term “women” has practical significance for women’s lives, now and in the past, it is still an important category of historical analysis.

Scholars of women’s history note that there is still much work to be done in this field that is less than 40 years old and constantly challenged by dominant traditional interpretations that ignore issues of women and gender (Cott et al., 2003; Lerner, 2004; Scott, Evans, Cahn, & Faue, 1999a, 1999b). For example, Lerner (2004) suggests that “there are still many periods, regions, and groups that remain undocumented and uninterpreted” (p. 24). Even more specifically, Nancy Hewett (Cott et al., 2003) argues that women’s historians widely recognize the lack of attention they have given to racial, class, and regional difference in American women’s history. For this project, I find it interesting that she notes the neglect of “southern and western women” (Cott et al., 2003, p. 156).

This dissertation project makes a contribution to women’s history by adding to our knowledge about women’s curricular options in the western United States. As described in Chapter 2, this study specifically contributes to the literatures on the history of women’s education and the history of women’s colleges. In the end, my goal has been to work at the confluence of women’s history, education history, and curriculum history in order to more fully understand the curriculum offered to women at Colorado Women’s College and how this curriculum reflected the College’s views about the purpose of education for women.
Chapter Four: The Foundations of the Curriculum at Colorado Woman’s College,

1909-1920

*And men may not enter our college,*

*Except when they come out to call;*

*For this is a college for women,*

*No men in our classes at all.*

*C.W.C., C.W.C, oh, this is the college for me, for me*

*C.W.C., C.W.C, oh, this is the college for me.*

At the turn of the 20th century, when Colorado Woman’s College opened to students for the first time, “it was the minority of women who went to college,” and it was an era in which “neighbors still commiserated mothers whose daughters, going to college, would probably never marry” (Boas, 1935, p. 267), despite the evidence that most women married whether or not they were college educated. At the same time, women had made great in-roads into higher education at all levels, and they celebrated their success at gaining admission to both a wide range of women’s colleges and coeducational universities. For example, in 1908 (just one year before CWC opened), Bryn Mawr president M. Carey Thomas remarked proudly, “Now, women who have been to college are as plentiful as blackberries on summer hedges” (Thomas, 1908, p. 66). In fact, as Peril (2006) writes, “at the turn of the twentieth century, the college girl was an accepted if not always understood fixture in the American landscape” (p. 326).

---

1 Yearbook, *Odaroloc*, 1909-1910, p. 46, Colorado Women’s College Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Penrose Library, University of Denver, CO.
Women college students were especially plentiful in the American West in the early 1900s, where coeducation was common due to both “progressive ideologies and economic necessity” (Radke-Moss, 2008, p. 1). College girls in the West attended a large variety of schools, both public and private, and with varied institutional forms. The state of Colorado had a particularly diverse educational landscape when CWC opened in 1909, and in the following section I briefly review the history of higher education in Colorado in order to provide background for understanding CWC’s standing within its local and regional context. This discussion will be followed by a description and analysis of the foundational curriculum offered at CWC from 1909 to 1920, with differences indicated where sources allow between the CWC curriculum and that found at other local Colorado colleges, other women’s colleges in the West, and at the well-known eastern women’s colleges.

The Origins of Higher Education in Colorado

Even before Colorado gained official statehood in 1876, the citizens and leaders of the territorial region recognized the importance of education. They began to establish both public and private colleges out of a desire for civic self-respect, and also due to a necessity for advanced knowledge in a remote and isolated outpost of culture and civilization (McGiffert, 1964). “Where towns were organized, colleges followed” (McGiffert, 1964, p. 3), and by 1890 there were 11 institutions of higher education located in the most populated area of the state, following the eastern edge of the Rockies from Fort Collins to Colorado Springs. The earliest public institutions included the University of Colorado, which opened in 1877, Colorado State University, where classes

---

2 See Appendix A for an in-depth review of the literature on women and coeducation.
started in 1879, Colorado School of Mines, which opened in 1874, and Colorado State Teachers College (now University of Northern Colorado) in Greeley, which officially opened in 1890 (McGiffert, 1964). The first private colleges were fueled by religious and missionary zeal and denominational rivalries (McGiffert, 1964).

Carothers (1951) notes that CWC’s founder, Reverend Robert Cameron, was motivated to establish a college to represent the Baptist community. She writes, “Cameron saw that educational institutions were being built throughout the state by other church groups such as the Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians” (p. 290). These early private colleges included the University of Denver (1864), established by the Methodists, Congregational Colorado College (1874), Presbyterian affiliated Longmont College (1885) and Westminster University of Colorado (1907), and Roman Catholic Regis College (1884) (McGiffert, 1964). Thus, when CWC was originally founded in 1888, it was in the midst of this flurry of activity surrounding higher education in the state.

**Loretto Heights college.**

The only other women’s college in Colorado was Loretto Heights College, which has received little attention in the literature. Loretto Heights started its life as a Roman Catholic academy for girls in 1891, founded by the Sisters of Loretto (Casey & Fern, 1943; Jones, 1955). In 1918 Loretto added a college curriculum, spurred by the Catholic University of America’s admission of women, and the resulting “fresh impetus” given to higher education in the Catholic community (Casey & Fern, 1943, p. 142). In 1926 the North Central Association of Colleges accredited Loretto Heights as a four-year baccalaureate granting college. By 1941 the high school academy closed and Loretto
Heights continued on solely as a college for women (Casey & Fern, 1943). In fact, after CWC became a junior college in 1920, “Loretto Heights was the only fully accredited senior college for women” in Colorado (Jones, 1955, p. 388).

CWC never fully identified Loretto Heights as a competitor college, likely because Loretto enrolled only a very small number of non-Catholic students. For example, there were only seven non-Catholic women students in the decade from 1938-1948 (Jones, 1955, p. 418). In the early years of the college many of the students were themselves Lorettes (Sisters of Loretto) from Colorado and surrounding western states, who were taking advantage of the opportunity to earn a bachelor’s degree while teaching at the academy.

In its marketing and publicity, CWC most certainly ignored the presence of Loretto Heights, often noting that CWC was the only college for women in the Rocky Mountain region. For example, a CWC campus publication from 1933 stated, “Colorado Woman’s College is the only college of its kind in the fifteen Rocky Mountain states…an area of two million square miles.”\(^3\) At times the College gave brief recognition to Loretto Heights by adding that CWC was the only women’s college in the region “aside from the Parochial schools.”\(^4\) A 1928 publication noted that CWC was “the only institution of its

---

\(^3\) Campus Views: Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College, 1933, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 8-9, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, CO. (Hereafter cited as WHC, DPL). See also The College Girl and Her Money, 1928, p. 4, Colorado Historical Society, Stephen H. Hart Library, Denver, CO. (Hereafter cited as CHS). This theme is also found throughout the CWC College catalogs, yearbooks, and the College newspaper of the 1920s and 1930s.

\(^4\) The “Why,” 1928, p. 5, WHC, DPL.
kind except parochial schools between Kansas City and the Pacific Coast.”⁵ Despite this indifference, students at the two colleges did interact and compete against each other in sports such as basketball and field hockey,⁶ and in 1956 they joined together with other local colleges to create a private college consortium.⁷ Eventually, in 1988, Loretto Heights College merged with Regis University in Denver, bringing to Regis its successful programs in nursing, dance, and professional studies (Regis University, 2010).

**Distinctive traits of Colorado colleges and universities.**

In order to garner sufficient numbers of students, and to distinguish themselves from more established eastern colleges, the institutions of higher education in Colorado highlighted the region’s dry, mountainous, sunshine-filled, and recuperative climate, and appealed directly to families with daughters in ill-health (McGiffert, 1964). Rudolph (1977) suggests that promoters of higher education in Colorado went so far as to leave the impression “that a Colorado college was not a curriculum but a sanitarium” (p. 23). CWC was no different, and from its inception the College encouraged the enrollment of “narrow-chested and consumptively-inclined girls” from the “damp climate of the East.”⁸ In fact, the College boasted about the Colorado climate in almost every catalog throughout the life of the College: “The Healthfulness of the climate” and “the grandeur

---

⁵ *Bring Her to Denver*, 1928, p. 5, CHS.


⁸ *Souvenir of Corner-Stone Laying*, March 22, 1890, Box 252: History Chronological Files 1888-1900, DU Archives.
of the scenery” were noted in 1915.” The stimulating climate, clear atmosphere, and low humidity made “Denver an ideal place for health and vigor” in 1927, and in 1943, the College claimed that Denver had “the most healthful climate in the world.” As was mentioned in Chapter 2 (and is discussed in Appendix A), this emphasis on the healthfulness of the college atmosphere was even more important to CWC as a college for women, given the historical controversies over collegiate education and its supposed negative effects on women’s health (Lowe, 2003; Solomon, 1985).

Even considering their varied missions, aims, and student populations, the one aspect of education that all Colorado colleges shared in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a focus on practical learning that could be applied to everyday life. These were western colleges, shaped in some cases directly, and for others like CWC, more subtly, by the Morrill Land Grant Acts of the 19th century that provided government land for the creation of public colleges to provide training in agricultural and mechanical skills (McGiffert, 1964; Radke-Moss, 2008). In order to be responsive to rural, local communities, western colleges were forced to stress the utility of their courses of study. As a result, the classical curriculum was criticized harshly by “working farmers and hard-rock miners who saw no earthly use for the fripperies of liberal education” (McGiffert, 1964, p. 55). While the public colleges fell on the practical end of the curriculum spectrum, and the private colleges leaned more toward the liberal arts curriculum, “any

---

9 College catalog, *Year Book*, 1915-1916, p. 12, DU Archives.


system of higher education supported by a state like Colorado would have to emphasize the practical side of education if it were to survive” (Allen, Foster, Andrade, Mitterling, & Scamehorn, 1976, p. 30).

It was in this educational context that CWC opened as a private, Baptist college for women students. The remainder of this chapter will analyze the curriculum that CWC offered, which adapted over time to educate women for their multiple roles and their changing, complicated, and contested positions in society.

**The Founding Curriculum: 1909-1920**

The proper curriculum for women students had always been a subject of intense debate, but at the time of CWC’s opening in 1909, the discussion had reached a frenzied state (Chamberlain, 1988a). Women’s achievements in higher education had triggered a backlash against women students in both women’s colleges and coeducational facilities (Palmieri, 1987, 1995; Woody, 1929), and “outright hostility to women’s education reached its peak around the turn of the twentieth century” (Nash, 2005, p. 115). Leaders at coeducational universities made claims that women were “feminizing” their institutions by dominating courses in humanities, languages, and the emerging home economics departments. Eventually many colleges, including Stanford, Boston University, and Wesleyan, established enrollment limits for women (Nidiffer, 2000; Rosenberg, 1988; Solomon, 1985). Radke-Moss (2008) writes that “the effects of anti-coeducation fervor on western land-grant institutions…can be seen in the marked drop in their female enrollments from around 1900 to 1910” (p. 299). The race suicide

---

12 See Appendix A for a more in-depth discussion of the turn-of-the century backlash against women’s higher education.
arguments and fears about low marriage rates of women’s college graduates, discussed in
Chapter 2, largely fueled the backlash against the education of women in the nation’s
women’s colleges. In addition, critics blamed the oldest, eastern women’s colleges for
continuing to offer women the traditional liberal arts curriculum that was viewed by the
early 20th century as inappropriate to women’s traditionally domestic roles in society
(Palmieri, 1987, 1995; Solomon, 1985). One of the most well-known and vocal critics of
women’s education was G. Stanley Hall, President of Clark University, who believed that
“in an ideal society,…woman’s education should focus on motherhood and wifehood,
and seek in every way to magnify these functions” (Hall, 1904, pp. 610-611).

Also a factor in the turn-of-the-century debates over the most suitable curriculum
for women students was the large-scale progressive reform of American higher education
that had taken place throughout the last decades of the 19th century. Progressive educators
pushed for the curriculum in America’s colleges to become more practical and relevant to
everyday concerns and to offer students more choice in the form of electives and
vocational options in the curriculum (Lucas, 1994; Goodchild, 2008). Led by theorists
such as John Dewey, the progressive education movement grew out of the progressive
political movement and sought to make schools more responsive to students and a
democratic society at large. Some of the key elements on their reform agenda included
the introduction of student-centered education, cooperative learning, critical thinking,
practical and experiential pedagogy, and diversity in the curriculum to meet the needs of
all students (Kliebard, 2004). The term “progressive” education was often used
“synonymously with adjectives like ‘modern’ and ‘new’ to designate something other
than traditional practice” (Kliebard, 2004, pp. 189-190). It was a broad and sometimes
contradictory movement, but it was held together by disillusionment with the status quo and “antagonism to the traditional course of study” (Kliebard, 2004, p. 190).

“By 1910 the period of greatest change in the world of higher learning had taken place,” (Gruber, 1997, p. 211) and variety in the curriculum became the norm. The traditional liberal arts curriculum, vocational programs, domestic curricula based on home economics, and endless combinations of mixed and hybrid programs existed concurrently at institutions of higher education. For women’s colleges, this meant that “as was true of American higher education in general, there was no consensus among the women’s colleges as to what the undergraduate experience ought to be” (Thelin, 2004, p. 226). In general, it was true that the eastern women’s colleges continued to offer a traditional liberal arts curriculum focused on Latin, literature, math, science, and philosophy, while coeducational, land-grant universities of the West “put more emphasis on practical subjects and vocational preparation” (Chamberlain, 1988a, p. 9), which for women students meant home economics (Radke-Moss, 2008).

The curriculum first offered at Colorado Woman’s College reflected these debates and controversies surrounding the education of women and was unique for the region. The Baptist founders of the college and the first President, Jay Porter Treat, hoped to provide women students with a non-denominational “Christian education” that would educate them for their “peculiar family and social duties.”13 This curriculum stressed preparation for domestic life at all turns, which the first published course catalog from 1910-1911 illustrated:

13 College catalog, Bulletin: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1910-1911, p. 10, DU Archives. (Also available at WHC, DPL).
While the other relations of life are not ignored, the emphasis is placed upon the home and the home life—upon womanhood, wifehood and motherhood. Students who come to the institution are educated toward the home, and not away from it.\textsuperscript{14}

A year before the college opened, President Treat had also made it clear that students at CWC would purposefully and consciously not be educated for careers outside the home. In a 1908 \textit{Denver Times} newspaper article he stated:

\begin{quote}
We believe that the colleges of today have become extreme in their pursuit of the idea that every woman should be equipped to earn her own living, if necessary, and we are going back to the old idea that a woman’s first duty is in the home and to her family. We shall make paramount in our course …to teach our students how to be good housekeepers, good wives, and capable mothers, and we believe that we will do more for our girls and for the world than if we taught them to be stenographers, cashiers or bookkeepers.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

Treat emphasized that there was a “necessity for such training,” and that CWC was as “determined to give it as completely as other schools prepare women for competition with men.”\textsuperscript{16} The \textit{Denver Times} author suggested that this was a distinctive plan of education and wrote that “the college will be unique in that it will be devoted solely to the training of women for wives and mothers,” and in its avoidance of “any other subject taught to women who desire to compete with men in the world of business or in the professions.”\textsuperscript{17}

The rigid, domestic-oriented women’s college curriculum such as was first offered at CWC was indeed out of the norm for the Denver area. Here, the existing

---

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{The Denver Times}, December 29, 1908, reprinted in \textit{The Colorado Prospector}, vol. 9, no. 4, 1978, p. 3, Box Title: Bulletins and Pamphlets, DU Archives. (Also at Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Public Library, Boulder, CO.).

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
colleges offered coeducational, liberal arts and practical, vocational programs with a wide variety of elective choice in the curriculum (McGiffert, 1964). In fact, the University of Colorado had even modeled its curriculum on the distinguished elective system at the University of Michigan, indicating its commitment to student choice in the curriculum (Allen et al., 1976; McGiffert, 1964). Even where women were concentrated in domestic home economics programs in the coeducational land-grant schools of the West, they took classes oriented toward vocations such as teaching, dietetics, and social work (Apple, 1997; Nerad, 1999; Radke-Moss, 2008), which clearly CWC did not wish to encourage.

In contrast, CWC opened with a prescribed, largely liberal arts, yet domestically applied curriculum that allowed for no elective choice. Students could choose only whether to study for a bachelor of arts or bachelor of science degree, and non-degree courses were taught in music, art, and expression, or speech arts. The requirements for the two degrees were identical except that all students in the bachelor of arts course were required to take Latin each semester for three years, while students seeking science degrees replaced Latin with botany and biology in the freshman and sophomore years, and specialized home economics classes in household chemistry and dietetics in the junior year.\(^{18}\)

Indicating the overall domestic orientation of the curriculum, every student on campus was required to study home economics each semester for three years, which consisted of courses in cooking, sewing, sanitation, and household management. In the fourth year, these were supplemented with applied, domestic courses in “Home

decorating” and “Fundamentals of child life.”¹⁹ In addition to home economics, liberal arts courses in composition, literature, history, and modern languages dominated the curriculum. (Table 1 provides the complete list of required courses for the BA degree at the opening of the College). In many ways this curriculum combined the liberal arts tradition of the east-coast women’s colleges with the practical, home economics-oriented curriculum offered to women in the western coeducational colleges—all combined with an avowed dedication to domestic life for its students.

The home economics requirement at CWC.

The fact that CWC offered home economics courses, as a women’s college, set it apart from the eastern women’s colleges, where home economics was consciously rejected (Antler, 1982; Chamberlain, 1988b; Goodsell, 1923; Nerad, 1999; Newcomer, 1959; Stage, 1997). Bryn Mawr, in particular, protested the intrusion of home economics into the liberal arts curriculum, as president M. Carey Thomas “thought home economics was too sex stereotyped to fit in a curriculum designed to replicate the rigors of the male Ivy League colleges” (Stage, 1997, p. 7). Expressing her distaste for home economics and other applied fields of study, Thomas (1908) wrote:

Most of the universities of the west and many eastern universities…are boring thru their academic college course at a hundred places with professional courses. (p. 76)

I am in consequence astounded to see the efforts which have been made within the past few years…to persuade…those in charge of women’s education to riddle the college curriculum of women with hygiene and sanitary drainage and domestic science and child-study, and all the rest of the so-called practical studies. (p. 77)

¹⁹ Ibid., 12-13, 20-21, 23-26, DU Archives.
Table 1

*Bachelor of Arts Degree, Curriculum Required for Graduation, 1910-1911*\(^{20}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>College Algebra (4); Latin (4); Composition and Rhetoric (4); Advanced Physiology, Hygiene and Sanitation (3); Bible Study (2); Home Economics (3); Physical Training.</td>
<td>Trigonometry (4); Latin (4); Composition and Rhetoric (4); Advanced Physiology, Hygiene and Sanitation (3); Bible Study (2); Home Economics (3); Physical Training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Latin (4); English, Literary Criticism (3); English History (4); German or French (4); Bible Study (2); Home Economics (3); Physical Training.</td>
<td>Latin (4); American History (4); English, American Literature (3); German or French (4); Bible Study (2); Home Economics (3); Physical Training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Latin (2); German or French (4); English (2); Political Economy and Bible Economics (3); History, Political History of Modern Europe (3); Psychology and Psychic Culture (4); Home Economics (2); Physical Training.</td>
<td>Latin (2); German or French (4); English, Greek Drama (2); Sociology (3); French History (3); Psychology and Psychic Culture (4); Home Economics (2); Physical Training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Fundamentals of Child Life and Practical Pedagogy (4); Logic (4); German or French and History of German or French Literature (4); Educational Ideals and History of Education (4); History and Interpretation of Art (2); Physical Training.</td>
<td>Ethics (3); Christian Evidences (4); Introduction to Philosophy (4); Home Decorating (1); Rational Living (2); Christian Missions and Ethnic Religions (3); Physical Training.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers in parentheses represent semester hours required.

---

While Bryn Mawr and the other eastern women’s colleges resisted home economics, other lesser-known women’s colleges, particularly those in the West and South, did not. For example, another western women’s college, Mills College in California, did offer home economics courses to students in the early 20th century. Mills actually increased and strengthened these courses in 1912, as it became aware of increased competition from the numerous coeducational schools throughout California (Keep, 1931), which suggests that western women’s colleges were forced to offer a curriculum at least partly in line with that of the western coeducational institutions.

Southern women’s colleges integrated home economics into the liberal arts curriculum as well, as a way of providing vocational opportunities and domestic education to a wide range of women and as a statement of “discontent with the curriculum of the woman’s college as it had developed” (Young, 1932, p. 207). Therefore, the curriculum at CWC represented a move away from the strictly traditional liberal arts curriculum of the eastern women’s colleges, and solidarity with the newer, early 20th century attempts by western and southern women’s colleges to respond to their local constituencies by merging domestic and liberal arts traditions. The rhetoric of the early CWC college catalogs and the statements of President Treat, I would argue, also reflect CWC’s reaction to the debates over the purpose of women education in the early 20th century. CWC would offer a traditional curriculum, with graduation requirements for the bachelor’s degree in Latin, modern languages, history, mathematics, and the like, and also orient students toward domestic life with an emphasis on home economics.21

21 College catalog, Bulletin: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1910-1911, pp. 12-13, DU Archives.
As a new women’s college establishing itself in the heightened atmosphere of the turn-of-the-century, CWC was not alone. Wheaton College in Massachusetts also adopted a collegiate curriculum at this time and took pains to distinguish itself from the battered, and endlessly critiqued Seven Sister colleges. A New York Times article in 1912 stated that Wheaton College would be “like Wellesley and Smith and Vassar—only different” (“Teach girls home-making,” 1912, p. 10). Their plan, like CWC’s, they explained, was to “fit young women as home-makers, rather than to equip them for professional pursuits, as most of the colleges do” (“Teach girls home-making,” 1912, p. 10). Again, this illustrates the early 20th century trend toward domestic education for women, and while there most certainly was an audience for this education, one can only imagine the pressures that educators of women felt to conform to societal trends or else face harsh critique in an era of backlash.

**An education not for their brothers.**

Reflecting race suicide arguments and gendered ideas regarding the ideal curriculum for women, the “Aims of the College” section found in the first decade of College catalogs stated that “the welfare of society and the perpetuity of the race, make it certain that most of the educated women should find their places in the normal relations of the family.”22 Leaders of the College believed that education for women needed to revolve around this fundamental fact of women’s lives or else risk doing violence to the “laws of nature, which are the laws of God.”23 These statements illustrate the College’s

---

22 See College catalogs, 1910-1924. For specific example, see Bulletin: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1910-1911, p. 10, DU Archives.

23 Ibid.
religious orientation and in part, its justifications for offering a domestic-oriented, separate education for women.

CWC leaders worked hard to distinguish their curriculum from other coeducational courses of study in the region by suggesting that due to “social, physiological and psychological reasons the best courses of study for young women, particularly in the higher institutions, are not those which should be, and are, framed for their brothers.”24 Yet, despite this rhetoric, in its overall make-up, the curriculum at CWC was never as exclusively domestic as collegiate leaders expressed, given its substantial requirements in traditional academic disciplines. The College often specifically encouraged and required vocational applications of the curricula, which seemed to contradict its stated aims and purposes as a college. As an example, the College required all students studying piano and expression to take courses in teaching methods, and Sunday school teaching was a requirement for all students seeking the bachelor’s degree by 1915.25 All home economics students were given “practice in demonstrating cookery and giving lectures along different lines of Home Economics,” clearly preparing students for practical uses of their degrees beyond the scope of wife and motherhood.26 Additionally, the College specifically promoted the “Public School Music” and “Public School Drawing” programs as offering young women distinct career paths. The 1916

24 Ibid., 11.

25 College catalog, Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1913-1914, p. 38; College catalog, Year Book: 1914-1915, p. 28; College catalog, Year Book: 1915-1916, p. 17, DU Archives.

26 College catalog, Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1913-1914, p. 30, DU Archives.
catalog stated, for instance, “There is a crying need in America for competent men and women to fill positions as Supervisors of Music in the Public Schools.” Only seven years into the life of the College, this encouragement of students to “compete” for careers with men was in direct opposition to President Treat’s original mission and purpose.

Another career possibility suggested to students through the curriculum was that of professional church organist. After a new Kimball pipe organ was installed in the College auditorium during the 1917-1918 school year, CWC began to offer the rare opportunity for instruction on the instrument. The College was quick to note that within the first year, many students were already “holding enviable church positions.” Surely this was a message to enrolled and potential students that CWC certificates and degrees could be useful beyond the domestic realm of home and family life.

**The development of the curriculum.**

In these foundational years CWC unveiled its curriculum slowly, adding new programs as qualified students entered. In the first year of operation only the freshman and sophomore curriculum was offered. The junior year was added in 1910, and by the fall semester in 1911, the complete four years were finally in place. The first major addition to the course offerings came in 1911, when the College offered a “special” two-

---

27 College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year*, 1915-1916, p. 39, DU Archives.

28 College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year*, 1918-1919, p. 12, 36 (quote), DU Archives.

29 College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year*, 1911-1912, p. 11, DU Archives. Also available at WHC, DPL.
year program in home economics leading to an associate in domestic economy degree.\textsuperscript{30} The bachelor of music degree was formalized during the 1913-1914 school year, and the College added a department of education in 1915 “to give special preparation to those who aspire to teach.”\textsuperscript{31} This year also saw the bachelor of expression degree outlined. A second two-year “special” (meaning non-baccalaureate) program was added in physical education in 1916.\textsuperscript{32} By the 1917-1918 school year, CWC had added interior decoration to its department of art, which first specialized in ceramics decoration.\textsuperscript{33} Following the trend throughout higher education, CWC slowly phased out its original requirements in Latin, and by the end of the first decade, only the freshman year was still offered. As a balance, Spanish was added to French as a modern language taught in 1919.\textsuperscript{34}

The College catalogs indicate that throughout these early years CWC offered various two and three-year teaching certificates and diplomas in areas such as music (including piano, pipe organ, violin, and voice), art, and expression. These programs required students to take a minimum number of academic courses in addition to the more

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 29.

\textsuperscript{31} College catalog, \textit{Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year}, 1913-1914, p. 38; College catalog, \textit{Year Book}: 1915-1916, p. 20, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{32} College catalog, \textit{Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year}, 1916-1917, p. 41, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{33} College catalog, \textit{Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year}, 1917-1918, p. 48, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{34} College catalog, \textit{Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year}, 1919-1920, pp. 48-49, DU Archives.
artistic courses. For the most part, all students taking any classes at all at the College were also required to take courses in English composition and physical education.\textsuperscript{35}

The first movement away from a fully prescribed baccalaureate program of study, and toward a system based on academic majors and free electives, took place during the 1919-1920 school year.\textsuperscript{36} Yet, this newly adopted system would be short-lived, as within the year, CWC quickly transitioned to a two-year junior college curriculum.

Before this move to junior college status, the first major reduction in the CWC curriculum took place when the College eliminated the bachelor of science degree beginning with the 1918-1919 school year. This was likely due to the fact that only 11 BS degrees had been conferred up to that point, the most recent having been granted in 1917.\textsuperscript{37}

**Pedagogy at CWC.**

Throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, recitation, or the act of calling upon students to “recite” what they had memorized or learned in their lessons had been the most common form of classroom pedagogy. By the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the recitation method was still in practice, although it was losing ground to lecture and discussion formats that were made popular in the large research universities, where students took notes from faculty experts.

\textsuperscript{35} See for example, College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year*, 1917-1918, p. 40, 50; College catalog, *Year Book*: 1914-1915, p. 12, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{36} College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year*, 1919-1920, p. 25, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{37} College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year*, 1918-1919, p. 17, DU Archives; Victor Cornelison, *Historical Material on CWC When a 4-Year College and Reasons for Changing to Junior College in 1920*, 1959, p. 6, Box 255: History Chronological Files 1917-1926, DU Archives.
and specialists (Lucas, 1994, p. 128; Goodchild, 2008). Over time, even as the use of the recitation style in the classroom faded, the term “recitation” took on the more general meaning of indicating a duration of time spent in the classroom. For example, each 50-minute class session at CWC was referred to as a “recitation period.”

At CWC the traditional recitation method was most commonly used in language classes, where students were “drill[ed] in Grammar, Pronunciation, and Conversation.” Otherwise, lectures dominated the liberal arts, with lab sessions typical in home economics and the sciences. Students were required to write essays for most courses and professors assigned “readings from original documents” in history classes. Students were expected to prepare for debates in English classes, and discussion of readings was part of the typical classroom environment. The assigned homework must have seemed burdensome at times, as students complained about their Latin work and dreamed of nasty tricks to play on their teacher in the 1915 College yearbook.

Field work and practical activities were teaching strategies in many disciplines, and this method of teaching moved students out of the classroom and into their communities to apply their learning. The course catalogs describe how biology students conducted “field work in the city parks, on the Capitol grounds and elsewhere,” and how botany students headed outdoors to study “the flowering plants found on the College

---

38 College catalog, Bulletin: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1910-1911, p. 12; College catalog, Year Book: 1915-1916, p. 17, DU Archives.

39 College catalog, Bulletin: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1910-1911, p. 17, DU Archives.

40 Ibid., 15.

41 Yearbook, Odaroloc, 1915, p. 68, DU Archives.
Campus and vicinity.”  

Students of home economics brought their studies out of the classroom and laboratory and applied them in real-life settings. As an example, for the first several years at the College, all students were required in their home economics courses to “serve a breakfast and luncheon and give a demonstration before members of the class and faculty.” It was also expected “that desserts and other dishes be prepared and served occasionally in the dining room…under supervision of instructor.”

In the same vein, “learn by doing” was the motto of the expression department, and all students regularly performed dramatic and interpretive readings before campus audiences. Similarly, music students were required to give frequent recitals to gain practice performing in public. The observation of children and school visits were a regular part of classes in child life, and students in the physical education degree program observed at Denver playgrounds and received “practice in conducting classes and coaching athletics” in addition to “teaching games and directing playground activities.”

Students in the house decoration course submitted detailed home design plans and even took excursions into local Denver shops in order to collect materials for their assignments. Reflecting the 20th century progressive education trend toward greater

---


43 See for example, College catalog, *Bulletin: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year*, 1910-1911, p. 24, DU Archives.

44 Ibid., 39; College catalog, *Year Book*: 1915-1916, p. 41, DU Archives.


46 College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year*, 1917-1918, p. 35, DU Archives.
critical thinking in the classroom, the new astronomy course offered in 1914 was said to emphasize “thinking, rather than memorizing” as an overall course theme.\footnote{College catalog, Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1914-1915, p. 16, DU Archives.}

Probably the most practical and field-oriented of all of the curricula included classes in supervised practice teaching, which were required for students in home economics and for those who wished to prepare for teaching careers in other disciplines. The 1916-1917 course catalog described that practice teaching in home economics was “done in preparatory, settlement, mission and night school classes.” Interaction with these types of community institutions such as schools, playgrounds, missions, and settlement houses would have exposed students to a wide variety of social issues to which their knowledge could be applied and also created much-needed publicity for the newly emerging college.

It appears that these pedagogical strategies that were popular at CWC were also typical at the eastern women’s colleges, as the literature indicates that lectures, labs, field work, and the use of recitation in language classes was standard there (Robinson, 1918, pp. 110-111). In addition, an advice manual for college freshman girls, written in 1914, reminded students of the importance of good note taking for success in college lectures, indicating the status of the lecture in higher education at the time. The author wrote, “You live pen in hand during your four years in college. You acquire the useful art of note-taking” (Brown, 1914, p. 52). The author encouraged women students to develop the

\footnote{College catalog, Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1916-1917, p. 32, DU Archives.}
skillful art of proper note-taking, as only then could they “capture the thought and much of the language of a lecturer in full flight” (Brown, 1914, pp. 53-54). One can certainly imagine the CWC students heeding this advice as they made their way through daily class lectures.

**Curriculum comparisons with other women’s colleges.**

A research report published in 1918 summarized the curricula offered during the 1915-1916 academic year at five of the Seven Sister women’s colleges, including Vassar, Wellesley, Radcliffe, Barnard, and Mount Holyoke (Robinson, 1918). This information, then, allows direct comparisons to be made between the curriculum at CWC and the curricula of selected eastern women’s colleges. The most notable difference between the curriculum at CWC and that of the eastern colleges was that the eastern colleges had fewer prescribed courses and allowed much more elective choice, while CWC still outlined a four-year curriculum to be completed by all students seeking the bachelor’s degree, with minimal choice allowed among classes. This is likely due to the fact that CWC had small enrollments and could not afford to hire the faculty required to offer additional elective coursework.

As older, well-established colleges, the curricular offerings at the eastern colleges were both broader and deeper than those at CWC (Robinson, 1918). Yet, the general requirements for graduation were similar at CWC and the eastern colleges in 1915-1916. For example, the list of required courses shared by all of the eastern colleges for the bachelor of arts degree included “English composition, mathematics, Latin or Greek, German or French, philosophy” (Robinson, 1918, p. 62). CWC also required each of these subjects for the BA degree, including four years of English, two years of
mathematics, three years of Latin, and one year of philosophy. Wellesley and Mount Holyoke also required Bible courses, which CWC also prescribed for one year. Courses offered at the eastern colleges, which did not appear on the records for CWC, included anthropology, archeology, Greek, Italian, Spanish, and physics (Robinson, 1918, p. 58). The only coursework required for the bachelor of arts degree at CWC that was not offered at any of the five eastern colleges studied were courses in home economics and child life. This is not surprising, given the well-known aversion to domestic courses at the eastern women’s colleges.

A similar study of the curricula of women’s colleges, published in 1919, summarized and described the course offerings at six eastern and southern women’s colleges during the 1917-1918 school year (Dealey, 1919). The included colleges were Mount Holyoke, Wheaton, and Women’s College at Brown University—found in the northeast—and Goucher College, Women’s College of Delaware, and Randolph-Macon Woman’s College, found in the mid-Atlantic and south.

Again, the major difference between CWC and this selection of women’s colleges is that CWC offered a fully prescribed curriculum for the bachelor of arts degree, while the other colleges allowed for a set of requirements accompanied by electives (Dealey, 1919, p. 294). It was typical at these colleges for only half of the overall semester hours to be prescribed. Most required an average of 120 hours for graduation (Dealey, 1919),

---

49 College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1915-1916*, p. 17, DU Archives.

50 Ibid.
compared with 159 hours at CWC.\textsuperscript{51} The courses required for graduation by all six of the colleges in Dealey’s study included English composition and literature, modern languages, history, and science, all of which were also required for graduation by CWC at this time.\textsuperscript{52} Other courses that were required for graduation by at least one of the six colleges in the study were biblical literature, classical languages, history of art, mathematics, social science, home economics, philosophy, psychology, and education (Dealey, 1919, p. 294). Among these courses, those that were most commonly required across colleges included classical languages, as four out of the six colleges required either Latin or Greek. Biblical literature and mathematics were also required by four out of six colleges, yet history of art and home economics were both required only at Wheaton College.

These comparisons indicate that students in the bachelor of arts program at CWC received a thorough and rigorous liberal arts education, as they were required to take multiple courses in every subject required by at least one of the six colleges in the Dealey study. Table 2 illustrates the semester hour comparisons in each of these subjects. It is clear that CWC required more coursework for graduation in every academic subject, with the exception of science. This is likely due to the fact that CWC was still offering the bachelor of science degree in 1917-1918, so students interested in science could specialize in that degree program.\textsuperscript{53} There was no mention of a similar degree being offered at any of the six colleges studied, and the literature indicates that the bachelor of

\textsuperscript{51} College catalog, \textit{Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year}, 1917-1918, pp. 18-19, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 19.
Table 2

*Bachelor of Arts Degree, Number of Semester Hours Required for Graduation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mount Holyoke</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheaton</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s College, B.U.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randolph-Macon</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goucher</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s College, Delaware</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colorado Woman’s College</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54 Adapted from Dealey (1919, p. 294). College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1917-1918*, pp. 18-19, DU Archives.
science degree was fading in popularity at the women’s colleges in the early 20th century (Robinson, 1918, p. 50).

**Physical education curriculum at CWC.**

One course that was required for graduation at CWC throughout the era from 1909-1920, that was not mentioned in the comparative studies above, was physical education. Women’s colleges were known for pioneering required coursework in physical education, and for paying close attention to the health of students, in order to protect themselves against complaints that education made women weak, unhealthy, and infertile (Baker, 1976; Newcomer, 1959, p. 101). It is likely that physical education courses were required at the many women’s colleges discussed in these comparative studies, and yet, students did not receive actual credit for them. This was the case at CWC, as all students on campus took physical education, but these courses did not count toward graduation.

An important aim of CWC from the very start was to protect the health and well-being of all students. The first course catalog noted that “careful attention” would be given “to the health and physical development of the students,” and President Treat reiterated frequently that CWC was a place where “health and morals” would be “safeguarded.” Physical examinations were given to all incoming students and the college physician prescribed appropriate exercises. Parents were sent regular reports about their student’s progress, and the students themselves were required to submit

---


56 See for example, Yearbook, *Odaroloc*, 1916-1917, vol. 8, p. 93, DU Archives.
weekly updates on their physical training.\textsuperscript{57} Each student also received a vocal diagnosis, and vocal study was recommended to correct “physical defects, such as undeveloped breathing, stooping posture” and “hollow chest.”\textsuperscript{58} Throughout most of this era, CWC students donned middy blouses and bloomers\textsuperscript{59} and took “two periods of general gymnastics exercises per week,” unless they had a physician’s exemption.\textsuperscript{60} These classes included “marching tactics, free movements, mat exercises, use of wands, Indian clubs, games and rhythmic exercises.”\textsuperscript{61} The required exercises were considered “corrective” and were meant to assist students with “gracefulness and self control.”\textsuperscript{62} In addition to these gymnastics sessions, students also had opportunities to participate in “tennis, basket ball, archery and fencing.”\textsuperscript{63} After 1916, with the completion of the addition to the main College building, (later called Treat Hall), students had access to a large, indoor gymnasium.\textsuperscript{64} All students living in the dorms (which were all but local girls living at home with their parents) were required to “take either morning walks or out

\begin{itemize}
\item[57] College catalog, \textit{Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year}, 1911-1912, p. 25, DU Archives.
\item[58] College catalog, \textit{Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year}, 1911-1912, p. 40, DU Archives.
\item[60] College catalog, \textit{Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year}, 1917-1918, p. 50, DU Archives.
\item[61] Ibid.
\item[62] Ibid., 52.
\item[63] Ibid., 50.
\item[64] Ibid., 12.
\end{itemize}
of doors exercise” and were expected to get exercise in the gymnasium when the weather was bad, in addition to their required gymnastics classes.\textsuperscript{65}

**World War I and its impact on the CWC curriculum.**

The entrance of the U.S. into the Great War in 1917 greatly influenced college campuses across the country, leading to disruptions of classes and the reorganization of resources toward the War effort (Lucas, 1994). At the eastern women’s colleges the War prompted the short-term institution of practical, vocational courses in subjects such as “typing, dietetics, telegraphy, first aid and bookkeeping, so that women might fill essential jobs left vacant by soldiers” (Kendall, 1976, p. 152). In addition, the colleges organized their campuses to provide war-related training. As an example, many “college women served as nurses, with women from around the country attending the Vassar Training Camp for nurses in 1918” (Radke-Moss, 2008, p. 242).

World War I also led to curricular change at west-coast Mills College. There, they added “non-credit courses in knitting, sewing, cooking, current history, and Red Cross techniques” (Hedley, 1961, p. 109). Home economics classes emphasized “food conservation and substitution” (Keep, 1931, p. 118), and home economics students gave community lectures on the preparation of “‘war breads’ and meat substitutes” (Hedley, 1961, p. 109). Mills also encouraged students to take courses in public health and altered its curriculum to enable “students to secure within five years a bachelor’s degree and a certificate as a graduate nurse” (Keep, 1931, p. 118). Through their physical education department they trained students for positions as reconstruction aides and physiotherapists, as recommended and outlined by the Surgeon General’s office. Other

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 52.
course offerings influenced by the War included the replacement of general sociology classes with a course on “War and Social Welfare” (Keep, 1931, p. 118).

McGiffert (1964) argues that Colorado colleges did not feel the impact of World War I as greatly as eastern and midwestern schools, where campus enrollments were greatly reduced by quick enlistment. Yet, he suggests that wartime activities still dominated campus life and had a substantial impact on the curriculum. For women students at the University of Denver and the Gunnison Normal School, participation in Red Cross and Y.W.C.A. activities was mandatory, and “at Boulder and elsewhere special courses in democratic ideals and institutions were offered” (McGiffert, 1964, p. 120). Courses such as “telegraphy, automobile mechanics, radio technology, aeronautics” and “military medicine” were also instituted throughout the state, but had “for the most part disappeared from the catalogs by 1920” (McGiffert, 1964, p. 122).

In comparison to the impact that World War I had on the campuses just discussed, the consequences for CWC were relatively minor. Perhaps the most significant curricular change brought by the War was the elimination of German from the languages department in 1917. German had been offered since the opening of the College in 1909, yet it disappeared from the college catalog without comment or explanation in 1917 and did not return to the curriculum until 1929. Colorado state law prohibited secondary school instruction in the German language during the War (McGiffert, 1964), and while the teaching of German was not outlawed at the college level, campuses certainly felt pressure to silence their German instructors and programs. Patriotic leagues emerged on

---

66 College catalog, Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1917-1918, p. 18, 26; College catalog, Twenty-Second Annual Catalog, April, 1929, vol. 22, no. 2, p. 30, DU Archives.
many campuses to give support to the War effort and to organize home-front activities, and a University of Denver professor of German, Martha Crook, was removed by DU for refusing to join the campus Patriotic League (McGiffert, 1964, p. 121). Similar removals occurred at Colorado College, and “No courses in German were taught at the Gunnison Normal School from 1917 to 1921, or at the University of Denver from 1918 to 1921” (McGiffert, 1964, p. 122). Colorado College eliminated German in 1920, and the University of Colorado voted narrowly to keep its program, although two faculty members were expelled in 1917 for “what the president called ‘pro-German sympathies’” (McGiffert, 1964, p. 121). While there is no indication that German classes were discontinued at the eastern women’s colleges, Young (1932) notes that Sophie Newcomb, the women’s college at Tulane, in Louisiana, did put an end to German language instruction in 1918, only to reinstate the subject in 1922 (p. 81). At CWC, Ethel Barnes, who had taught Latin, French, and German since 1914, did not remain on campus after the College eliminated German from the curriculum beginning with the 1917-1918 academic year. While it cannot be determined if Professor Barnes left freely or if the College forced her removal, her absence from the College yearbooks and course bulletins in the years following the War appears to be consistent with the plight of other professors of German at Colorado colleges and universities.

Aside from the elimination of German from the curriculum, the War presented itself at CWC in many ways. As early as 1914 students had attended a lecture and

---

discussion on “The Causes of the European War,” and by 1917 the students were actively engaged in a wide variety of war-related activities. After a chapel lecture on the Red Cross by the wife of an Army General, there was so much student interest that the College organized a first aid class, and by 1918 a “Gauze Room” had been set-up so that students could perform their Red Cross activities in the “evenings and spare time during the day.” CWC students also participated in an essay contest on the topic of wartime conservation, sponsored by the W.C.T.U., and were awarded first and second place in the college division. War-related topics filled the editorial columns of the campus newspaper, the Colo-Wo-Co, and reflected student concerns about their role in the War effort. For example, the Editress-in-Chief, wrote in 1917:

We who are at home can do our part, too. We can be a little more economical, a little more industrious, a little more unselfish than we have ever been before. We can think more seriously and apply ourselves more conscientiously; and we can pray with all our hearts for a just and atoning Peace.

Students noted in the yearbook of 1918-1919 that their extracurricular organizations and activities “had suffered from the interruptions of the school year,” and no evidence exists that students produced a college yearbook for the 1917-1918 year, indicating that perhaps there were too many interruptions to allow for its publication, or it did not seem appropriate. It appears that both the War and the influenza epidemic of

69 Student newspaper, *Colo-Wo-Co*, June, 1917, DU Archives.
70 Student newspaper, “News,” *Colo-Wo-Co*, January 26, 1918, DU Archives.
1918, which created the need for a campus quarantine, greatly disrupted many of their routines.\textsuperscript{73} In fact, a student of home economics at the College, Amy Elizabeth Woodard, died of influenza in February of 1919, sending waves of grief across the campus and bringing the fears of war and disease close to home.\textsuperscript{74} Despite the gravity of the epidemic, the students did find lighthearted ways to express their frustration with the quarantine, as seen in this poem in the \textit{Colo-Wo-Co}:

\begin{quote}
There are germs we drink in water,
There are germs we drink in tea,
There are germs for every mother’s daughter,
But there’s just one germ alone for me.
There are germs which cause typhoid fever,
There are germs which cause smallpox, too,
But the germ which locked us on the campus
Is the germ which they call the “flu.”\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

When the War was finally over, CWC students celebrated and filled their campus newspaper with notes of joy and thankfulness, as illustrated by the following excerpts:

\begin{quote}
November 11
I am really too excited to write tonight. The news is really true—the men have stopped fighting! There was no school, so about thirty of us girls went downtown in machines. I never heard of a town going wild, but Denver certainly did today. Such a noise! I really believe you could have heard it in Germany.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{75} Student newspaper, \textit{Colo-Wo-Co}, “College News,” December, 1918, p. 9, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
November 12
I am a little calmer now, and am beginning to realize what a wonderful event took place yesterday....We certainly have much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving.\textsuperscript{77}

In the end, the greatest lesson of World War I for CWC students was that the War provided a realization that women’s contributions to society were necessary and valuable, and that there were many professional opportunities for women that had been highlighted by wartime activities. A student essay in the newspaper, titled, “The Responsibility of the College Student,” expressed this sentiment at the end of the War: “Never before has as great a responsibility rested upon the shoulders of the woman student as there does today.”\textsuperscript{78} Even advertisements in their yearbooks spoke to them about their newfound responsibilities as women in a time of war. Figure 1 displays an advertisement for business courses at another local college. (CWC did not yet offer a business curriculum). It illustrates that CWC students were receiving the message that the War was creating a moment of professional opportunity for them.\textsuperscript{79} Yet, as discussed, education for professional life was not promoted by official college rhetoric in this era.

\textbf{Figure 1.} Advertisement appearing in the College yearbook, \textit{Odaroloc}, 1916-1917.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{78} Student newspaper, \textit{Colo-Wo-Co}, December, 1918, p. 6, DU Archives.

The students most definitely came to understand that home economics could provide a career path in the postwar world. Mary Williams, a graduating student in home economics, editorialized about the importance of her field, (and especially the specialty sub-field of dietetics which all CWC students in the department studied) in the College yearbook:

Dietetics, which we are accustomed to associate only with hospitals, has opened a large field of possibilities. During the great war the government has realized its value and placed a dietician in every institution where the health and maximum efficiency of the people concerned was of great importance. The artistic girl can enter the work of costuming, designing, millinery or decorating, the foundation of each of which has been laid at C.W.C. Social welfare, the new profession, opens vast fields for the young woman trained in practical home management. In fact, every woman who possesses this training is in great demand.80

CWC students in the music department also recognized new potential for careers for themselves in the musical field as an outgrowth of the War. They identified the special role that music played in sparking military and civic morale during the War, and understood that the postwar moment could be parlayed into the continued support of community music. Mary Dobbs, a graduating senior, expressed the following sentiments regarding her hopes for the future of music in the postwar era:

One of the benefits which must be reckoned when the final balance sheet is drawn for the great war is that music was permitted to serve as never before, and that public mind is so altered upon the importance of music that only the pathetically ignorant will hereafter class music with the non-essentials….Music has been found to be of immeasurable value in keeping up the spirits of the soldiers and in promoting morale….Music has come out of the war spiritualized and ennobled as a great human need. Our war time experience with music has made us feel its nearness to our hearts, and as a nation and as individual communities we have given it recognition in a way that even the most hopeful had never before thought possible….The musician’s service is a public one….Those who have chosen

80 Yearbook, Colo-Wo-Co, 1919, vol. 9, p. 58, DU Archives.
music as the means through which they may serve mankind must realize what this moment means and should grasp the vastness of this opportunity now.  

As these examples illustrate, CWC students were considering their futures by the end of the War and could imagine ways to use the CWC curriculum to chart a place for themselves as women in postwar society. As Kendall (1976) found was the case at the eastern women’s colleges, the War provided an education in itself. In essence, “the war had provided an abrupt exposure to a world that the cloistered campuses had had kept at bay” (p. 152).

**Student enrollment and course preferences, 1909-1920.**

CWC opened with a class of 24 college students and 32 preparatory students in 1909. The college enrollment peaked at 69 students during the 1913-1914 academic year and fell to 31 students by the end of the 1919-1920 school term. The four-year preparatory, or high school program, was popular, and throughout this period of 1909-1920 there were almost always more preparatory students enrolled at CWC than students taking the collegiate curriculum.  

Newcomer (1959) suggests that most of the eastern women’s colleges had also allowed for preparatory programs during their foundational years, but that these programs were slowly eliminated over time to strengthen the academic rigor of the colleges. While the College administration wished to eliminate the preparatory program, or at least move it off the campus, this was not financially feasible.

---


82 Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 25, 1939, p. 21, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives.
at CWC until 1936. Figure 2 summarizes the enrollment at CWC from 1909 to 1920. The combined preparatory and college enrollment was fewer than 200 students per year throughout this era, including the transient, “special” students who took occasional classes and never officially enrolled in a degree program. By comparison, there were roughly 300 women college students attending the University of Colorado at the time of CWC’s entrance onto the college scene—so many that a Dean of Women was hired to oversee the activities of the growing numbers of “coeds” (Westermeier, 1976, p. 31; Davis, 1965). By 1925, there were close to 1,000 women students attending CU, illustrating the vast difference in student numbers between a small, private, religious college and a large, coeducational university in Colorado (Westermeier, 1976).

The most popular degree program by far during this first decade at the College was the two-year course in home economics, leading to the associate in domestic economy degree (A.D.E.). As Table 3 (p. 125) illustrates, CWC granted a total of 148 degrees from 1909 to 1920, and of these 106 were the A.D.E. degree, representing 72% of all degrees awarded. Forty-two bachelor’s degrees were granted, representing 28% of the total, with the bachelor of music being the most popular, followed by the bachelor of science and the bachelor of arts. The home economics degree may have been the most appealing to students because it offered such a wide diversity in coursework. While it was fully prescribed, like the bachelor’s degrees, students had the opportunity to take

---

83 Victor Cornelison, Historical Material on CWC When a 4-Year College and Reasons for Changing to Junior College in 1920, 1959, p. 7, Box 255: History Chronological Files 1917-1926; College catalog, Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College, 1936-1937, vol. 28, no. 4, DU Archives.

84 Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 25, 1939, p. 21, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives.
Figure 2. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1909-1920

---

85 Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 25, 1939, p. 21, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives. Total enrollment figures include “special” non-degree students.
**Table 3**

*Degrees Granted at Colorado Woman’s College, 1909-1920*<sup>86</sup>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th># Granted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>(No degrees awarded)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>(No degrees awarded)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Associate in Domestic Economy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Associate in Domestic Economy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Literature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Associate in Domestic Economy</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Associate in Domestic Economy</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Music</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Associate in Domestic Economy</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Music</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Associate in Domestic Economy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Expression</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Associate in Domestic Economy</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Music</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Expression</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Associate in Domestic Economy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Music</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Associate in Domestic Economy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Music</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Expression</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Associate in Domestic Economy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associate in Arts</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Music</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total degrees awarded, 1909-1920</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>86</sup> Compiled from CWC course catalogs, 1912-1921, DU Archives.  
125
courses in everything from cooking, sewing, millinery, and textiles, to household and
food chemistry, bacteriology, psychology, dietetics, sanitation, and home nursing.
Classes in household management, home decoration, child life, and teaching methods
rounded out the curriculum.⁸⁷ Students also had access to a wide range of reading
materials related to home economics, as the largest collection of reference books in the
College library were books on home economics topics. Pleasure reading included
magazines such as *The House Beautiful, Boston Cooking School Magazine, Ladies’
Home Journal, Good Housekeeping, Literary Digest, and The Journal of Home
Economics*, which were available in the library “for use of Home Economic Students.”⁸⁸

It is likely that home economics was also popular because it provided students
with an education that combined preparation for domestic life and motherhood, while
also leaving open the possibility for other professional applications such as teaching,
interior decorating, or social work. Since all of the degree programs required at least
some home economics, all students were exposed to the field, and students were likely
drawn to the fact that courses in home economics were some of the few that specifically
addressed women’s roles in society. For example, an early course in household
management included the “study of the present economic position of woman, and its
effect upon the family,” as well as the “responsibility of the housewife for conditions of
public hygiene.”⁸⁹

---

⁸⁷ See for example, College catalog, *Year Book: 1917-1918*, pp. 34-36, DU Archives.
⁸⁸ College catalog, *Year Book: 1914-1915*, pp. 35-36, DU Archives.
Home economics was non-threatening, as it stayed safely within the societal lines of what was expected of women, and it offered practical skills which could be immediately applied (Nerad, 1999; Stage, 1997).\(^90\) CWC students clearly enjoyed this aspect of the program, as the home economics students presented a public exhibit of their work during graduation week each year, which became an anticipated tradition of the College starting in 1914.\(^91\) Figure 3, a program from 1916, provides details on the nature of these exhibits.

The popularity of home economics at CWC in these early years of the College foreshadowed the interest that CWC students would have in practical, vocational courses throughout the history of the college. This desire for applied coursework would challenge CWC to balance both tradition and modernity in its curricular offerings and to continue to provide students with a broad range of courses including liberal arts classes, domestic education for family life and motherhood, and vocational preparation.

As this chapter has shown, the curriculum offered at CWC in its first decade is not simple to classify and characterize. The curriculum differed from that found at the eastern women’s colleges because it required home economics coursework for all students and featured the option of a two-year home economics degree. CWC’s curriculum plan was much more similar to that provided by Mills College, a western College for women in California, and the women’s colleges of the south. These schools, like CWC, combined liberal arts coursework with home economics to allow for competition with

\(^90\) See Appendix A for further background on the field of home economics and its impact on women’s education.

\(^91\) College catalog, *Year Book: 1913-1914*, p. 4, DU Archives.
Figure 3. Home economics department annual exhibit program, June 7, 1916⁹²

⁹² Program of the Annual Exhibit of the Home Economics Department of the Colorado Woman’s College, 1916, CHS.
coeducational colleges where instruction in home economics was extremely popular and to provide greater preparation for the varied and changing demands of women’s lives.

The official rhetoric espoused by college administrators and the first president of the College, Jay Porter Treat, reflected a belief that women should be educated primarily in preparation for their domestic roles in the home and community. While this may have developed out of sincere beliefs and philosophies about the purpose of education for women, it also certainly represented a conscious desire to set CWC apart from both the well-known women colleges of the East and the popular coeducational colleges in its own midst. In a crowded educational landscape, CWC carved out a place for itself as a small, Christian, domestic-focused, college for young women. In an era of backlash against women’s education, it appears that CWC took an intentionally conservative approach to opening a new college for women at the turn of the 20th century and appealed directly to conservative parents who might not yet feel comfortable sending their daughters to one of the existing coeducational colleges in the state. In an essay written in 1916, President Treat expressed this point of view:

College life as it is organized in a Woman’s College, seems to conservative parents, less exposed and more in accordance with inherited tradition. Consequently, young women who in their homes, lead guarded lives, are to be found in the Women’s Colleges, rather than in co-educational colleges….The Colorado Woman’s College has many inspiring aims, but the one which dominates is to give young women, …courses especially adapted to them and that will fit them for efficiency in the home, give them the elements of leadership in their respective communities—courses of college grade. In other words, the aim is to train and discipline young women with special reference to the functions of wifehood, motherhood and the supervision and inspiration of the home. This aim is based upon the profound conviction that the welfare of any community, state,
or nation is divinely and hence inseparably dependent upon the qualities of its motherhood and the spirit and charity of its homes.\textsuperscript{93}

The CWC curriculum represented these stated values in a variety of ways (such as through the universal home economics requirement), yet the home economics coursework was more rigorous than surface-level domestic education, and the course catalogs describe an overall curriculum that offered preparation for much more than motherhood alone. In fact, the College required training in teaching and coursework that encouraged the application of learning in the community and even the professional realm.

Many colleges, (especially western land-grants) originally instituted domestic coursework in fields such as home economics, intending “to promote domestic roles for young women.” Yet, ironically, in the end it “prepared students more for careers in teaching and institutional management than for housekeeping” (Stage, 1997, p. 8).

Thus, the curriculum itself at CWC presented a somewhat different and more complicated message about the purpose of women’s education than the official rhetoric. The next chapter explores the development of the curriculum at CWC from 1920 to 1930—a period in which the College transitioned into becoming a junior college for women. I continue to summarize the curriculum that CWC provided and also reflect on how the curriculum represented beliefs and philosophies about the role of women’s education in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

\textsuperscript{93} J. P. Treat, \textit{A Colorado Assett}, CWC Collection, President Treat Papers, MS 130, Box 9, FF 5, pp. 1-2, DU Archives.
Figure 4. First College building, 1910-1911 College catalog, DU Archives.

Figure 5. Map of CWC and other women’s colleges, 1928, “The Why,” WHC, DPL.
Figure 6. Expression class, 1917-1918 College catalog, DU Archives.

Figure 7. Home economics classroom, 1910-1911 College catalog, DU Archives.
Figure 8. Student in CWC dormitory room, 1916-1917 College catalog, DU Archives.

Figure 9. Student drawing from 1913-1914 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 10. Students in art class, 1917-1918 College catalog, DU Archives.

Figure 11. Students in chemistry class, 1915-1916 College catalog, DU Archives.
Figure 12. College newspaper staff, 1918-1919 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 13. Physical education class, 1916-1917 College catalog, DU Archives.
Figure 14. Student drawing, 1915-1916 yearbook, DU Archives.
Chapter Five: CWC Becomes a Junior College, 1920-1930

In 1920, a major curricular change took place at Colorado Woman’s College when the College administration voted to eliminate the junior and senior level baccalaureate curriculum and to transform the institution into a two-year junior college.¹ In this chapter I analyze this important transition in the College’s history, providing a description of the curriculum, comparisons to other women’s colleges, and data on student enrollment, degrees granted, and most popular courses of study. I conclude that as the vocational curricula expanded at CWC, the College also increased its attention to moral rhetoric and traditional social roles for women.

Adapting to the Two-Year Curriculum: 1920-1930

Survival was difficult for small, private colleges in Colorado in the first decades of the 20th century. McGiffert (1964) writes that “although the private denominational institutions of higher learning were the first to hit the ground in Colorado, they were hard put to hold their own against the public institutions in the competition for students, money and prestige” (p. 125). By 1920, only five private colleges still operated in the state, including the University of Denver, Colorado College, Regis College, Loretto Heights College, and Colorado Woman’s College. Of these five remaining schools, only

¹ College catalog, Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year, 1920-1921, p. 14; Victor Cornelison, Historical Material on CWC When a 4-Year College and Reasons for Changing to Junior College in 1920, 1959, p. 1, Box 255: History Chronological Files 1917-1926, DU Archives.
DU and CC had been fully accredited (McGiffert, 1964, p. 125). One of the main reasons that colleges found it difficult to attract students was that population growth was very slow in Colorado from the teens through the 1940s, as the gold and silver mining booms faded and the economy faltered (Loevy, 1999). Therefore, many colleges had to rely on enrollment from out-of-state students in order to keep their doors open. For example, “during the 1920s and 1930s, only about 10 percent of the students at Colorado College came from the state of Colorado” (Loevy, 1999, p. 108).

While CWC was one of these determined private colleges that stayed alive in a difficult environment, it certainly faced financial obstacles throughout its first decade, and decreasing college-level enrollments had become a major source of frustration for college officials by 1920. As Figure 2 (p. 124) in the last chapter illustrated, enrollment in the college-level curriculum had risen to as many as 69 students during the 1913-1914 school year, and then slowly declined to only 31 students by the end of the decade. Yet, at the same time the preparatory program for high school students was growing, with 79 students enrolled in the 1919-1920 academic year. With these statistics in mind, President John Bailey, who took control of the College in the Fall of 1918, recommended to the College Board in 1919 that they should consider consolidating the work of the College to include only the preparatory department and the first two years of college work. Bailey argued that in essence, the College was already functioning as a junior college because there were few students doing junior and senior-year college work, and

---

2 Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 25, 1939, p. 21, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives.

3 Victor Cornelison, Historical Material on CWC When a 4-Year College and Reasons for Changing to Junior College in 1920, 1959, pp. 1-5, Box 255: History Chronological Files 1917-1926, DU Archives.
they lacked an adequate endowment and sufficient resources for advanced laboratory equipment, library materials, and teacher salaries.\textsuperscript{4} He was also concerned that few of the College instructors held graduate-level degrees appropriate for instructing upper-level courses. Of the 19 faculty serving during the 1919-1920 academic year (including President Bailey), only Bailey held a doctorate. Four faculty members had master’s degrees, nine held bachelor’s degrees, and five faculty members had no college degree.\textsuperscript{5} (While an analysis of the College faculty is beyond the scope of this project, it is interesting to note that all of the faculty were women, aside from the College president).

Another factor in the decision to transition to junior college status was that “housing and educating young women of such a wide age differential in the same building was resulting in many difficulties.”\textsuperscript{6} The preparatory students started at ninth grade, and therefore there were students from ninth grade to seniors in college living, eating, and studying together, and sharing the campus social life. CWC alumna Mary Kirke Wilson remembered the friction between college and preparatory students when she attended in the early 1920s. She stated:

\begin{quote}
We had freshmen and sophomores in the college. And we had four years in the high school. And of course the little high school girls didn’t amount to anything as far as we were concerned, we were the college.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{7} Mary Kirke Wilson for \textit{Colorado Reflections}, KOA, Oral history recording, 1984, University of Colorado, Denver, Archives and Special Collections, Auraria Library, Denver, CO.
\end{flushleft}
While the preparatory program could have been eliminated, it is likely that financial feasibility was an important factor in President Bailey’s decision. Faculty member Victor Cornelison, who in the 1950s researched the college’s earlier adoption of the junior college curriculum, stated:

The economic facts could not be ignored…that the largest enrollment was in the preparatory school. Altho we do not know exactly, it is reasonable to assume that President Bailey felt that the economic risk involved in eliminating the preparatory school was too great to assume.\(^8\)

Cornelison noted that Bailey believed enrollment was low due to the College’s lack of strictness and conservatism. Yet the opposite may have been true. Cornelison argues that CWC was known for its rules and regulations, and that the enrollment only climbed significantly after dancing was allowed on campus in the early 1930s.\(^9\)

**The two-year women’s college.**

While CWC had its own set of reasons for making the transition to junior college status, it certainly was not alone as a private, two-year college for women in 1920. Junior colleges of all types had flourished during the first two decades of the 20\(^{th}\) century, and “by 1922, thirty-seven of the forty-eight states contained junior colleges, this within two decades of their founding” (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 15). In this same year, 207 junior colleges existed, with 137 of these being private institutions (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Townsend (1999) suggests that “by the early 1920s there were about 60 women’s two-year schools,” the majority of which were private and religiously affiliated, like CWC (p. 28). Similarly, Cohen and Brawer (2008) argue that in these early years of the junior college movement, “over half the private colleges were single-sex institutions, with

---

\(^8\) Ibid., 8.

\(^9\) Ibid., 31.
colleges for women found most widely in New England, the Midwest, and the South” (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 19).

The junior college movement was driven by the need for local, accessible, and affordable higher education, and the desire for vocational curricula (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Private junior colleges proliferated early on, but by the mid-20th century public institutions with democratic missions dominated (Wolf-Wendel & Pedigo, 1999). In fact, junior colleges were so popular during the 20th century that even the University of Denver added a vocational junior college as a unit of the campus in 1941 (Beasley, 1985).

Scholars argue that many of the early private junior colleges were actually struggling four-year colleges that had abandoned their upper-division curricula to focus on the first two years of collegiate instruction, much like what happened at CWC (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; McDowell, 1919). McDowell (1919) writes that the private, two-year colleges generally offered a broader range of courses than the public junior colleges, and this was attributed to the fact that the private colleges had likely been four-year colleges at one time. For example, McDowell explains “the prominence of Latin in the private junior-college subjects” in this way (McDowell, 1919, p. 50). As the following description of the junior college curriculum at CWC illustrates, the diversity (if not depth) of course offerings there reflected the College’s earlier life as a baccalaureate granting institution.

While economic factors were clearly key in the creation of private junior colleges, some scholars suggest that the impetus for the creation of private, two-year women’s colleges was slightly different. Chamberlain (1988b, p. 113) argues that they offered
vocational instruction and represented the diversity and expansion of women’s colleges in the 20th century. In another vein, McDowell (1919) suggests that junior colleges for women evolved out of a desire for sex-segregated education for younger students in communities that could not afford to sustain separate four-year institutions. The President of Stephens College, a prominent junior college for women in Missouri, reflected this position in a speech at the National Education Association:

The cordial reception tendered them [the junior colleges in Missouri] was due to various causes, the chief of which was the growing concern of parents and educators over conditions surrounding girls yet in their teens, in the large coeducational institutions. Here lies the argument for giving the private junior college for women a definite place in an educational system. Through it the period of training of the adolescent girl may be extended two years beyond that provided by the present organization of the secondary schools. (McDowell, 1919, p. 36).

Certainly similar arguments were used at CWC to support its program once the switch to the junior college curriculum was made.

Another explanation for the increase in private junior colleges for women in the early 20th century is that they were encouraged and promoted by male administrators at coeducational colleges who hoped to steer women students away from their campuses (Solomon, 1985; Wolf-Wendel & Pedigo, 1999). By helping to create junior colleges for women, these administrators alleviated what they saw as the female enrollment problems of their own colleges and the “feminization” of their courses.

Frye (1995) writes that there was little consensus within the junior colleges for women as to the mission and purpose of these colleges and whether they should focus on terminal coursework or preparation for transferring to a four-year college. He argues that in the end, women students drove the curriculum through their “self-determined needs” (Frye, 1995, p. 7). The most common curriculum throughout the 20th century included
preparation for work in teaching, healthcare, and the secretarial field (Frye, 1995), all of which would be offered at CWC during its days as a junior college. Frye suggests that home economics was popular only at the private colleges for women, and later in this chapter and the chapters that follow, I chart CWC enrollment in home economics throughout its history.

This review of the literature on the history of private, junior colleges for women indicates that these institutions have indeed played an important role in the history of women’s education, yet little else, other than the studies presented here, has been written about them (Frye, 1995; Wolf-Wendel & Pedigo, 1999). Wolf-Wendel and Pedigo (1999) in particular have argued that two-year women’s colleges have been left out of the historical record and that the “legacy of two-year women’s colleges is silenced, fading, and may soon be forgotten” (p. 78). They suggest that these colleges have had no advocates, as they are viewed as non-academic by four-year women’s colleges, and they are seen by public junior colleges as “antithetical to the idea of open, accessible, community-oriented institutions” (p. 78). Wolf-Wendel and Pedigo challenge scholars of women’s education to take two-year women’s institutions seriously, without dismissing them as “finishing schools.” This dissertation most definitely gives close attention to CWC during its years as a junior college, and therefore makes a significant contribution to this literature.

**The establishment of the associate in arts degree.**

When CWC opened in the fall of 1920, the College had moved from a semester format to a three-term calendar year, and it no longer offered the bachelor of arts
degree.\textsuperscript{10} Instead, students could study for one of three two-year degrees, including the associate in arts, associate in home economics, and associate in fine arts.\textsuperscript{11} Students could also continue to work toward the bachelor of music degree, a four-year program, and the bachelor of expression, a three-year degree.\textsuperscript{12} These baccalaureate programs in the fine arts, viewed as distinctive from the academic college course in arts and sciences, continued to be offered through the 1930s.\textsuperscript{13} In fact, the College began referring to the music department as the Conservatory of Music in 1927 and expanded the curriculum to include harp studies and public school music. As the music program expanded, the College leased studio space in the Woman’s Club building in downtown Denver, and students took courses there as well.\textsuperscript{14}

As a junior college, CWC was newly divided in 1920 into three groups comprised of the “Liberal Arts Group,” “The Vocational Arts Group,” and “The Fine Arts Group.”\textsuperscript{15} Liberals arts contained the departments of classical languages, English language and literature, history and social sciences, mathematics and physics, natural science, psychology and education, romance languages, and biblical literature and religious

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{10} The three-term calendar year was first instituted during the 1919-1920 academic year. See College catalog, \textit{Year Book}, 1919-1920, p. 19, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{11} College catalog, \textit{Year Book}, 1920-1921, pp. 27-29, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 29, 43.

\textsuperscript{13} Victor Cornelison, \textit{Historical Material on CWC When a 4-Year College and Reasons for Changing to Junior College in 1920}, 1959, p. 6, Box 255: History Chronological Files 1917-1926; See also the College catalogs, 1920-1935, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{14} College catalog, \textit{Twentieth Annual Catalog of CWC}, 1927-1928, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 35, 42, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{15} College catalog, \textit{Year Book}, 1920-1921, p. 27, DU Archives.
\end{flushleft}
education. The vocational arts group included courses in home economics and teacher preparation, and the fine arts group held the departments of art, expression, piano, pipe organ, violin, and voice.\textsuperscript{16}

The associate in arts degree was the most academically rigorous of all of the degree programs on campus, and it was still largely prescribed for students during the first year. At the beginning of the second year, students did have the opportunity to select a major area of concentration from the core courses taken during the first year, and for the first time, second-year students could freely elect 24 credit hours from any theoretical courses offered throughout the College, including those in the vocational and fine arts groups. Physical education was required every term, and home economics was now an option, but not a requirement for any student. Overall, women in the associate in arts degree program completed 96 credit hours (largely in the liberal arts) with the following mandatory requirements:

- English, 15 hours
- Biblical Literature, 9 hours
- History and Social Science, 12 hours
- Psychology and Education, 12 hours
- Foreign Language, Mathematics, or Science, 12 hours
- Physical Education, 6 hours\textsuperscript{17}

Throughout this first decade as a junior college, CWC’s curriculum shifted and fluctuated subtly each year, as the College adapted to its new institutional form and mission. Requirements were tweaked and adjusted (for example, foreign language regularly waffled between being required and elective), and eventually by the 1925-1926

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
academic year the College offered only one two-year associate’s degree, that being the associate in arts degree. At this time students could select majors in education, English, home economics, mathematics, religion, romance languages (French and Spanish), science, or social science in addition to required foundational classes.

In essence, the College was streamlining, standardizing, and focusing its academic curriculum and its college identity, reducing three two-year programs down to one. Home economics became a major within the new “College of Arts and Sciences,” and fine arts students could continue to study for two-year certificates, not degrees, which required mostly creative coursework with additional liberal arts classes. As part of the standardization that took place, in 1925, college entrance tests became required for the first time, and CWC began to align itself much more closely with the growing junior college movement. The College widely advertised its membership in the American Association of Junior Colleges and emphasized the many senior colleges and universities that recognized its courses and accepted its students. CWC also noted regularly that the associate in arts degree was “the equivalent of the Freshman and Sophomore years of a

---

18 College catalog, *Colorado Woman’s College Catalog*, 1925-1926, p. 46, DU Archives.

19 College catalog, *Colorado Woman’s College Catalog*, 1925-1926, pp. 47-48, DU Archives.

20 Ibid., 39.

21 See for example, College catalog, *Colorado Woman’s College Catalog*, 1926-1927, p. 4; *Twentyifth Annual Catalog of CWC*, 1927-1928, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 11, DU Archives.
University or standard College.” The following passage from a course catalog illustrated the College’s emerging identification as a junior college:

The Junior College is a comparatively new institution in American education. Probably the first Junior College was accredited in 1901. Since that time, numerous institutions of this character public, private, and denominational, have been established. The Junior College has met a real need in a highly successful way.

Throughout the 1920s, students also reflected their identification with their College and the emerging junior college movement, offering glimpses into their reasons for attending:

The Junior College has a definite place in our school system….The tremendous growth of our larger institutions has resulted in large Freshmen and Sophomore classes…The Junior College movement is gaining much favor. It is in reality a day of Junior Colleges….Many opportunities are afforded by the Junior College for Freshmen and Sophomores to enter into college activities…Two years in the College serve as a transition from home into the larger and more complex life of the university.

Even as CWC transitioned its institutional mission and promoted itself as a junior college, College officials and students still desired comparisons to the nation’s most well-respected and recognized four-year women’s colleges. As a promotional pamphlet in 1928 stated: “Why Shouldn’t Denver Have Such A College As Wellesley, Vassar, or Smith? It should! And It Will!”

22 See for example, College catalog, *Colorado Woman’s College Bulletin*, 1924-1925, p. 29, DU Archives.


25 *The “Why,”* 1928, p. 10, WHC, DPL.
Curricular comparisons.

While direct comparisons cannot be made between CWC’s two-year associate in arts degree and that of bachelor’s degree programs at other women’s colleges, it is again useful to understand, when possible, how the curriculum at CWC differed from that of other schools. A detailed study of the curriculum at seven southern women’s colleges during the 1926-1927 academic year, by Young (1932), allows the unique opportunity for such an understanding. Young studied exactly the types of colleges that the literature on women’s colleges has largely ignored—small, lesser-known colleges in the American South. These included Salem College, Judson, Wesleyan, Newcomb, Goucher, Agnes Scott, and Randolph-Macon. Young (1932) found that among these colleges, there was little consensus in the mid-1920s regarding requirements for graduation, as the only courses required by all seven colleges were English and history. All but Newcomb College required a course in religious education, and a majority required mathematics, philosophy, and psychology. Only three of the colleges required Latin, and just one, Goucher College, required a course in science for graduation. This outline of the curriculum at seven southern women’s colleges thus illustrates that CWC’s two-year academic curriculum was still on par with the offerings and requirements of the typical women’s college in the South in the mid-1920s. CWC required, for example, both of the subjects required by all seven colleges—English and history—and offered coursework in
all other fields deemed mandatory by at least one of the southern women’s colleges, with the exception of philosophy.\textsuperscript{26} (Table 4 illustrates these points of comparison).

The one major curricular distinction at CWC was that like these southern women’s colleges, CWC required religious education for graduation throughout the decade, but by the 1927-1928 academic year it was elective only. In addition, only three of the seven southern women’s colleges offered any coursework at all in home economics or other vocational or applied fields of study (Young, 1932, p. 189).\textsuperscript{27} Yet, home economics and other new professional programs were growing in interest at CWC, as I will discuss later in this section.

**Pedagogy and new courses.**

Teaching strategies throughout the 1920s tended even more toward lecture and discussion formats than in earlier years, and only the expression department still required recitations with the head of the department every two weeks.\textsuperscript{28} The typical outside reading requirement for English classes was 300 pages per quarter, and midterm exams were routine, causing student’s hearts to “palp” for days with anxiety.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{26} College catalog, *Colorado Woman’s College Catalog*, 1926-1927, p. 51; College catalog, *Twentieth Annual Catalog of CWC*, 1927-1928, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 24, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{27} In comparison, Newcomer (1959) writes that “a study of the catalogues of 54 women’s colleges in the South in 1930 showed that 34 of these” offered home economics (p. 58).

\textsuperscript{28} College catalog, *Colorado Woman’s College Bulletin*, 1924-1925, p. 34, DU Archives.

### Comparing Required Courses for Graduation at CWC and Seven Southern Women’s Colleges, 1926-1927

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Salem</th>
<th>Judson</th>
<th>Wesleyan</th>
<th>Newcomb</th>
<th>Goucher</th>
<th>Agnes Scott</th>
<th>Randolph-Macon</th>
<th>CWC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Education</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychology</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latin</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physiology</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X = Required course for graduation.  
✓ = Coursework offered at CWC, but not required for graduation.  
O = Optional requirement for graduation (students could select from mathematics, foreign language, or science)

---

30 Adapted from Young (1932, p. 118). CWC data compiled from course catalogs, 1926-1928.
New courses of note that appeared in this decade included a required physical hygiene course that emphasized proper diet, posture, and first aid, a course on “How to Study,” and a piano course in ragtime music, reflecting a concession to the music of the era. New social science classes included a course on the sociology of the family, emphasizing parenthood and the “causes of divorce.” American and European history courses mirrored postwar concerns and addressed topics such as the “conditions that led to World War and the problems that have arisen since,” and “the rise of present-day problems as well as America’s relation to world affairs.” Readings by women authors were more frequently adopted in the classroom during this era as well. For example, students in the expression department reported on works by Margaret Hill McCarter and Willa Cather in their public speaking course. This was unusual at a time when there were few women writers in the curriculum, even at women’s colleges (Peril, 2006, p. 219).

**Home economics in the 1920s at CWC.**

As mentioned earlier, the home economics program at CWC fluctuated frequently in the 1920s between residing in the academic liberal arts curriculum (AA degree) and standing alone as a two-year, terminal degree program. After CWC placed home economics in the associate of arts degree program during the 1925-1926 academic year, it

---


33 College catalog, *Colorado Woman’s College Catalog*, 1925-1926, p. 63, DU Archives.

was later taken out and again made one of the “Special Departments,” in 1927-1928, where it stayed for many years.\textsuperscript{35} I believe that this wrangling over the proper placement of the home economics program within the collegiate curriculum represented the College’s larger struggle with determining the appropriate role of home economics in the education of women students. CWC seemed to have difficulty deciding if home economics deserved to be considered a legitimate academic subject or “major” within the associate of arts degree or if it was merely a non-academic subject, necessarily preparing students for life and future domestic roles, but not continued study at the university level.

The coursework in home economics continued to focus on cooking, sewing, and home-making, but science courses were emphasized much more in home economics than in the associate of arts degree program. For example, inorganic and organic chemistry, along with biology, botany, and physiology, were all required for specialization in home economics but not for the two-year college degree.\textsuperscript{36} This seems to corroborate the literature which argues that women students with interests in science were typically steered toward home economics degrees, as in some cases this is where the science courses for women were located (Nerad, 1999; Stage, 1997).

Some home economics students were defensive about the reputation of their field and repeatedly declared that home economics was an import academic subject and not the “matrimonial factory” that some assumed it to be.\textsuperscript{37} They hoped that it would lead them

\textsuperscript{35} College catalog, \textit{Twentieth Annual Catalog of CWC}, 1927-1928, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 30, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{36} See for example, College catalog, \textit{Colorado Woman’s College Bulletin}, 1924-1925, p. 36, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{37} Yearbook, \textit{The Spinster}, 1921-1922, vol. xii, p. 33, DU Archives.
to “professions such as teaching, dietetics, cafeteria and tea-room management, nursing, extension work, and others.” While practical skills in home economics were bolstered by activities and field trips (such as to inspect a Denver biscuit factory), the students joked that they were learning too much theory and not enough hands-on skills. Playing on this sentiment, one home economics student sarcastically wrote in the College yearbook: “Oh, my! That cake is burning and I can’t take it out for five minutes yet.”

Educators and cultural critics continued to debate the merits of home economics and the purpose of education for women, and throughout the 1920s, the backlash against liberal arts coursework as inappropriate for women’s domestic roles continued (Horowitz, 1993; Palmieri, 1987; Solomon, 1985). Under this pressure, even the eastern women’s colleges somewhat reluctantly conceded and began to offer a smattering of home economics and life-training courses in the 1920s. For example, Smith College started the Institute for the Coordination of Women’s Interests (Antler, 1982; Solomon, 1985; Young, 1932), which prepared women for combining work and family life after college, and they created an “Orientation Course” which taught students to apply their liberal arts knowledge to daily living (Young, 1932, p. 209). Vassar College went the furthest in training women for home and family life when it implemented the euthenics major in 1924 (Antler, 1982; Horowitz, 1993; Solomon, 1985). Euthenics combined courses in child hygiene, nutrition, home nursing, parenting, and household management.

---

38 Ibid.
39 Yearbook, Skyline, 1924-1925, p. 66, DU Archives.
40 Yearbook, Skyline, 1923-1924, p. 56, DU Archives.
41 Palmieri (1987) argues that a wide range of educators, psychologists, journalists, and doctors all fueled the backlash against women’s liberal arts education.
with an emphasis on applying science in the home. Describing the program, Antler (1982) writes:

> Though the undergraduate euthenics program continued until the 1950s, only a handful of Vassar students majored in it, and the institute seems generally to have been scorned by the majority of Vassar’s faculty, who believed that the idea of educating women for careers in homemaking represented a step backward for women’s education. (p. 30)

While few Vassar students majored in euthenics, Solomon (1985) notes that many students “sampled its courses,” and ultimately the interdisciplinary program had a major impact on the campus in the 20th century (p. 150). Horowitz (1993) concludes that the symbolic message of the euthenics department at Vassar was more influential than the program itself. In the end, euthenics represented Vassar’s “partial accommodation to the new claims of the 1920s” (Horowitz, 1993, p. 302).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the founding of new, experimental women’s colleges in the 1920s (Bennington, Sarah Lawrence, and Scripps) also represented a conscious reaction to the pressures faced by educators of women in the postwar era (Horowitz, 1993; Rudolph, 1990). These colleges provided a fresh opportunity to design educational programs especially for women, and lacking long traditions, they were less self-conscious about their curricular choices. A student at Scripps reflected this more care-free attitude when she stated that Scripps College was not against vocational education, nor was the College specifically in favor of it. The College was not “troubling itself over the recent chatter as to what is or is not ‘vocational’ instruction,” she said (McPherrin, 1930, p. 165).
The growth of vocational programs at CWC.

While the associate of arts degree was at the center of the curriculum at CWC, and the bachelor of music and expression programs continued to expand, perhaps the most significant curricular development of this era was the addition of two-year, terminal, vocational programs, which CWC labeled “Special Departments.” These were professional, practical departments that included, but went beyond home economics and aimed to prepare students for specific careers after college. The first program introduced was the secretarial department in 1921, which was “intended to prepare young women for responsible positions as secretaries.” The curriculum included stenography, typewriting, bookkeeping, and business law, along with basic academic courses, and it eventually included accounting, shorthand, and economics. By the end of the 1920s, students could expect to be trained for “secretarial, accounting, and executive positions” in addition to teaching business courses. Some of the highlights of the program were that students took regular field trips to local businesses and office environments, and President Bailey himself taught the culminating course in supervised office training on campus. Reflecting on this training one student wrote:

---

42 See for example, College catalog, *Twentieth Annual Catalog of CWC*, 1927-1928, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 30, DU Archives.

43 College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year*, 1921-1922, p. 35, DU Archives.


I wonder if I ever will fully recover from the fright of that first day in the office. I was partially paralyzed at the sight of the mahogany furniture and I entirely succumbed when I heard the first awe-inspiring “Dear Sir.”

Journalism became a popular program when it was introduced during the 1927-1928 academic year, and the College added two-year programs in physical education and religious education for the 1928-1929 school year. By the end of the 1920s, there were seven programs designated as “Special Departments,” including art, expression and dramatics, secretarial, home economics, journalism, physical education, and religious education. All of these vocational programs were highly publicized and promoted by the College, and it appears that the addition of new programs was driven by student interest, as the course catalogs stated that “an insistent demand for commercial courses…led to the establishment of the Secretarial Department.” The College catalogs also indicate that expanded professional opportunities for women in society also fueled the expansion of the vocational curriculum. For every new program developed and introduced, the College promoted the corresponding career possibilities for women:

Specific training in commercial art and applied design finds a ready market and often opens up avenues to desirable and profitable occupations.

---


49 Ibid., 30.
The various forms of newspaper, magazine, advertising, news service, and general publicity work offer attractive openings to young women who have ability and training along those lines [in Journalism].

This [public school music] course is planned to meet the requirements of public schools…the students are prepared for the training of glee clubs, choruses, and orchestras, and the production of operettas…in the schools.

The harp is essentially a woman’s instrument. It is constantly in demands….A student…can, within the first year of her study, be prepared for engagements with resultant remuneration.

Many college students pursuing these courses [in religious education] are finding summer employment for two months at a small guarantee salary and expenses, and such opportunities are increasing, as the value of these courses to the student, and the value of these students to the work of churches become more apparent. Denominational agencies are diligent in seeking to place such students in this sort of vacation work.

Training in Expression and Dramatics prepares a young woman not only to provide entertainment and pleasure for those with whom she associates, but it may also open a way to professional careers.

In addition to these two-year vocational programs, the College also updated its teacher-education coursework throughout the 1920s to assure students that they would be qualified for state teaching certificates. Despite the fact that CWC encouraged students to enroll in vocational programs and pursue careers, the official rhetoric of the College regarding the purpose of women’s education continued to emphasize women’s domestic

---

50 Ibid., 33.
51 Ibid., 41.
52 Ibid., 42.
53 College catalog, Twenty-first Annual Catalog of CWC, 1928-1929, vol. 21, no. 1, p. 41, DU Archives.
55 College catalog, Colorado Woman’s College Bulletin, 1924-1925, p. 71, DU Archives.
roles throughout this decade of the 1920s. In fact, I would argue that as vocational programs expanded, there was a corresponding increase in the College’s attention to the importance of protecting students and maintaining proper morality and traditional gender roles on campus.

The College continued to claim that the purpose of education at CWC was to “prepare a woman to meet her family and social duties with joyous understanding of their rich significance.”\(^56\) College officials also believed that since educated women found “their places within the normal relations of the family,” they should be “educated with regard to this very important fact.”\(^57\) In addition to this familiar stance regarding the purpose of women’s education, as new vocational programs were added, the College also began to increase language in the College catalogs regarding the safe and wholesome environment of the campus and the morality expected of all students. For example, College officials emphasized that CWC offered “an ideal home life under Christian influences with reasonable and proper supervision and protection,” and they reassured parents that they could guarantee “the health, safety, scholarship, and spiritual well-being of their daughters.”\(^58\) CWC promoted the idea that life at the College was like “the life of a fine, happy, well-conducted family.” They reiterated their responsibility for “insuring the proper moral and social life, of safeguarding the health, and of providing an

\(^56\) College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year*, 1921-1922, p. 12, DU Archives. See also other catalogs throughout the era.

\(^57\) College catalog, *Year Book: Colorado Woman’s College Scholastic Year*, 1923-1924, p. 44, DU Archives.

\(^58\) College catalog, *Twentieth Annual Catalog of CWC*, 1927-1928, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 9, DU Archives.
environment of the best possible influences” to all students.59 “Surely a girl’s life is safe in such surroundings,” the catalog claimed. Samuel Vaughn, who became President in 1926, expressed the view that the College’s purpose was to “fit students to lead wholesome, creative lives,” striving toward ideal womanhood. In his mind “ideal womanhood” meant being pure, serene, gracious, loving, patient, enduring, and holy.60 In 1928 he presented the following message to parents:

If you send us a normal girl of good parentage, we will put her under home-like, Christian influences, keep her well and safe and busy and happy, and return her to you as fine as she came to us, beautified, strengthened, and educated in the best sense of the word. Under such influences and in such an environment, there need be no fear of the outcome of her education. When through, she will come back to her home and her church more appreciative of both, and ready for any tasks that they may present to her.61

These recurring messages described CWC as a place where parents could feel comfortable and confident sending their daughters without fear that they might be wrongly influenced toward an undesirable or nontraditional life path. The College was likely attempting to distinguish itself from other local coeducational colleges with this message, which the College found to be a necessary and continual strategy. CWC regularly scared conservative parents by reminding them that at “the larger coeducational colleges,” students were “shaken loose from the moorings of the past,”62 and that some

59 Ibid., 15.

60 Student newspaper, Colo-Wo-Co, March 1930, vol. 9, no. 5, DU Archives.

61 Colorado Woman’s College: A School that Looks After the Whole Girl, July, 1928, vol. 21, no. 3, p. 2, Box Title: Bulletins and Pamphlets, DU Archives.

62 Bring Her to Denver, 1928, p. 7, CHS.
girls at these larger colleges “were swept off their feet by the social whirl” and sent “with blighted lives to disappointed homes.”

Thus, marketing and competition for students was certainly at play, yet, I believe that the conscious attempts to reassure parents, and the conflicted, mixed messages found throughout the course catalogs to parents and students also represent something further. It is as if CWC believed it could balance student desires for vocational programs leading them out of the home and into expanding careers for women, with parental preference for traditional roles for their daughters. In a way, the heightened sensitivity to safety, protection, morality, and ideal womanhood was used by CWC to soften the blow of the actual curriculum that the College offered. In an era in which students felt that the purpose of college was to “teach one how to make her dreams come true,” whatever those dreams might be, CWC had a difficult role to play in satisfying the multiple demands of all students and parents, while also distinguishing itself as a private, junior college. This balancing act would become a recurring theme running throughout the history of the college curriculum.

One way that CWC attempted to meet all of these competing demands was to offer a wide diversity of coursework that could be utilized in many ways, depending on student and family interests. For example, by offering the two-year associate in arts degree, the College prepared students to continue their advanced training at the university level. Those with performing arts interests could receive high-level training in the

---


64 Yearbook, *Skyline*, 1928-1929, p. 61, DU Archives.
Conservatory of Music, and those wishing to prepare for domestic life could take courses in home economics. Students desiring to pursue careers in teaching, business, journalism, commercial art, and more, could enroll in CWC’s two-year vocational “Special Departments.” This combining of liberal arts, domestic, and vocational curricula again represented the College’s attempts to balance traditional and modern educational ideals and values.

CWC emphasized that its courses could suit a variety of students with diverse life plans. For example, art courses could be useful to teachers in the classroom, to housewives looking to create a “harmonious atmosphere” and develop a taste for “refinement and culture,” and finally to those seeking to become professional studio or commercial artists. Similar to the newly founded experimental women’s colleges of the 1920s, with their progressive educational interests in addressing the personal needs and preferences of the individual student (Horowitz, 1993; Newcomer, 1959; Rudolph, 1990), CWC also highlighted that its programs were “flexible” and could be “easily adapted to the individual needs of students.” The College catalog stated, “An attempt has been made to arrange a college course that will go a long way toward meeting the needs of all students.”

Student Enrollment and Course Preferences, 1920-1930

Student enrollment in collegiate-level programs made steady growth throughout the 1920s and increased most toward the end of the decade when the majority of

---

65 College catalog, *Colorado Woman’s College Catalog*, 1926-1927, p. 78, DU Archives.

66 Ibid., 55.

67 Ibid.
vocational programs such as journalism and secretarial arts were in place. (See Figure 15). Yet, one of the major concerns was that many students left the College before their second year of studies—only roughly 35% returned each year.\(^{68}\)

Enrollment in the preparatory program dropped significantly from 1920 to 1930, likely because the College attempted to phase out the high school-level program. CWC eliminated the ninth grade year in 1924-1925, and offered only the 12\(^{th}\) grade year in 1926-1927, only to bring back the four-year preparatory program in the 1927-1928 academic year, despite the faculty distaste for combining collegiate and preparatory curricula.\(^{69}\) English professor Gladys Bell, who served from 1925 to 1929, was an example of one member of the faculty who did not approve of the preparatory program. In an interview conducted after her retirement, she reflected on CWC and the student body. Bell commented that after removing the preparatory program, “they began building a student body that was outstanding, I think.”\(^{70}\)

The associate in arts degree quickly became the most popular degree program after its introduction in 1920, and the numbers of graduates rose each year, reaching as many as 24 students in 1929.\(^{71}\) Figure 16 (p. 164) illustrates that home economics was the next most popular degree program over the decade, followed by expression,

\(^{68}\) Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 25, 1939, p. 20, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives.

\(^{69}\) College catalog, Colorado Woman’s College Bulletin, 1924-1925, p. 41, DU Archives.

\(^{70}\) Oral history transcript, Gladys Colette Bell, 1976, p. 6, Mss: M1843, WHC, DPL.

\(^{71}\) Compiled from Yearbook, Skyline, 1929-1930, vol. xxi, DU Archives.
Figure 15. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1920-1930

[Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 25, 1939, p. 21, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives. Total enrollment figures include “special” non-degree students.]
Figure 16. Associate degrees granted at CWC, 1920-1930

Compiler from College catalogs, 1922-1927, DU Archives. No data are available for 1926-1929. Information for 1929-1930 was compiled from the College yearbook listings of majors for graduating students.
secretarial arts, and music. By the end of the decade, the secretarial department (renamed the commercial department in 1929-1930) gained steam, and some students were switching from home economics to the commercial department. A student reporter for the College newspaper, the *Colo-Wo-Co*, wrote:

The Commercial classes have increased a great deal. It seems that everyone has had a sudden mania for a business career, and has started typing, bookkeeping and the other subjects that go with a commercial course. Take, for instance, our illustrious Jimmy Gammon, who has decided to try a Commercial course vs. the Home.74

Once students could specify individual majors within the associate in arts degree, it was clear that education was by far the most popular, indicating student interest in teaching after graduation. The most popular majors within the associate in arts degree program were education (22 majors), English (8), social science (4), French (2), and one each in religion, history, Latin, and Spanish.75 CWC awarded only one bachelor of music degree and four bachelor of expression of degrees over the course of the 1920s, illustrating the College’s clear transition from a fledgling liberal arts college at the turn-of-the-century to a fully developed two-year women’s college.

In the next chapter I discuss developments in the CWC curriculum during the 1930s, which included an expansion of the College’s vocational programs and the introduction of a highly influential personality development curriculum.

---

74 Student newspaper, “Do You Want Speed?,” *Colo-Wo-Co*, February 1929, vol. 8, no. 4, p. 5, DU Archives.

75 Compiled from college catalogs, 1922-1927. No data are available for 1926-1929. Information for 1929-1930 was compiled from the college yearbook listing of majors for graduating students.
Figure 17. CWC art students, 1927-1928 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 18. Browsers literary club meeting, 1926-1927 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 19. Basketball team with its mascot “Boy,” 1928-1929 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 20. All College banquet, Hotel Cosmopolitan, 1927-1928 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 21. Student drawing depicting life at CWC, 1927-1928 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 22. CWC yearbook staff, 1927-1928 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 23. Scribblers writing club meeting, 1926-1927 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 24. College orchestra, 1925-1926 yearbook, DU Archives.
Chapter Six: The Expansion of Vocational Curricula at CWC and the Implementation of Personality Development, 1930-1940

To this point I have described the foundational curriculum at CWC and offered an in-depth analysis of the College’s first major curricular transition to junior college status in 1920. In this chapter I outline some of the fundamental changes in the College curriculum during the decade of the 1930s and follow with a more detailed discussion of the expansion of the vocational curriculum, and the simultaneous introduction of personality development coursework.

Throughout the 1930s professional courses were on the rise at colleges and universities around the country, as “the Depression prompted renewed concern for practical utility and vocational curricula” (Lucas, 1994, p. 253). At the junior colleges specifically, there was a “trend away from purely academic subjects, especially foreign languages, toward the social sciences, fine arts, and technical courses” (Jones, 1936, p. 242). CWC certainly reflected many of these curricular trends, as several new vocational programs were created throughout the 1930s, while others were expanded, and College officials and faculty constantly reminded students of the growing professional opportunities for women. My argument in this chapter is that, ultimately, CWC’s personality development program, which emphasized traditional women’s roles and values, served to counterbalance the College’s growing vocational curricular offerings, allowing the College to maintain both traditional and modern educational ideals.
Overview of Basic Curriculum Changes throughout the Decade

CWC entered the decade of the 1930s with renewed confidence in its purpose and mission as a western, junior college for women. The North Central Association of Colleges granted CWC full membership as an accredited junior college on March 15, 1932, affirming the College’s place in the landscape of higher education. Further validation of the College came when, as part of the accrediting process, an inspecting faculty member declared, “There is a great need for more women’s colleges in the west.” CWC built upon this solid foundation by establishing programs throughout the 1930s that would become central to the College’s curriculum for decades.

By the opening of the 1930s, CWC had switched back to a two-semester academic year, which it would retain throughout its history. The College continued to offer a wide variety of degrees, including the liberal arts-focused associate in arts, vocational programs in the “Special Departments,” and associate and bachelor’s degrees in the Conservatory of Music. New elective classes introduced early in the decade included radio broadcasting, Italian, and a religious education class titled “Bible

---


3 The College first made this transition during the 1927-1928 academic year. See College catalog, *Twentieth Annual Catalog of CWC*, 1927-1928, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 4, DU Archives.
Womanhood,” which detailed the lives of the “fascinating women who wrote vital history of the early ages.”

New physical education courses were also offered in bowling, equestrian riding, archery, fencing, and swimming, the latter of which students claimed “surpassed all other campus athletic activities in popularity.” Students generally rotated their physical education activities throughout the year, combining indoor exercises and activities in the gymnasium with outdoor games and sports. In spring, students often prepared for the pageantry of the annual May Fete in physical education classes. One of the most unique courses offered for physical education credit was a class called “rhythmic body training,” which incorporated elements of German dance and was said to cure “bodily defects such as round shoulders, knock-knees, bow-legs, weak foot-arch,” and “protruding abdomen.”

The summer of 1932 brought the first summer session ever to be held at CWC, and students had the choice of taking six-week sessions on campus or at Camp Freeman, the College’s mountain retreat. On a lighter curricular note, the students themselves organized and taught weekly informal craft classes using materials such as “leather,

---


5 Yearbook, Skyline, 1933-1934, vol. 25, p. 77, DU Archives.


8 Student newspaper, “Camp Freeman,” Colo-Wo-Co, February 4, 1932, vol. 11, no. 5, p. 6, DU Archives.
wood, and cork." These fun classes attracted many students and provided an opportunity to create Christmas gifts for friends and family in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

Also of interest pedagogically was the fact that the CWC library became a branch of the Denver Public Library in the 1930s. This greatly expanded the capabilities of the College library and gave students access to many more reading materials than was previously possible, given the library’s limited collections.¹⁰

**New degree types offered.**

In 1934, CWC instituted a change in the types of degrees that it granted, and students in all of the former “Special Departments” (including subjects such as journalism, home economics, and commercial education) now received two-year associate in science degrees.¹¹ This was a notable curricular highlight, as it legitimized the vocational courses on campus and foreshadowed the increase in vocational degree programs that were to come over the course of the 1930s. This combining of all vocational programs under the umbrella “associate in science” degree illustrates the College’s belief that all non-traditional academic subjects served the same purpose of preparing students for practical and specific careers, and therefore could be joined together under the applied notion of science. In addition, many of the vocational programs required more science coursework than the associate in arts degree, such as

---

⁹ See for example, student newspaper, “Craft Class is Organized,” *The Western Graphic*, November 15, 1939, p. 2, microfilm, DU Archives.


home economics, physical education, and the pre-nursing program to be discussed later in
the chapter.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Curricular comparison of the associate in arts degree.}

At the start of the 1930s, the liberal arts-focused associate in arts degree reflected
the trends in higher education at large and required a combination of mandatory and
elective courses (Lucas, 1994). CWC still leaned toward more requirements and fewer
free electives than the average American college, with only one third of courses being
elective.\textsuperscript{13} The obligatory core curriculum for the associate in arts degree at the start of
the decade consisted of English composition and literature, science, foreign language,
mathematics, physical education, a choice of history, government, sociology, or
psychology, and an orientation course developed to assist students with study techniques
and adjustment to college life.\textsuperscript{14} Students wishing to earn a state teaching certificate were
encouraged to use 20 of their 23 hours of electives to take appropriate courses from the
department of education.\textsuperscript{15} (By the end of the decade CWC instituted a specific “Teacher
Training Course,” leading to the associate in arts degree, that qualified students for the
state certificate).\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 53, 55, 57-58.
\item\textsuperscript{13} College catalog, \textit{Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College: Twenty-Fourth Annual
\item\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 26, 31.
\item\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 26.
\item\textsuperscript{16} See College catalog, \textit{Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College: Annual Catalog}, 1939-
1940, p. 34, DU Archives.
\end{itemize}
A comparison with the required courses of the mid-1920s, as described in Table 4 in the last chapter (p. 150), indicates that math, foreign language, and science were now absolutely required for graduation and not just one of a number of options. Since the purpose of the associate in arts degree was to prepare students to transfer to a four-year college, the changes in requirements over time likely reflected variations in four-year college requirements for transfer students.

In her study of women’s higher education, Newcomer (1959) presents information about the required coursework in “the majority of women’s colleges for 1931-32,” (p. 97) allowing for a comparison against the associate in arts degree requirements at CWC at the beginning of the 1930s. Newcomer’s data, representing the mandatory courses of four-year women’s colleges, reveals that almost all schools required English and history. Other commonly required courses included religion, psychology, philosophy, mathematics, health and hygiene, and classics (Newcomer, 1959, p. 97). (Table 5 provides the percentages of women’s colleges that required each academic subject for graduation). By comparison, CWC’s two-year program required (or allowed as an option to fulfill requirements) all of these same courses, with the exception of religion and philosophy, during the 1931-1932 academic year. This again illustrates CWC’s preference for a more prescribed curriculum, perhaps as a way to guarantee junior college students a smooth transition to the senior college level, to meet the transfer requirements of four-year colleges, or as a strategy for controlling the numbers of courses offered on a small, fiscally-strapped campus. Whatever the reason, the selection of required academic subjects at CWC was more rigid, yet very consistent with those
Table 5

Required Courses in Surveyed Women’s Colleges, Including CWC, 1931-1932\(^\text{17}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Percentage of Women’s Colleges Requiring Subject</th>
<th>CWC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Hygiene</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X = Required course for graduation.

√ = Coursework offered at CWC, but not required for graduation.

O = Optional requirement for graduation (students could select from among a list of choices).

mandated at other women’s colleges in the U.S. CWC may have differed from many east coast women’s colleges with its inclusion of other domestic and specifically vocational curricula, but in the realm of liberal arts, their offerings (at least in terms of subject matter) were actually quite similar.

**Developments in the music department.**

The 1930s brought significant changes to the department of music at CWC, and the curricular adjustments began in 1932 when the College took over the operations and administration of the Denver College of Music, located in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Denver.18 CWC’s affiliation with the Denver College of Music allowed for growth and expansion of the music program without significant expense, as the two Colleges shared resources and instructors.19 For example, after the affiliation, CWC students were able to take instruction in orchestral instruments such as clarinet, flute, oboe, and trumpet.20 Music classes held at the downtown music campus were coeducational, with academic subjects for Denver College of Music students taken at CWC or the University of

---


19 *Denver College of Music, Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College, 1932-1933*, vol. 25, no. 3, p. 9, DU Archives.

20 Ibid., 7-8.
Students at CWC proudly boasted that this new arrangement gave “C.W.C. the musical leadership of the West.”

In 1934, the Conservatory of Music at CWC suddenly discontinued its bachelor of music degree (the longest lasting and only remaining baccalaureate program on campus), instead electing to offer only the associate in fine arts degree. A total of 24 bachelor’s degrees had been granted in the period following CWC’s transition to junior college status in 1920. No further bachelor’s degrees would be conferred at CWC until the 1960s.

The Expansion of the Vocational Curricula in the 1930s

The most consequential curricular development of the 1930s at CWC was a significant expansion of the vocational curricula. The growth in this subject area was driven by student interest and the opening of new career possibilities for women, which the College encouraged. By the end of the decade, more CWC students would receive two-year vocational degrees than any other type.

---

21 Ibid., 9; Student newspaper, “Presenting the Denver College of Music,” Colo-Wo-Co, February 4, 1932, vol. 11, no. 5, DU Archives. The Denver College of Music was accredited as a member of the National Association of Schools of Music.

22 Yearbook, Skyline, 1931-1932, vol. xxiii, p. 79, DU Archives.


24 Victor Cornelison, Historical Material on CWC When a 4-Year College and Reasons for Changing to Junior College in 1920, 1959, p. 6, Box 255: History Chronological Files 1917-1926, DU Archives.

25 Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 16, 1940, p. 15, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives.
New programs were introduced throughout the decade starting with pre-nursing in 1934-1935, a popular vocational program for women that was never offered at the Seven Sister Colleges but that had been instituted at Mills College in California as early as 1917 (Baker, 1976; Hedley, 1961, p. 100). Programs in basic science (to prepare women to teach science or work in laboratory settings), pre-medical (to train students for entrance into medical school), and pre-library science all followed in the 1937-1938 academic year. CWC added a pre-legal program in 1939. All of these new vocational programs led to the associate in science degree.

In the area of fine arts, the art department grew to include vocational concentrations in costume design and interior decoration in this era to supplement courses in studio arts. The art department was noted for getting students out of the studio and into the community, as they took regular field trips to Denver’s many museums and businesses and sketching trips to city park zoo and outdoor locations in the Rocky Mountains.

---


29 Ibid., 46.

30 Ibid., 45.
Home economics expands.

The home economics department, by now a long-standing vocational program, also expanded when new concentrations in pre-dietetics and general home making (the latter designed specifically for future wives and mothers not planning to transfer to a senior college) were added to the general home economics course in 1937. With the creation of the new emphasis on home making, child rearing and family life were inserted back into the curriculum for the first time in many years in classes such as “Child care and Training” and “Family Relationships.”

Home economics continued to offer students opportunities to practically apply the skills learned in class. Field trips to investigate local factories, such as canning and bottling facilities, were a routine part of life in the program, and students regularly demonstrated proper table etiquette to their fellow students at model formal dinners. Students in the home economics program were also able to proudly display their clothing design and sewing skills when they organized fashion shows featuring their own creations.

Home economics continued to be a popular major at local coeducational colleges in Colorado and at non-eastern women’s colleges throughout the 1930s. For example, McGiffert (1964) writes that four of Colorado’s public schools “offered extensive work

32 Ibid., 51.
34 Yearbook, Skyline, 1937-1938, p. 58, DU Archives.
in home economics,” (p. 217) and, therefore, CWC’s expansion in this area likely kept it competitive. Scripps College provided a unique model of home economics pedagogy at a western women’s college. During its first years of operation in the 1930s, home economics students were able to gain practical experience living in the off-campus bungalow, where they “coped with household budgets and attempted dinner parties” (Horowitz, 1993, p. 348). Figure 32 (p. 208) illustrates that just as it was a popular subject around the country, home economics continued to be one of the most popular fields of study at CWC during the decade of the 1930s.

**The commercial department expands.**

In 1931, the commercial education department added a general business concentration to its secretarial and commercial teaching programs, which broadened the scope of the department considerably. Students could now train for secretarial positions as well as those in accounting, advertising, sales, and office management. Graduates interested in government employment were also “prepared to pass the prescribed examinations of the United States Civil Service Commission.” The coursework was mostly prescribed in the commercial education program, although some electives were allowed, and overall it appears that there were more specific courses offered in this subject than any other on campus throughout the decade. Specialized classes included accounting, money and banking, business organization and administration, salesmanship, economic geography, advertising, business law, business mathematics, and business

---

literature and correspondence, in addition to the technical courses in typing and stenography.\footnote{See for example, College catalog, \textit{Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College}, 1933-1934, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 48-51, DU Archives.}

In 1939 the commercial department changed its name to the department of business education, and it also added specializations in foreign trade and retail merchandising, again diversifying the course offerings and possible careers for CWC students.\footnote{College catalog, \textit{Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College: Annual Catalog}, 1939-1940, p. 53, DU Archives.} These expansions were justified by the College as “meet[ing] an insistent demand for technical business education of college grade.”\footnote{College catalog, \textit{Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College: Annual Catalog}, 1938-1939, vol. 31, no. 1, p. 52, DU Archives.}

One of the most popular elements of the business curriculum was that starting in 1932, all students had the opportunity to gain practical business experience in “seven of the leading business organizations of the West,” including The Denver Dry Goods Company, Gates Rubber Company, The Daniels and Fisher Stores Company, The Morey Mercantile Company, and the First National Bank of Denver.\footnote{College catalog, \textit{Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College: Twenty-Fifth Annual Catalog}, 1932-1933, vol. 25, no. 1, p. 35, DU Archives.} These internship placements must have assisted many students in finding permanent employment, as the department boasted that “even during the depression period, every available graduate was placed in a desirable position.”\footnote{College catalog, \textit{Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College: Annual Catalog}, 1938-1939, vol. 31, no. 1, p. 53, DU Archives.}
The associate in science degree in business education was the second most popular major at CWC in the 1930s (see Figure 32, p. 208) and it showed dramatic growth over the decade. This interest in secretarial and business studies was palpable throughout higher education. Many college officials, including CWC’s own Edna Jones, head of the business department, believed that “a dignifying of commercial education” resulted from the depression, lifting the field “from the lowly position that it…held, to one of greater importance” (Jones, 1936, p. 244). Proper business education could solve many social and economic problems, educators believed, and this helped to expand business programs and enrollments in colleges everywhere in the years between the wars (Thelin, 2004).

Private secretarial schools, such as the popular Katharine “Katy” Gibbs School in New York City, known for its elegance and gentility, attracted many graduates from prestigious eastern women’s colleges who did not receive business as part of their regular college curricula (Kendall, 1976; Solomon, 1985; Thelin, 2004). Schools such as this helped to legitimize business as a field of study for women and “gave social approval to this type of employment” (Solomon, 1985, p. 130).

**CWC Promotes Vocational Curricula and Careers for Women**

The college catalogs reveal that CWC officials more than ever promoted the vocational curricula that they offered to students by advertising the many career opportunities for women associated with each degree program. For example, in describing the vocational science course, the catalog noted, “The study of the basic
sciences is offering greater opportunities than ever before to women.” Describing the art program, the catalogs highlighted the vocational component of the department, stating: “Many C.W.C. art majors go directly into commercial art.” Longtime art professor Alfred Wands added that a career in art was particularly suited to women because it allowed for the mixing of marriage and career: “The girl who prepares herself for the fine arts and still decides to marry has...an advantage over most girls. She may maintain a home and still continue with her life work if she so desires,” he said.

Encouraging students to enroll in home economics, College officials wrote in the catalogs that “the widening field of opportunity for Home Economics college graduates is one of the outstanding developments of recent years.” They insisted that “probably no other college course offer[ed] such varied and interesting occupations to its graduates.”

Over the span of the 1930s, the College suggested that the professional fields open to home economics graduates included everything from teaching, research, social service, dietetics, and agricultural extension, to textile merchandising, broadcasting, demonstrating, institutional management, and consulting in the areas of finance, nutrition, and budgeting.

---


45 Ibid.
In a complete turnaround from earlier College aims, College Dean and later College President James Huchingson, repeatedly spoke of the importance of careers in the lives of CWC graduates. He told students that “earning power is the best possible guarantee of self-reliance, self-support, honor, and independence,” and “the development of woman’s place in professional life” was one his stated goals.

CWC students were highly encouraged by these messages, and they too expressed much optimism about the professional possibilities in their future. For example, students rejoiced “women’s increasing power in modern journalism” in the College yearbook.

**Curriculum Change and Student Demand**

Clearly societal changes and growing professional opportunities for women influenced the direction of the CWC curriculum in the 1930s toward vocational programs. Yet, the College also consciously adopted “progressive” educational principles and attempted to adapt the curriculum to meet student needs and interests. For example, College officials noted in an annual report that business programs in “Foreign Trade” and “Merchandising” were implemented as the direct result of “increased interest in vocations.” They were particularly interested in responding to the many students preparing to become professional retail buyers. Overall, when shaping the curriculum, the

---


49 *Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees*, April 25, 1939, p. 6, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives.
goal of College leaders was to “harmonize with…progressive tendencies.” As in years past, they were working to educate women for a diverse set of future opportunities and life demands. Thus, the curriculum reflected women’s varied needs, from liberal arts and domestic education, to specific career preparation.

**Building the CWC Personality: “Social Fundamentals” and Personality Development**

As CWC was expanding and developing its vocational curricula throughout the decade of the 1930s, the College was simultaneously implementing another major curricular initiative, which it called the personality development program. This program would become perhaps the most important ever created by the College, as it brought a measure of national attention to the small campus and became the core of the CWC curriculum, campus-wide, for several decades. This fundamental program first appeared as a fully developed curriculum in 1934, with the introduction of the “Orientation” class and the College’s four-point program, although the first glimpses of personality training can be traced back to the 1931 catalog.  

**The mental hygiene movement.**

Personality training as a trend in higher education grew out of the mental hygiene movement, which gained attention and stature in the post-World War I era (Cohen, 1983). The mental hygienists were social workers, doctors, educators, and psychiatrists who believed that personalities were malleable and could be shaped and improved with 

---

50 Ibid.

effort (Cohen, 1982). Their agenda was to infiltrate America’s colleges and universities and to persuade them to offer courses in mental hygiene that would help college students better deal with adjustments to college life. The mental hygienists were most concerned with the “minor personality disorders,” that occurred in the college years, which they viewed as a “distinctive stage of development” (Cohen, 1982, pp. 76, 77). The mental hygiene movement caught on quickly, as its general philosophy meshed well with principles of the popular progressive education movement. Each movement promoted the belief that higher education had a responsibility to prepare students for life beyond the classroom, and “the hygienists’ underlying assumption was that colleges should prepare for life and that the human being was ruled by emotions not intellect” (Cohen, 1982, p. 81). By 1930, a diverse set of institutions had added some component of mental hygiene and personality training to the curriculum, including “Harvard, Smith, Brown, Wellesley, Mt. Holyoke, the University of Vermont, the University of Colorado, Northwestern University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Chicago” (Cohen, 1982, p. 75). The pedagogical technique most favored by the hygienists was the informal, small group discussion, as it offered the most efficient method of reaching the largest numbers of students. With at least one local college among the early proponents of mental hygiene, CWC must have felt compelled to at least consider the movement’s ideals.

**Personality development coursework at CWC.**

In fact, CWC not only adopted personality training, but took the philosophy to the extreme, and as it grew and expanded over the years, personality development became the cornerstone of the CWC curriculum. Yet, instead of focusing solely on counseling and mental health, the College highlighted the development of personality traits such as
charm, beauty, and poise in students. In 1934, CWC officials debuted their new four-point program, which described the College’s overarching vision for women’s education. The program consisted of (1) the educational program, (2) the cultural program, (3) the physical program, and (4) the spiritual program. The most significant element in this four-point plan was the new cultural program, which featured “personality development through classes stressing such topics as personal appearance, voice, diction, etiquette, tact, personal magnetism, cosmetics, dress, and entertaining.”

In 1934, all entering freshmen students campus-wide were required to take the personality development class, which the College called “Orientation,” in their first semester. Following the ideology of the mental hygienists, College officials stated:

Personality, the manner in which one presents and expresses oneself, may be improved or even totally changed. Personalities that are disagreeable, magnetic, colorless, or even dominating may be transformed into charm if the will to improve is strong enough.

Thus, the goal for all students in the personality development program was to “study their personal characteristics, get the opinion of others, strive to correct their weaknesses, and develop their good qualities.” The College emphasized the importance of personality by insisting to students that “success in life depends far more on the possession of a pleasing personality than upon the possession of technical knowledge.”

---


53 Ibid., 13.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.
In just the following year, 1935, the personality development requirement for all freshmen students increased significantly. The “Orientation” class was renamed “Social Fundamentals,” and it became a year-long course. The topics for the class covered the areas of etiquette in all social settings, personal appearance (detailing the proper use of make-up, care of hair and fingernails, appropriate dress, and posture) and speech, which consisted of perfecting eloquent diction, voice control, charming conversation techniques, and public speaking.\(^{57}\) In addition, a new course titled “Freshman Lectures” was added to the curriculum and required for all freshmen in their second semester.\(^{58}\) This was a more typical mental hygiene class devoted to counseling and psychology topics. In the lectures class, a wide range of faculty at CWC and outside experts from the Denver area spoke to students in small groups about tackling everyday life problems and adjustments, modern religious problems from the “girl’s point of view,”\(^{59}\) and “the duties of the girl to her community, home, church, and to the nation.”\(^{60}\) Eventually these topics would broaden to include “the eternal-boy-question” and the composing of “a working philosophy of life.”\(^{61}\)


\(^{58}\) Ibid., 31.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 39.

\(^{60}\) College catalog, *Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College: Annual Catalog*, 1936-1937, vol. 28, no. 4, p. 10, DU Archives. CWC consistently referred to its students as “girls” and not “women.”

By 1938, descriptions of the personality development program dominated the college catalog, and a personality clinic had been established to allow students the opportunity to meet individually with specialists such as dermatologists, cosmetologists, color and clothing experts, and beauticians to work on specific personal issues. The personality clinic also included a “recording studio” where each student could “both see and hear her own voice” and a “motion picture camera so that she may see herself walk, talk, sit, and stand.”

The student newspaper described how motion pictures were taken of every freshman and later viewed in the College auditorium and the social fundamentals classes, where students were critiqued on posture, figure, facial expressions, poise, and ease. In addition, “tongue twisters and two-minute speeches before the microphone tested enunciation and pronunciation of C.W.C.-eds,” so that each student could “criticize her own speaking pitch, volume and range,” leading to a pleasant, “well modulated” speaking voice. The point of these exercises was for students to see themselves as others saw them and to hone the skills that CWC deemed as “the essentials of a cultured, refined woman.” Students definitely learned how to use their appearance and posture to reflect class and social status, as illustrated by the catalog.

---


64 Student newspaper, “Camera Brings Flaws to Light,” *The Western Graphic*, October 13, 1938, p. 3, microfilm, DU Archives.

statement that each student would learn to walk gracefully and rhythmically, and not “like a tired laborer.”

**The personality development textbook: Building Your Personality.**

Personality inventories and vocational aptitude tests also measured characteristics of students’ personalities, and they allowed each student to interpret her score, and then work with faculty and counselors to “formulate plans” toward becoming “a well-balanced,” “well-integrated individual.” In 1939, CWC speech professor and personality development director Hattie Marsh published a personality textbook that was used in the social fundamentals class at CWC and remained a popular, widely-used textbook through the 1950s. This book provided multiple inventories and ratings sheets so that students could critique themselves and their classmates on a variety of personal traits (Marsh, 1939). Marsh and the College emphasized that when all elements of the text were completed, in conjunction with course discussions and faculty conferences, the finished product would be a manual for each girl that afforded “a complete picture of her personality.”

The chapters in Marsh’s *Building Your Personality* included personality, speech, poise, dress, beauty aids, grooming, etiquette, and health. The updated second edition added a chapter on growth, which emphasized life-long learning (Marsh, 1947). These textbooks provide great insight into the personality development program at CWC and CWC and

---

66 Ibid., 9.

67 Ibid., 12.

the specific content of personality courses. The ratings sheets and discussion questions provided in the text reveal much about what students likely discussed in class and what types of class exercises took place. While the goal was constant self-improvement and self development, in the end the course activities likely left many students embarrassed, uncomfortable, and self-critical. For example, students were asked to analyze every detailed aspect of their personal appearance and also to judge and evaluate the physical characteristics of their classmates. Figures 25-29 are short excerpts from five of these often lengthy inventories, and they illustrate how invasive the questions could be, often asking students to evaluate highly personal grooming habits. They also focused on bodily measurements and asked students to keep track of their weight and the size of individual body parts (see Figure 29, p. 197).

**Student response to personality development in the 1930s.**

Students most certainly would have felt at least slightly uncomfortable sharing and evaluating such personal information as was discussed each week in the personality development courses at CWC, and I believe many students (especially those who did not live up to the ideal) may have felt overly criticized, and even humiliated, leading to self-doubt. If nothing else, students were instilled with a perhaps unhealthy obsession with the constant judgment of themselves and others. This I feel manifested in their fascination with campus-wide beauty pageants and public announcements of body measurements, throughout the 1930s-1950s. Students’ eagerness for criticism, encouraged by the personality coursework, is illustrated by the following example. In 1938, a member of the sophomore class wrote in the yearbook: “As a continuation of the social fundamentals
### PERSONAL APPEARANCE RATING SHEET NO. III

(Excerpt from personality development textbook (Marsh, 1939, p. 178).

Name of person to be rated: ________________________________

Place a check mark in the column which best describes the individual named above. Score as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Score carefully. Add the number of points. This total sum will give the individual’s “percentage of grooming.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Body
   - a. Bathes daily ............
   - b. Uses deodorant .......
   - c. Free of body odors...
   - d. Removes superfluous hair .................

2. Dresses, suits, and coats
   - a. Well pressed .............
   - b. Clean ........................
   - c. Length becoming .......
   - d. In good repair ............

3. Underwear
   - a. Clean ........................
   - b. Shoulder straps hidden .........................
   - c. Slips correct length...
   - d. Wears foundation garment .....................

---

*Figure 25*.
**PERSONALITY RATING SCALE NO. 1**

Name ________________________

*Directions for Scoring*

In scoring each of the following personality traits, select acquaintances or friends or idealized persons for your standards of comparison. The scores will range from one point up to five points:

- Up to the standard of the best person you have ever known: 5 points
- Between the best and the average: 4 points
- About equal to that of an average person: 3 points
- Between the average person and one with very little of the trait: 2 points
- About equal to one who has very little or practically none of the trait: 0 or 1 point

The scores in these columns are to be copied from the preceding scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>My Opinion</th>
<th>Friends' Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**A. Facial expression:**
1. Appears friendly...
2. Is cheerful...
3. Avoids showing anger...
4. Reflects thoughts...
5. Has no habitual scowl...
6. Has no annoying facial movements...

**B. Physical bearing:**
1. Sitting posture...
2. Standing posture...
3. Grace of movement...
4. Dignity of bearing...
5. Walk...

**C. Poise and self-control:**
1. Avoids worrying about self...
2. Looks others in the face...
3. Is genuine—has no pretense...
4. Feels sure of self...
5. Remains calm when things go wrong...

---

*Figure 26. Excerpt from personality development textbook (Marsh, 1947, p. 23).*
### PERSONALITY RATING SCALE NO. III

**Dress (Cont.)**

Physical characteristics which should influence clothing selection should be checked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face</th>
<th>Neck</th>
<th>Arms</th>
<th>Chest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oval</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangle</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Sunken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangle</td>
<td>Thin</td>
<td>Heavy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thin</td>
<td>Plump</td>
<td>Thin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shoulders</th>
<th>Bust</th>
<th>Waist</th>
<th>Abdomen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad</td>
<td>Overdeveloped</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Protruding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloping</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Underdeveloped</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopped</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conspicuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scapula</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hips</th>
<th>Thighs</th>
<th>Calves</th>
<th>Ankles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Heavy</td>
<td>Thick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Thin</td>
<td>Thin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneven</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Suggestions for future clothing purchase:_

---

*Figure 27. Excerpt from personality development textbook (Marsh, 1947, p. 139).*
PERSONALITY RATING SCALE NO. IV

(A first-impression check.)

Name of person to be rated

Place a check mark at each description which corresponds with your estimate of the person named above.

1. Eyes are:
   - frowning
   - bloodshot
   - clear
   - expressive
   - expressive at times
   - tired
   - sparkling
   - lifeless
   - often dull
   - lusterless

2. Eyebrows are:
   - colorless
   - shaped becomingly
   - arched too high
   - plucked in too thin a line
   - neat
   - thick
   - shaggy

3. The Face is:
   - oval
   - long
   - round
   - square
   - triangular
   - an inverted triangle
   - thin
   - thin lips
   - receding chin
   - protruding chin
   - high cheek bones
   - deep-set eyes
   - high forehead
   - low forehead

4. The Face has:
   - smooth
   - clear
   - beautiful
   - full of filled pores
   - in fairly good condition
   - unobtrusive
   - blemished
   - not clean

5. The Complexion is:
   - florid
   - pink-tinged
   - olive
   - sallow
   - tinted with yellow
   - gray

Figure 28. Excerpt from personality development textbook (Marsh, 1947, p. 179).
Figure 29. Excerpt from personality development textbook (Marsh, 1947, p. 100).
classes, the sophomores inaugurated a criticism box, a medium through which each member of the class was constructively criticized by her classmates.”

Some students seemed to take personality development courses lightly, as indicated by a freshman column in the school newspaper, “Through a Frosh Day.” In this column a first-year student described each of her classes and offered a few comments. Describing social fundamentals she wrote, “The class has been divided into sections to study the proper do’s and don’ts of veddy, veddy formal occasions.”

By the end of the decade, in 1939, personality development, and its many messages, appeared to have infused deeply into the student experience and student consciousness. When describing the student population at CWC in the foreword to the 1939 yearbook, the student editors wrote, “Take some hair: red, blonde, brown, or black; take flesh and bones for the perfect figure; take a flair for dressing, endowed with personality—mix well with culture and multiply by an x number of times.”

**Personality Development as a Distinctive Program at CWC**

College officials used the personality program to distinguish CWC from other local colleges. For instance, the College catalog stated that with the addition of personality development, CWC provided “a girl a college education—plus.” The College also argued that personality development was unique among colleges in the

---


72 Ibid., 9.
West. The catalog stated, “Our personality development work is unequaled; no other school that we know of attempts such a program.” The College also referred to social fundamentals as a “unique,” “original,” and “famed” course. So little has been written about the specifics of personality coursework that it is difficult to determine just how unique the program at CWC actually was, although it appears that the College’s emphasis on personal appearance and poise was unusual. The only other college to highlight a similar program was Stephens College, a junior college in Missouri that had a “grooming clinic” where students learned “the science of beauty and dress” (“Junior College,” 1937, p. 66). Students at Stephens in the 1930s had the assistance of a New York stylist to help with hair technique, and a voice clinic, similar to CWC’s (“Junior College,” 1937, p. 66).

While it might not have been an entirely unique program, it does seem that CWC received attention in educational circles for its distinctive personality development coursework, and gained a bit more of a media spotlight in the late 1930s than it had previously garnered. For example, photos of CWC students appeared in the national magazine, *Collegiate Digest* in 1936. CWC also became the only junior college to host one of the summer workshops of the Progressive Education Association in 1938 (Ryan & Tyler, 1939), and their involvement was featured in the *New York Times* (“Progressives,”

---


75 Ibid., 1.

1938, p. 32). This honor indicated the growing stature of the College in the 1930s. By the early 1940s, the New York Times would directly highlight the CWC personality development program (“Personality Stressed,” 1942).

**Personality Development as a Response to Growth in Vocational Curricula**

Women’s colleges faced a difficult challenge in the 1930s because they needed to educate women for such a diversity of future life plans. As Boas wrote in 1935, “The Problem before the women’s colleges, then, must be to work out a program of education that will fit students for marriage, if they should marry; for a career, if that is possible for them” (Boas, 1935, p. 272). CWC took on this challenge directly and continued to work toward offering a curriculum that would please many different types of students. As in the past, the College balanced both liberal arts and vocational curricula, and also offered coursework specifically designed for enlightened motherhood and home keeping. The ideal “Miss C.W.C.,” as defined in the College catalog, worked hard “to meet wisely and alertly the exigencies of her career in business or profession, or as queen of her home.”

As the economic crisis of the 1930s “reduced the barriers between male and female jobs,” (Kessler-Harris, 1982, p. 272) and helped to reshape societal roles for women, more professional avenues opened to them. Student demand for vocational curricula thus increased, and CWC responded by adding the vocational programs described such as science, pre-library, pre-legal, pre-medical, and general business to the already established list of vocational concentrations (journalism, secretarial, commercial art, home economics). As a traditional, Christian college with a historically conservative

---

audience, CWC also sought to balance traditional views of womanhood with more modern ideas concerning women’s changing roles in society. The College continued to emphasize the protection of its students, “insuring the proper moral and social life” of all who entered. The College also persisted in evoking domestic imagery as it assured all who might be interested, including parents and community members, that young women at CWC lived their lives on campus in the “homelike…atmosphere of a fine, happy, well-conducted family in a beautiful home.”

These strategies had been used in the past to counterbalance the growth of vocational curricula and to soften the threat that a daughter might leave college with desires beyond traditional marriage and motherhood. I believe that the initiation of the personality development program at CWC offered an even greater counterbalance to the significant expansion of the vocational curricula in the 1930s. Personality development broadened the purpose of education for women to include detailed social training as an integral component, alongside preparation for home or profession. Yet by instituting a campus-wide curricular program that mandated the development of beauty, poise, charm, grace, and propriety in women students, the College assured that all CWC graduates were beyond reproach, whatever their future plans. The message to students was that as women, they could pursue new career opportunities and plan non-traditional life courses, but only if they also first proved their mastery of ideal American womanhood. The College did not deny that “the college woman must ultimately lead and guide the

---


It was just that College officials believed that a woman must first “know how to conduct herself in the various stations and avenues of life.” For example, the catalog stated:

She must understand herself and how to care for, protect and refine herself. She must know how to dress, how to meet people, how to carry on an intelligent conversation, and how to participate in the affairs of social, community, and business life.

Through rigorous social and personality training, the College hoped to prepare women for the difficulties of dealing with the social criticism they would likely face if they made the choice to enter the professional world as career women. The graduates might be scrutinized for their choices, but personality development courses guaranteed that they would certainly not be critiqued for their lack of womanly beauty, poise, or conversational charm. The College even touted the value of personality development from the employers’ perspective, noting that this type of social training “was recognized by modern business as an essential part of training for positions of the highest type.”

The implementation of this unique curricular program also allowed the College to focus its promotional literature largely on this new element, allowing students to find the vocational curriculum they desired for themselves, while much was discussed in the catalogs about the details of the personality clinic and classes such as “Social

---


81 Ibid., 13.

82 Ibid.

Fundamentals.” In this way, the College almost distracted those who might fear too much vocational curricula for their daughters with talk of the value of individualized personality training.

In addition to teaching CWC’s version of perfect, idealized womanliness, the personality development program also imbued students with a sense of selflessness, which served to outweigh and overshadow any extreme individual goals they might acquire through the curriculum. Again, students were free to adopt new roles, but only if they continued to successfully fulfill existing social roles for women. In other words, women were taught that it was appropriate to pursue their own dreams and desires only after family and community expectations were met. As discussed, the “Freshman Lectures” course continually reminded students of their responsibilities to their homes and families first, and the ideal Miss C.W.C.’s ultimate life purpose was “TO LIVE FOR OTHERS.”

This emphasis on selflessness helped the College teach students the lessons of traditional womanhood, while also promoting new careers, new paths, and new possibilities for their lives. Tradition and modernity walked hand in hand at CWC in the 1930s. The College monitored curricular change, and then implemented and adapted the new personality development program in a fine balancing act that provided an education for women that was at the same time constraining and empowering.

---

84 College catalog, Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College: Annual Catalog, 1939-1940, p. 7, DU Archives.
Student Enrollment and Course Preferences, 1930-1940

The enrollment of students in collegiate instruction at CWC throughout the 1930s increased significantly, reaching a high of 360 students by the 1939-1940 academic year. This figure more than doubled the enrollment of a decade earlier, when only 149 students entered during the 1929-1930 academic year.\(^{85}\) Figure 30 illustrates how the most dramatic enrollment increases occurred toward the end of the decade, when new vocational programs and personality development coursework were both in place. Figure 30 also presents enrollment data for the preparatory students from 1930 until the final elimination of the preparatory department in 1936.\(^{86}\) Overall, student persistence improved greatly over the College’s statistics from previous decades, reaching a height of 65% returning students in the 1939-1940 academic year. The average student return rate for the decade of the 1930s was 53.4%.\(^{87}\) Among these students who did not return to complete their studies, it is likely that many transferred to other colleges, found employment, or married.\(^{88}\)

Over the course of the 10 year period from 1930 to 1940, CWC granted 352 associate in arts degrees, 273 associate in science degrees, and 153 associate in fine arts degrees.

---

\(^{85}\) Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 25, 1939, p. 21, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954; Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 16, 1940, p. 18, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives.

\(^{86}\) See Yearbook, Skyline, 1935-1936, p. 10, DU Archives.

\(^{87}\) Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 16, 1940, p. 17, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives.

\(^{88}\) The student newspapers indicated that these were common reasons why students did not return to campus.
Figure 30. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1930-1940

---

89 Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 25, 1939, p. 21, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954; Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 16, 1940, p. 18, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives. Total enrollment figures include “special” non-degree students.
degrees, for a total of 778 degrees. While students earned more associate in arts degrees than any other type, the emerging trend for the decade showed an increased student preference for terminal, vocational degrees in departments such as home economics, journalism, and business education.\textsuperscript{90} For example, from 1930 to 1940 the percentage of associate in science (terminal, vocational) degrees increased 33\% (from 12.5 to 45.7\%), “while the straight liberal arts majors decreased from 76.8\% in 1930 to 32.2\% in 1940.”\textsuperscript{91} This represented a decrease of 44.6\% for the associate in arts degree. Figure 31 illustrates this trend away from the liberal-arts based associate in arts degree and toward the vocational, associate in science degree.

Figure 32 (p. 208) illustrates the top eight most popular majors over the decade, as compiled from the declared majors of graduating students in the College yearbooks. These majors were education, secretarial/business, liberal arts, home economics, journalism, music, and drama/speech, indicating that many students were planning for careers in the teaching field. Students could teach with their two-year degree if they completed the proper sequence of courses and qualified for a state teaching certificate. Thus, in essence, four of the most popular majors were terminal, vocational programs. At the same time this list illustrates that all of the three branches of education offered at CWC, including liberal arts, domestic, and vocational, were represented among the most popular majors. CWC appeared to be well serving a wide variety of students.

Despite their increased interest in career-related fields in this decade, students still expressed much interest in domestic activities. For example, a student newspaper article

\textsuperscript{90} Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 16, 1940, p. 15, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
Figure 31. Change in distribution of degree types granted, illustrating growth of associate in science degree, 1930-1940.  

Consolidated Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, April 16, 1940, p. 15, Box 257: History Chronological Files 1939-1954, DU Archives.

207
**Figure 32.** Most popular majors at CWC, as declared by students, 1930-1940.

Compiled from self-reported majors of graduating students as listed in College yearbooks, 1930-1940, DU Archives. Note: The expression department changed its name to dramatic arts in 1933-1934.
described how many students enrolled in vocational programs enjoyed traditional women’s crafts such as crocheting, knitting, sewing, and quilting. The author described one of her fellow students as follows:

Dorothy Sweatt is a Southern girl who is planning a journalistic career, and upsets the popular opinion that potential newspaper women have no home-making interests. She is making multi-colored squares of crocheted yarn, which when properly assembled will result in an Afghan blanket.  

This vignette reflects the tensions created by the expansion of vocational curricula for women students in the 1930s, and the corresponding desire to demonstrate traditional womanhood. Here, this article represents how individual students dealt with the tensions. CWC dealt with these same tensions by initiating the personality development program to soften the conflicting messages of the College’s vocational curriculum and traditional women’s roles.

With the fundamentals of the CWC curriculum established, the next chapter outlines major curricular changes at CWC from 1940 through 1959. I explore the impact of World War II on the College curriculum and discuss the relative stability of the curriculum in the postwar era.

---

Figure 33. Swimming class, YWCA pool, 1933-1934 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 34. Personality development voice recording, 1939 College catalog, WHC, DPL.
Miss Mary Asher Nelson
Los Angeles, California

Qualifications:

Height: 5 Feet, 9½ Inches
Weight: 118 Pounds
Neck: 12¾ Inches
Bust: 34 Inches
Waist: 23½ Inches
Hips: 35½ Inches
Thighs: 17 Inches
Calves: 12 Inches
 Ankles: 7¾ Inches
Ankles: 9 Inches
Wrist: 5¼ Inches

Figure 35. Beauty contest winner, 1932-1933 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 36. Hygiene counseling with College nurse, 1939 College catalog, WHC, DPL.

Figure 37. Personality development consultation, 1939 College catalog, WHC, DPL.
Figure 38. Denver College of Music building, 1932-1933 College catalog, DU Archives.
Figure 39. Business machines class, 1939 College catalog, WHC, DPL.

Figure 40. Secretarial class, 1939-1940 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 41. Rhythmic body training class, 1932-1933 College catalog, DU Archives.
Chapter Seven: The CWC Curriculum During World War II and the Postwar Decade, 1940-1959

This chapter provides an overview of further evolutions in the CWC curriculum from 1940 to 1959. Divided chronologically, this discussion traces the major philosophical changes that took place within the curriculum across these decades. In both of the major sections that follow (1940-1946, 1946-1959), I again provide a description of CWC’s curriculum, comparing it to that of other women’s colleges where such comparative data exists. As in past chapters, I include information for each era on student enrollment, and most popular courses of study. I describe how CWC introduced specific courses to meet wartime demands in the 1940s. I also discuss how the curriculum remained relatively stable in the 1950s, even while other women’s colleges altered their curricula in response to postwar critics of women’s higher education. I discover that throughout the 1940s and 1950s, CWC combined a liberal arts curriculum with domestic education and ever-increasing vocational programs for women, thus preparing its students for a wide diversity of life and career paths. I argue that all the while, the personality development program stood at the forefront of the curriculum, serving to equalize conflicting ideas regarding women’s education and its purpose.

The Impact of World War II on the CWC Curriculum, 1940-1946

World War II brought several changes to the curriculum at CWC, as the College was committed to “preparing students to assume their responsibilities in the all-out war
Red Cross courses in home nursing and first aid training were first introduced in 1941, and initially attracted 60 students. These classes required students to pass an exam which certified them to be “subject to call for Red Cross duty in time of war.” Red Cross courses were offered throughout the duration of the War and college catalogs noted that they were included in the curriculum “to meet the needs of the young women eager to ‘DO’ in this period of all-out defense.” The College promoted these courses by arguing that they were “useful in time of emergency,” but also “invaluable to the young woman, regardless of the profession for which she prepares.”

The War also brought changes to the academic schedule, as the College instituted Saturday classes and intensive summer sessions in order to allow students to more quickly prepare for war work. Under the new schedule, freshman students could graduate in three semesters, as opposed to the typical four. By 1943 CWC instituted more substantial changes to the curriculum to meet wartime demands, such as offering radio telegraphy training and a new program to train students for positions as air hostesses.

---


2 Student newspaper, “New Course are Offered,” *The Western Graphic*, February 6, 1941, p. 1, DU Archives.


4 Ibid.


The air hostess program was coordinated with Continental Airlines and required students to remain on-campus for a third year. There was much interest in this program, as College officials and community members believed that there was a great demand for women in the airline industry during wartime. For example, one airline executive made the following comment in the student newspaper:

With the attack on Pearl Harbor and our entry into the active war, woman’s place in airline work has become more and more important. This fact is attested by the increasingly large number of women being employed in various capacities. Hundreds of women are now taking the place of men as reservation clerks, passenger agents, ticket counter clerks and ramp attendants…Hundreds of girls are airplane hostesses—a dignified and interesting profession.7

The air hostess program became one of the most long-standing legacies of wartime curriculum change, as the College continued to offer this training through the 1960s.8

In the fall of 1943, “as a war emergency measure,” and in response to student demand, the North Central Association of Colleges granted CWC the ability to offer additional third-year college courses in order to provide specialized preparation for “wartime jobs.”9 Thus, advanced courses in home economics, nutrition, dietetics, social service, and elementary teaching were offered to interested students. Other war-related curriculum changes included an increase in the physical education hours required of all students, in order “to keep every girl fit and ready to do her part,”10 and alterations in the


8 See College catalogs through 1962, DU Archives.


art curriculum to allow students to contribute illustrative posters and drawings for use by the army.\textsuperscript{11} A government-approved aviation program was also coordinated to certify students for their private pilots’ licenses.\textsuperscript{12} In fact, the aviation ground school and flight instruction program became so popular that students organized an aviation club in 1944 that they called Stick and Rudder.\textsuperscript{13} Even at War’s end, Aviation remained a regular part of the curriculum until 1963.

Perhaps the most unique wartime introduction to the curriculum was a military training class, referred to as the CWC Cadette officers’ training school, led by CWC President James “Prexy” Huchingson.\textsuperscript{14} This program educated students in precision marching and military drill in order to prepare them for entrance into the armed services. Many CWC students expressed interest in “joining the ranks of the WAVES, WAACS, SPARS, and Marines,” and they needed to know the “art of drilling.”\textsuperscript{15} The College claimed to be the “first girls’ school to provide feminine military training,”\textsuperscript{16} and I have discovered no similar women’s college courses described in the literature. More than 30

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{11} “CWC-eds are Now in Army,” \textit{The Western Graphic}, November 12, 1942, p. 1, microfilm, DU Archives.
\textsuperscript{12} “Aviation Offered to CWC,” \textit{The Western Graphic}, February 11, 1943, p. 1, microfilm, DU Archives.
\textsuperscript{14} College catalog, \textit{Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College}, 1943-1944, vol. 36, no. 3, p. 6, DU Archives.
\textsuperscript{15} “‘Prexy’ Drills Campus Corps,” \textit{The Western Graphic}, April 29, 1943, p. 2, microfilm, DU Archives.
\end{flushleft}
senior students in 1943 braved early mornings to practice in the gym, and the student newspaper noted: “upon completion of their training, some of the senior students will be commissioned as officers and will train all freshmen interested in joining the armed forces.”

The newspaper also stated that the marching corps would be sent on a public demonstration tour “including the various army camps.”

CWC students themselves even made contributions to the curriculum during World War II, as the student council and Y.W.C.A. club on campus organized and sponsored a course in Braille which attracted students and faculty alike. The purpose of the class was to certify participants to “transcribe books for those service men who return from the war blind.”

Areas of the regular curriculum that expanded due to new career opportunities for women during the War were business education, which added a specialization in “Personnel,” in 1943, and courses in radio broadcasting, which the College described as offering “unlimited possibilities for young women as commentators, announcers or artists.”

---

17 “Seniors Drill to be Officers,” *The Western Graphic*, October 14, 1943, p. 1, microfilm, DU Archives. In this era first-year students were called freshmen, and second-year students, seniors. This subtly highlighted the College’s terminal coursework and not its role as a two-year college for students seeking to transfer to a senior college.

18 Ibid.


**War-related curriculum revision at other women’s colleges.**

Similar curricular changes occurred during World War II at other women’s college campuses as well. For example, the eastern women’s colleges, along with western women’s colleges such as Mills College and Mount St. Mary’s College (a Catholic women’s college in Los Angeles, CA) instituted Red Cross courses that were popular with students (Hedley, 1961; Kendall, 1976; McNeil, 1985). Most women’s colleges also offered accelerated coursework, as was the case at CWC, to allow students to graduate more quickly. Distinctive additions to the curriculum at Mills College included “a new crop of extra-curricular classes” (Hedley, 1961 p. 109), such as automobile mechanics and occupational therapy, the latter of which was designed to prepare students to serve the needs of injured soldiers. At Mount St. Mary’s one of the unique curricular changes was that “an organized program of prayer, meditation, and silence was scheduled for each free period” (McNeil, 1985, p. 46).

**War rhetoric as curriculum rationale.**

Throughout World War II, CWC referred generally to all courses that contributed in some way to preparing women for war work as “Victory Courses.” For example, the college catalog stated in 1943: “Throughout the duration of the war, the college will continue to specialize in Victory Courses for capable, ambitious, patriotic young women.” In a College brochure titled “For Victory: Meeting the Demand for Trained Women,” Victory Courses were described as leading to “thorough preparation for

---

employment in business, industry, civil service, and war emergency.” Precisely which courses the College considered to be Victory courses was never explicitly specified, indicating that CWC was less interested in their curricular content than simply utilizing the rhetoric of war. I would argue that College officials used the heightened language of wartime to justify their continued expansion of the vocational curriculum and to encourage women to prepare themselves for new professional opportunities brought by the demands of war. Clearly, the College hoped to do its part in contributing to the War effort, but they also strategically made use of the opportunity to rationalize the curricular path they had already set with renewed patriotic intensity.

**CWC promotes expanded wartime career options for women.**

For college women across America, World War II suddenly brought unprecedented career prospects, as “scores of women managed to slip through war-created gaps into previously all-male bastions while the incumbents were otherwise engaged” (Kendall, 1976, p. 204). Throughout the War, CWC encouraged its students to seize the occasion to pursue academic and career options that were previously solely in the male domain, such as in personnel, aviation, and the airline industry. The College also continually advertised and promoted the link between its vocational curricula and the new career opportunities for women that wartime manpower shortages and military campaigns necessitated. For example, the College highlighted opportunities for home economics majors as “food buyers, dietitians, home economists, lecturers,” and “supervisors” in the

---

23 “For Victory: Meeting the Demand for Trained Women,” n.d., Box Title: Scrapbooks, 1945, DU Archives.
“United States Civil Service, or in the Armed Forces.” The College catalogs also reminded students that graduates of the CWC business program were “qualified for high salaried positions...in the armed forces, national defense, or war industry,” as secretaries, accountants, retail salesmen, and office and personnel managers. Students also received the message that college women were being enlisted for “men’s work” in the Civil Service, and that this was a promising area of growth for women graduates. Sometimes the College explicitly used the emergency of war to motivate students and to recruit new ones, as illustrated in the following excerpt from a college catalog:

**WOMEN WANTED**
In this present global war, women who are sought for the choice positions of dignity, trust, and commanding the highest salaries, are college-trained women. The various branches of the armed forces are constantly seeking women who have completed at least two years of college.

In addition to encouraging students to prepare for war-related work, CWC also recognized the hundreds of CWC graduates who were already “serving valiantly in the armed forces, defense operations, and war industries,” where they were “making good” and “distinguishing themselves.” This served to honor those alumnae who contributed

---


28 Ibid., 5.
to the War effort and reinforced to students the expanded career possibilities that were available.

Along with preparing for immediate war work, CWC students were also encouraged to consider their roles in the postwar era and to use their college educations to train for their expanded postwar responsibilities and opportunities as women. CWC President Huchingson emphasized the importance of “young women in post-war reconstruction” in speeches throughout the Denver community,\(^{29}\) and College officials urged the CWC student to “dream her dreams” and to prepare “to take her rightful place as a citizen in the golden age of America.”\(^{30}\)

**Personality development expands.**

As I discussed in Chapter 6, CWC introduced the personality development program in the 1930s, which entailed coursework for all students in social training and proper womanhood. I have argued that CWC initiated these courses into the curriculum in order to equalize the College’s promotion of its vocational curriculum and expanded career opportunities for women. In this way, the College was able to balance traditional and modern ideals of womanhood on campus. The personality development program allowed CWC to assure parents, community members, employers, and the students themselves, that professional women could still uphold traditional standards of womanly beauty, femininity, charm, and grace.

\(^{29}\)“President Speaks on Broadcast,” *The Western Graphic*, December 2, 1943, p. 1, microfilm, DU Archives.

As World War II accelerated the demand for women in the workforce, women’s interest in vocational coursework grew as well. As just discussed, CWC met this demand and encouraged women to seek out new positions. Here again, the College matched this expansion of vocational curricula and opportunity with a simultaneous development of its personality development program. Prior to the war era, CWC students were required to take only two semesters of personality development coursework in the freshman year. By 1943, College officials extended the program to four semesters, thereby doubling the personality development requirement. As a result, all students took personality development courses every semester during both of their years on campus.\(^{31}\)

This addition of a second year to the personality curriculum was noted by the *New York Times*, which wrote: “As a counterbalance to the strained nerves and heavy working schedules brought about by wartime activities, students at the Colorado Woman’s College are now required to study personality development for two years” (“Personality Stressed,” 1942, p. D5). This announcement marked CWC’s only public acknowledgment of the critical role that personality development played as a “counterbalancing” force on campus. Here, the College recognized the power of personality development to alleviate the stresses and strains of war on the campus population. I would go further, as suggested, and argue that the College used the personality development curriculum even more broadly to maintain a balance between tradition and modernity on campus. The college catalog stated: “Modern young women, as never before, find themselves challenged in a world of changing conditions and

ideals.” Recognizing these changes, CWC expanded personality development to keep this social change somewhat in check, while still promoting advances for women in the realms of education and career. Winchell (2008) argues in a study of USO hostesses during World War II, that these college-aged women hostesses, who catered to the needs of male servicemen, “stabilized dominant gender roles in the midst of expanding work and career options for women” (p. 11). Personality development at CWC worked in this same way to stabilize gender roles and to reinforce the traditional purpose of women’s education, as evolving social change constantly threatened the status quo.

The aims and purpose of the personality development curriculum in the 1940s continued in the same pattern as the program had in the previous decade, only it grew to be even more intense. The College claimed to have “created a school for girls dedicated to the most cherished ideals of American womanhood.” To meet this lofty standard, students were weighed and measured by the faculty and staff of the posture clinic every six weeks, and they continued to be photographed and analyzed for posture faults “in revealing bathing suits and shorts,” the students remarked. The College catalog of 1945 described the personality program in this way to prospective and current students:

---

32 College catalog, Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College, 1941-1942, vol. 34, no. 4, p. 2, DU Archives.

33 Interestingly, only a handful of CWC students ever reported working as USO hostesses. See “Buying Stamps and Bonds,” The Western Graphic, February 3, 1944, p. 1, microfilm, DU Archives.

34 College catalog, Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College, 1941-1942, vol. 34, no. 4, p. 35, DU Archives.

35 “Dean Marsh Opens Clinic,” The Western Graphic, September 26, 1940, p. 1, microfilm, DU Archives.
Unusual as C.W.C. is in all its approaches to education, by far, the most unusual of its courses is the one which is offered by the Personality Department. Every girl who goes to C.W.C. is enrolled in this Department. When she comes to College, she will find required courses for freshmen under the name Orientation. Those are her personality courses. When she is a senior, the name of her course is The Philosophy of Living. Neither of these names sounds very exciting, but exciting work…[it] is. For it has only one purpose—to improve your personality, to give you poise, to show you how to take care of your hair and skin and nails, to teach you how to dress, to give you a beautiful speaking voice, to send you forth a perfectly-appointed, socially-cultured, woman.\(^{36}\)

These personality courses required “attendance at chapel, student assemblies, and appreciation hours,”\(^{37}\) at a time when the majority of women’s colleges had long-past eliminated such compulsory activities (Kendall, 1976; Peril, 2006). In this way, personality development encompassed all aspects of a student’s life on campus, both inside and outside the classroom. The College even credited personality development with helping its students attract husbands. For example, the catalog stated:

Because of their attractive, alluring personalities, C.W.C. graduates have distinguished themselves in holding positions of trust and distinction in the principal professions, careers, and vocations for women. They also have excelled in selecting husbands, proof of which is the large number of happy homes established.\(^{38}\)

This message promoted the personality program, and also reminded all who read the course catalogs that marriage was just as important a goal for college women as career preparation, even in wartime. Women at CWC were implicitly instructed that both were possible in their lives if they so desired.

\(^{36}\) College catalog, *Catalog of Colorado Woman’s College*, 1944-1945, vol. 37, no. 1, p. 18, DU Archives.


Personality development at CWC actually became so popular and closely identified with the College that faculty began offering an intensive six-week summer adult education course for “business women and club women,” which included all elements of the regular campus courses.³⁹ CWC was proud to note that it was “often called ‘The Personality Campus,’” and clearly the College highlighted this aspect of the curriculum to distinguish it from other college campuses both locally and across the country.⁴⁰ CWC did attempt to offer a unique curricular experience to students in combining personality development with practical vocational curriculum, liberal arts studies, fine arts facilities, and domestic preparation.

CWC officials believed that this curricular innovation was what defined the College as a western college for women, and throughout this era, they greatly emphasized the College’s identity as an institution of the West. For example, CWC described itself as a college which combined “the finest classical traditions of the long established women’s colleges with the modern desire for specialized training in professional and commercial pursuits.”⁴¹ They wrote that the College “combine[d] the inspiration of the newer West with the culture of the East.”⁴² In fact, CWC claimed to be “the only Western college for

³⁹ “Dean Marsh,” The Western Graphic, May 15, 1941, p. 1, microfilm, DU Archives.

⁴⁰ College catalog, Catalog of Colorado Woman’s College, 1945-1946, vol. 37, no. 4, p. 20, DU Archives.

⁴¹ College catalog, Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College, 1941-1942, vol. 34, no. 4, p. 1, DU Archives.

⁴² College catalog, Catalog of Colorado Woman’s College, 1944-1945, vol. 37, no. 1, p. 4, DU Archives.
women in America,” which mingled “the dignity of Eastern culture and the
adventuresome spirit of the West.”

**Student reactions to both vocational opportunity and personality
development in wartime.**

Students at CWC responded eagerly and enthusiastically to the new vocational
potential for women created by the wartime emergency, and they readily expressed their
desire to take full advantage of what they acknowledged were historic opportunities. For
example, students regularly encouraged each other in newspaper editorials to seize their
chances for new attainments before the moment had passed. One student wrote:

> We must live our lives fully, grasping every educational opportunity with all the
fervor we are capable of mustering. We are living in an age of opportunity, but
little or nothing has ever been accomplished through dreaming alone. The
advancement is here if we but dare to advance.\(^{44}\)

Another student reflected on how World War II had influenced the goals of college
women, stating:

> We want to take advantage of our educational opportunities because we believe
we can make a place for ourselves that has never before been attained by any
previous generation!....And we realize, too, that there are jobs opened to us.\(^{45}\)

CWC students of this era clearly understood the possibilities that awaited them, and they
were confident in their ability to meet new challenges after graduation. Student writings
of the time reflect their sense of having been well prepared by CWC for a wide variety of

\(^{43}\) College catalog, *Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College*, 1946-1947, vol. 38, no. 3,
September, 1945, p. 7, DU Archives.

\(^{44}\) “What about Tomorrow,” *The Western Graphic*, March 26, 1943, p. 4, microfilm, DU
Archives.

\(^{45}\) “Higher Education Counts,” *The Western Graphic*, March 2, 1944, p. 2, microfilm, DU
Archives.
life paths. When the editors of the 1945 yearbook asked at graduation, “What will we do?” they responded by listing: “Some will be graduated. Some will work. Some will marry. Some will join the service. Some will just go home. And some will go back to school.” Again highlighting the wide possibilities they saw for themselves as women graduates in wartime and their confidence in their preparation by CWC, student editors of the 1944 yearbook proudly stated:

For two years the seniors have looked forward to wearing the white caps and gowns signifying their graduation from Colorado Woman’s College. And now, these seniors… will take their place in a world still ravished by war. Some will continue their studies at institutions of higher learning—others will seek careers—and others will settle down in a cottage for two with that certain someone. It is these same seniors who will assist in building the post-war world of tomorrow—the life for which Colorado Woman’s College has helped to fit them.

Student enthusiasm for using the CWC curriculum for advancement after graduation was also swelled by patriotism and nationalism. Of particular interest is the way that students adopted the same war rhetoric utilized by College officials to defend their desires for careers after college. At the same time that the College spoke of “Victory Courses,” CWC students boasted that their entrance into the work world was an attack on the enemy. For example, a 1943 student newspaper headline at graduation rang out with the following exclamation as 123 students completed their degrees: “123 Threats to Tojo as Girls Begin Careers.”

46 Yearbook, Skyline, 1944-1945, vol. xxxvi, pp.82-83, DU Archives.


Those CWC students who wished to work after graduation were clear that they wanted to find jobs in fields with potential for the future and not in areas that would “become extinct after the war.”⁴⁹ They appeared to be most optimistic about the potential for women in business, likely because this field was so emphasized in the curriculum at CWC. Members of Tri Chi, a club for business majors on campus, expressed this sentiment in the yearbook:

Today we are busy preparing, for now—especially—girls are more important in the business fields than ever before—wars, defense programs, new projects, expanding industries, are constantly demanding the use of skilled labor to act as secretaries, private secretaries, then managers, retailers, accountants, advertisers, and merchandisers….Yes times have changed—and women with it—how wisely…We secretaries think our future looks bright—and we can hardly wait to try it for ourselves.⁵⁰

Students in the business honor fraternity, Alpha Pi Epsilon, also predicted “a rosy career ahead for secretaries and stenographers.”⁵¹ They saw additional benefits of the business field as well, in working with and meeting men, and they believed that their personality development training would assist in this aspect of their career lives. For example, a student wrote in the yearbook:

What business man can resist a delightful smile? A low lilting voice? A flawlessly groomed girl? And an efficient stenographer?...Here in C.W.C. we find plenty of

---


⁵¹ The Tri Chi business club and the business honor fraternity Alpha Pi Epsilon were two of the largest students clubs on campus in this period. See College yearbooks, 1940-1946.

girls who come up to this standard because of the important role personality training has on our campus.  

Overall, student reaction to the personality development training that increased so dramatically during the 1940s was mixed, with some women feeling it was one of the most important elements of the curriculum and others disapproving of it. For example, many graduates surveyed in 2000 remembered personality development during the 1940s at CWC fondly, as expressed in the following excerpts from alumnae survey questionnaires:

The Social Fundamentals gave me a security against embarrassment in public affairs…It helped when one needed to plan and lead in group activities.  

The ideals I was taught and experienced helped me in my marriage, in raising my three children and the confidence in myself to volunteer in my church and community.  

The exposure to all the finer things gave me good taste.  

I learned many of the social graces, not taught in many colleges any more and a wonderful philosophy of living.

Recognizing the power of personality development to temper social change, one surveyed student stated:

I believe young women need guidance and protection from their ignorance. CWC was able to lead a great many young women through this difficult period when the

---

53 Ibid.

54 Helen Elizabeth Rowland Proctor, CWC Alumnae Survey Questionnaire, 2000, DU Archives.

55 Phyllis Holm, CWC Alumnae Survey Questionnaire, 2000, DU Archives.

56 Marjorie Underwood Robbins, CWC Alumnae Survey Questionnaire, 2000, DU Archives.

57 Ruth Williams Northrup, CWC Alumnae Survey Questionnaire, 2000, DU Archives.
nation was fighting a World War and we seemed to be on the cutting edge of social changes.\textsuperscript{58}

These responses reflect the views of CWC graduates who were several decades removed from their collegiate experiences. A 1950 study conducted by Mast (1950) which surveyed CWC students who graduated between 1942 and 1947 indicates that personality development courses were not always among the students’ favorites. For example, many students listed personality courses among those they considered “the least valuable after graduation” (Mast, 1950, p. 41). One student “said that the personality courses offered in college were also offered in her high school. Another said the Philosophy of Living course was poorly organized” (Mast, 1950, p. 41). Rating all aspects of the personality program, surveyed students listed “Personality tests and mental hygiene” as the most useful and important areas, while “cosmetology,” “clothing,” “party hostesses,” and “social correspondence” rated at the bottom of the list (Mast, 1950, p. 52). Interestingly, a survey of CWC freshmen students in 1943, by CWC Dean Paul Baum, found that entering students were very interested in personality development. In fact, when asked about their number one aim and objective in college the most frequent response was, “To develop my personality” (Baum, 1945, p. 48). Similarly, in the same era students at Stephens College, a junior college for women in Missouri, expressed personality to be of utmost importance. A campus survey showed that Stephens students cited personality as “the source of more worry” than any other item. This clearly reflected a trend of the times toward college student interest in personality that has not yet been fully explored (Baum, 1945, p. 80).

\textsuperscript{58} Ellanore Mathews McKenna, CWC Alumnae Survey Questionnaire, 2000, DU Archives.
Baum’s research indicates that students went to CWC seeking personality training, and that it was clearly an important element of the College’s marketing and recruiting strategy. Yet Mast’s study shows that as recent college graduates they did not find that it lived up to expectations. Perhaps students came to see that in their everyday worlds as wives, mothers, and professionals personality development was not as practically necessary as they had been taught to believe. Yet, as older alumnae, CWC students remember the personality development training that they received in the 1940s as valuable and life-changing. Likely, this represents a mixture of nostalgia for a bygone era, along with a maturity that allows reflection on the full-spectrum of their lives. Surely the mixed reaction to personality development training represents the complicated nature of this coursework, and the ways that it could serve to empower women with the confidence to achieve their best, and at the same time constrain them in traditional gender roles.

**Student enrollment and course preferences, 1940-1946.**

Enrollment at CWC in the World War II-era showed a slight increasing trend over the previous decade, reaching a height of just over 400 students by 1945-1946. (Figure 42 illustrates the enrollment numbers at CWC from 1940-1946). This slight increase was consistent with enrollment trends for other women’s colleges of this period. Kendall (1976) argues that women’s colleges did not suffer the enrollment declines faced by coeducational colleges during World War II because there were no male students and faculty to lose to government service. In fact, she suggests that the eastern women’s colleges became more popular because the War brought fewer disruptions to college life than at coeducational campuses. For example, she argues that women’s colleges “could
Figure 42. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1940-1946

Compiled from College yearbooks, 1940-1946, DU Archives. I have compiled these enrollment figures by counting student photos in the College yearbooks, as institutional sources for this era could not be located. These numbers are very close to the figures reported by Turner (1982), using sources that are no longer available to researchers. I did not use Turner’s figures, as he does not report data for all years of interest in this study.
continue to offer a full and often expanded range of courses” (Kendall, 1976, p. 201).
Noting the benefits of the women’s colleges in wartime, she states that with “the most powerful arguments for coeducation…temporarily stilled…the women’s colleges got a great many able and interesting students who would have gone elsewhere in peacetime” (Kendall, 1976, p. 201). Certainly CWC enrollment must also have benefited from the fact that the campus had a faculty composed predominantly of women, and the ability to offer a complete curriculum throughout the duration of the War.

Figure 43 illustrates the top six most popular majors during the World War II-era, as compiled from the declared majors of graduating students in the College yearbooks. These most popular courses of study were liberal arts, followed extremely closely by those who declared secretarial or business majors. The two most popular majors were followed at some distance by home economics, journalism, education, and music. 60 The largest percentage of students continued, as at the end of the past decade, to receive the vocational-focused associate in science degree, followed by the associate in arts, and the associate in fine arts. For example, in 1945, of 158 graduating students, 47% received the associate in science degree, 37% the associate in arts degree, and 16% the associate in fine arts degree. 61

Of these same 158 seniors, 56% planned to attend a senior college, 30% planned to work, 7% planned to be married, and 7% were undecided at the time of graduation. 62 This great interest in continuing education after CWC likely explains the popularity

60 See College yearbooks, 1940-1946.
61 “Largest Graduating Class,” The Western Graphic, May 11, 1945, pp. 1, 6, microfilm, DU Archives.
62 Ibid., 2.
Figure 43. Most popular majors at CWC, as declared by students, 1940-1946

Compiled from self-reported majors of graduating students as listed in College yearbooks, 1940-1946, DU Archives.
of the liberal arts-focused associate in arts degree, which prepared students to transfer to a baccalaureate-granting college or university (see Figure 32, p. 208 for comparisons of the liberal arts major since the 1930s). The decrease in popularity of the education major from the decade of the 1930s likely indicates the broadened career possibilities that students imagined for themselves in this era of wartime change. (It could also simply reflect changes in how students self-reported their majors, as some in the past may have reported their major as education if they planned to teach, regardless of the subject matter in which they specialized). As would be expected given its emphasis in the curriculum and its wartime necessity, the popularity of the business program remained high. Again, as was indicated at the end of the 1930s, the most popular majors declared by students in their yearbooks represented the full spectrum of the curriculum at CWC from liberal arts, to vocational programs in business and journalism, to music and the fine arts, and finally to home economics, which offered a combination of both vocational and domestic preparation.

The next section of this chapter explores the themes that emerge from the coursework at CWC in the 1950s.

A Postwar Era of Curricular Stability, 1946-1959

At the end of World War II the curriculum at CWC quickly returned to a prewar state of normalcy. By 1946, there was no further mention of “Victory Courses” or other war-related curricular activities, and the College efficiently refocused its mission on preparing young women for two years of collegiate instruction leading to further education in a senior college, professional work, or homemaking. While some women’s colleges, including Vassar and Sarah Lawrence, briefly accepted men in the postwar
years to ease the overflowing college enrollments of returning soldiers (Kendall, 1976; Solomon (1985), this was not the case at CWC. Actually, CWC did not even admit women veterans, stating that the College “was unable to participate in post-war education for returning women veterans, because of its unique educational program, designed especially for girls,…its specialized equipment, furnishings, and facilities; and because of its limited accommodations.”

The College instituted a policy that married women and students over the age of 19 would not be admitted, and widows and students who married while enrolled at CWC were not allowed to live in the dorms.

While CWC clearly wished to re-establish its niche in the higher education landscape without allowing wartime adjustments to its mission, the College did not attempt to redefine its curriculum in the postwar years. As was discussed briefly in Chapter 2, many women’s colleges faced great pressure in the post-World War II era to eliminate liberal arts or vocational coursework that prepared women for lives outside the realm of domesticity and motherhood (Fass, 1989; Solomon, 1985). Solomon (1985) writes that women’s education at this time “became the focus of a backlash in which the old disagreement over the purposes of educating women was rekindled” (p. 191). Educators and social critics were “fearful of the continuing changes in work patterns and in expectations of women trained during and after the war,” and they began to criticize all

---

64 College catalog, Catalog of Colorado Woman’s College, 1945-1946, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 15-16, DU Archives.

colleges that did not promote domestic education for women that would prepare them for their eventual roles and wives and mothers (Solomon, 1985, p. 191).

One of the most vocal critics was Lynn White, president of Mills College, who argued that the eastern women’s colleges, with their insistence on liberal arts for women, were not properly preparing women for their future social roles. White envisioned domestic education for all women students, and he suggested that “learning to organize a dinner party or decorate a living room was… as essential to the future homemaker’s success as learning chemistry was to the budding (male) doctor” (Franklin, Gordon, Seller, & Fass, 1991, p. 51). Some colleges responded to the pressure by readjusting their curricula to better reflect societal expectations of women in the postwar era, while others, most notably Wellesley College and Mount Holyoke, refused (Fass, 1989). For example, child study became a popular major at Vassar in the 1950s (Bird, 1975), yet, Mount Holyoke continued to insist on the liberal arts. Strobel (1983) writes:

> In the midst of an intense national discussion concerning the “proper” education for American females, Mount Holyoke justified its existence by emphasizing that a sound preparation in the liberal arts remained the best possible education which an intelligent woman could receive. (p. 5)

Eisenmann (2002) argues that tensions, contradictions, and confusion permeated women’s education throughout the 1950s, as women’s actual behavior did not always match the cultural expectations, leaving educators puzzled as to how to best serve students and “accommodate all sides” (Eisenmann, 2002, p. 140).

**Personality development coursework maintains ideological balance.**

In the midst of these postwar tensions and debates over the most appropriate forms of education for women, CWC’s curriculum remained remarkably stable
throughout the 1950s. The College appeared to face little public scrutiny, even from Lynn White, who approvingly spoke at the campus Convocation in 1954. CWC continued to offer women courses in the liberal arts and sciences, vocational coursework for specific career preparation, training in fine arts, and the types of domestic courses that were being so strongly promoted in this era. I would argue that the College was able to weather the postwar years of retrenchment and backlash without critique because it had already dealt with the contradictions and tensions inherent in women’s education by supplementing the entire curriculum with personality development training. As I have illustrated in this study, CWC had been balancing the competing ideologies of traditional and modern womanhood in its curriculum for decades. By placing the personality curriculum at the center of the College’s identity, the focus was always on the ways in which the College prepared students to encompass traditional American womanhood, beyond anything else that they might also be studying. As The Denver Post encapsulated in 1948: “Packed in each busy little brain…along with memories of dates and political science—[was] a thorough working knowledge of how to plan, prepare and give a successful dinner” (Hodges, 1948). That CWC prepared women for their expected roles as wives and mothers could never be truly questioned, and as a result of their personality training, the students readily represented the ideals of beauty, elegance, charm, poise, and grace, that so comforted the nation in the aftermath of war.

---

Curriculum changes in the postwar era, 1946-1959.

Of course there were minor enhancements and reductions in the curriculum in the postwar years such as when the College unveiled its new five-point curriculum program during the 1946-1947 academic year. This new plan expanded upon the earlier four-point program to add the “Social Program” to the list of elements that defined the overall curriculum at CWC. 67 (The other components of the plan consisted of the educational, cultural, physical, and spiritual elements of the curriculum). In describing its social program, CWC described the great diversity of activities available to women on campus including “teas, luncheons, receptions and holiday celebrations.” 68 The College also highlighted for the first time the many ways in which students at CWC had opportunities to socialize with men from local colleges. The course catalog stated:

Young men of character are invited to share the campus social life. They are carefully selected from the four nearby universities by the Director of Activities, a faculty member. At the weekly “Get Acquainted” skating and bowling parties, at campus socials, girls learn poise in mixed company. 69

This new introduction of mixed-socializing as an element of the overall curricular program at CWC did little to change the nature of daily life for students. But, it did symbolize to parents and students that the College recognized the increased importance that postwar society placed on dating and marriage for the college woman.

Other curricular changes in this period included the introduction of modeling courses at the request of students in 1946 and the addition of coursework in photography


68 Ibid., 16.

69 Ibid.
The College expanded the business department by adding a two-year, medical secretary program in 1952 that combined training in basic science, first aid, and medical terminology with secretarial skills. That same year also saw the establishment of a revamped, two-year airline stewardess preparation program in business education, which required a broad range of courses including Spanish, speech, psychology, and aviation. The College catalog suggested that airline stewardess students should consider the modeling course in home economics, as it contributed to the development of “poise and grace” which was valuable in the airline industry.

These popular new vocational programs were featured in a 1957 article in the magazine *Western Farm Life* (Widmer, 1957) as offering important new opportunities to women graduates. The national magazine *What’s New in Home Economics* also cast attention on several of CWC’s vocational courses, including the College’s interior design, home economics, and aviation programs. The magazine spotlighted CWC student body president Shirley Woodhouse on its October cover in 1950, who described the aviation courses that she took at CWC. Woodhouse noted her family’s aeronautical background, and the ways in which her courses would be of great use to her after graduation. The article stated, “when she needs to give the family’s Cessna a going over, or when guests

---


fly to the Woodhouse ranch for dinner she’ll be able to be a hostess who can properly direct conversation into “air language” (Willson, 1950).

In 1954, CWC introduced modern dance classes in the physical education department, which attracted over 100 students,73 and dance became very popular with students over the course of the 1950s, as courses in dance theory and choreography were made part of the curriculum.74 Expanding the range of two-year, terminal vocational programs, the College also introduced a nursery school education certificate program in 1954. CWC had opened a professionally staffed nursery school in Pulliam Hall as a service to the community in 1951.75 This addition provided students in education and psychology “a laboratory for guided observation and work with children.”76 By 1954, it also provided an opportunity for students to be trained as nursery school assistants, “with excellent opportunities for immediate placement,” the College noted.77 Students of the nursery education program studied child development, spent a “semester of closely supervised work with children in the Nursery School,” and interned for a semester

73 “Dance Classes Use Dynamics,” The Western Graphic, November 1, 1954, p. 4, microfilm, DU Archives.


76 Ibid., 32.

77 Ibid.
working in off-campus child-care centers. In this way, the program reflected the practical, hand-on approach which CWC promoted in its vocational curricula.

CWC introduced the first coeducational course to be offered on the campus in 1957, when it allowed men to enroll in a drama course held one evening a week. The instructor, drama professor Homer Grout, argued that the addition of men in the drama production class would afford CWC a wider range of plays to perform. Women students had performed all roles in previous campus productions throughout the history of the College, including male roles, indicating the broad range of identities CWC students were willing to adopt with no men around to limit the scope of possibilities. Yet, the students were excited to share their dramatic spotlight with men. For example, a student newspaper reporter stated:

There has been at the very least the first breach in the dyke of female solitude in CWC classes. Drama students this year have found the evening classes…even more fascinating than usual. There are men in the class.

This experiment in coeducation provided some excitement for the students and enlivened play productions, but did not result in any expansion of coed classes in other disciplines.

**Personality development coursework continues in the postwar years.**

In 1947, CWC announced its now six-point approach to women’s education, which added “Personality” to the growing list of characteristics used to describe the

---

78 Ibid.


80 Ibid.
CWC curriculum. Thus, the personality development program received much focus as a highlight of the College’s offerings. After a brief reduction in personality development requirements in the immediate postwar years (only freshmen took courses as in the prewar era), by 1951, all students once again were required to take coursework focused on developing one’s personality to the fullest. The personality program continued to thrive during the 1950s, and new topics such as budgeting and parliamentary procedure were added to the long list of life skills covered. A reading clinic was also introduced to help students learn to read more quickly, allowing more time for pleasure reading outside of class and extracurricular activities. The College also suggested that improved reading skills were important to personality because a poor reader would not make an adequate conversationalist.

In 1952, CWC instituted a personality clinic for secretaries and stenographers at the Gates Rubber Company in Denver, indicating the popularity of this type of coursework with women and employers beyond the College gates and the centrality of personality curriculum to CWC’s community identity. Local newspapers and magazines featured the personality program as well, and applauded CWC for what they

---


found to be the uniqueness of its valuable curriculum for women. For example, *The Western Farm Life* noted how personality development at CWC was “in no way separated from other phases of school life” (Widmer, 1949, p. 32). The publication stated: “Throughout all classes, in each girl’s dormitory and in club relationships, the constant aim is to prepare her to meet life situations with poise and assurance” (Widmer, 1949, p. 32). *Rocky Mountain Life* praised the personality development program as well. The magazine published an article titled “CWC and Personality,” that stated: “This program has placed CWC in the ranks of the vanguard few top educational institutions intelligently seeking an answer to the frequent criticism that our colleges prepare no one practically for the future” (Bracken, 1946, p. 39). In part, it was this emphasis placed in the curriculum on practical, personality skills which kept critics of women’s education away from CWC during the postwar years.

By mid-decade the personality courses again enrolled only CWC freshmen, and by 1958, students no longer received course credit for their work in the practical personality clinic, although they continued to earn credit for the more academic, “mental hygiene” component of the personality development curriculum. While personality remained central to the curriculum during the 1950s, this fading trend by the end of the decade foreshadowed the eventual demise of the personality program in the 1960s.

**Pedagogical changes in the postwar era.**

As enrollments grew over the span of the 1950s, class sizes did as well and the lecture format dominated as the common form of teaching strategy. At the same time

---

newer pedagogical innovations also took hold including advanced fieldwork in classes such as “Techniques of Community Service,” where students learned how to directly address community problems outside the walls of CWC. Other faculty members utilized democratic, cooperative teaching methods, allowing students to actively participate in the shaping of class activities. For example, in the class “Speech Fundamentals” professors elected student committees that rotated throughout the term to help plan the coursework and to lead student discussions (Helgesen, 1951).

Another type of pedagogical change was that social science classes in this era at CWC more consciously addressed issues of postwar peace and international relations, which was a trend throughout American education broadly in the postwar era (Field, 2005). For example, history classes included discussions of postwar issues, and the Social Science division participated in the national Great Decisions Program, which urged communities to debate important international policy questions. Topics of the program in 1959 included the effectiveness of alliances, U.S. policy in Latin America, and Peace in the Middle East. The interest in international relations was also reflected in the energy devoted to extracurricular activities such as the Melting Pot Banquet, which

---


celebrated international cultures, and the popularity of the CWC International Relations club.  

Finally, the 1950s brought pedagogical experiments with new technologies such as closed circuit television as a teaching tool, and by 1960 faculty members were routinely using cameras and closed circuit television to demonstrate animal dissections to large lecture classes of over 150 students.

Curriculum comparisons with other women’s colleges.

Newcomer’s (1959) study of the curriculum of “the majority of women’s colleges” for the year 1956-1957 indicates that few courses aside from English were uniformly required at all campuses in the mid-1950s (p. 97), which reflects the diversity of the American collegiate curriculum at this time. Bennington College, Sarah Lawrence, and Vassar “had no single course required of all students” (p. 98). On the other hand, Scripps offered a substantial core curriculum in the liberal arts that all students took whatever their future goals (Newcomer, 1959; Ogilvie, 1956). Comparatively, at CWC in 1956, graduation requirements for all students on campus included English, humanities, personality development, and physical education. Liberal arts students wishing to transfer to senior colleges were also advised to take languages, science, mathematics, and social sciences, although the coursework was not rigorously prescribed as in the past.

---

90 See College newspapers and yearbooks for information about extracurricular activities in the postwar era.

91 “Dawson reviews educational experiments,” The Western Graphic, March 21, 1958, p. 2; “Closed Circuit TV,” The Western Graphic, October 14, 1960, p. 3, microfilm, DU Archives.

92 College catalog, Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College, 1956-1957, vol. 48, no. 4, p. 29, DU Archives.
Instead, students worked with counselors to best determine their course plans depending on their interests and the requirements of the four-year colleges they wished to attend. The vocational programs on campus were still largely prescribed with choice allowed for electives.

**Marriage education courses in the postwar era.**

Throughout the early 20th century marriage became a common topic of collegiate courses across the country, but the marriage education movement fully reached its stride in the postwar decade of the 1950s (Bailey, 1989). Newcomer (1959) argues that in the late-1950s courses on marriage were “found in practically every women’s college, and also, of course, in the coeducational institutions” (p. 99). The marriage education movement can be traced to the University of North Carolina in 1927, and much like home economics, it grew out of progressive-era interest in using scientific knowledge to understand everyday life issues (Bailey, 1989). Bailey argues that marriage courses also grew popular as a reaction to the profound social change which accompanied American life in the 20th century. By 1958, “over 700 institutions had fully accredited courses on marriage” (Bailey, 1989, p. 125). There was great diversity among these courses, but practicality and functionality ruled over “courses that looked at marriage as a historical and social institution” (p. 128). For example:

The head instructor at the University of Illinois reported to colleagues that he released students from a term paper if they did six hours of baby-sitting during the term, and at Stephens College a wedding plan was an acceptable term paper. (Bailey, 1989, p. 131)

---

93 Ibid., 30.
Issues concerning marriage and the family had always been addressed in personality development courses at CWC, but these topics became more explicitly covered beginning in the 1951-1952 school year. The 1951 catalog stated that personal conferences could even be arranged for students to discuss “engagement or pre-marital issues.”\(^94\) CWC also introduced a course titled “Marriage and the Family” in the home economics department that year, which followed the trend toward offering students functional information. The course covered “the problems involved in preparation for marriage, including dating, courtship, and engagement…[and] the factors which tend to stabilize modern marriage and produce better family relationships.”\(^95\) Other local colleges such as the University of Colorado had offered marriage courses since the early 1940s, and CWC students greatly desired a similar course for themselves.\(^96\) Mast’s (1950) survey of CWC graduates from 1942 to 1947 indicated that “Marriage and Sex Relations” was the course students mentioned more than any other as one “they wished they had taken while in college” (Mast, 1950, p. 40). In fact, instituting a marriage course was Mast’s first recommendation for CWC based on her study. As she was a faculty member at CWC, this likely resulted in the realization of the first dedicated marriage course in the year following her study’s publication.\(^97\) For a point of comparison of this


\(^{95}\) Ibid., 66.

\(^{96}\) “Marriage is Subject of Talk,” *The Western Graphic*, February 8, 1940, p. 3; “Problem Creates Need,” *The Western Graphic*, February 6, 1941, p. 4; microfilm, DU Archives.

\(^{97}\) See Yearbook, *Skyline*, 1949-1950, vol. xli, p. 21, DU Archives, for a listing of Mast in faculty section of the yearbook.
trend among the western women’s colleges, Mount St. Mary’s College in Los Angeles offered a “Diamond Ring” course in its home economics department for engaged students. “The course included a survey of home living and management, child care, interior decorating, budgeting, and home furnishings” (McNeil, 1985, p. 124).

**CWC students and the pursuit of marriage on campus.**

Beth Bailey (1989) argues that “as World War II drew to a close, the popular media began to celebrate American marriage—for *youth*” (p. 43). She notes that this reflected an already increasing trend of early marriage, but also helped to feed the growing early-marriage ideal which altered women’s aims and goals as students. Bailey (1989) suggests that while in earlier times women students denied any marriage-related motives for their educational pursuits, in the 1950s finding a husband became an openly accepted reason for attending college and was one of the top priorities of many college women.

CWC students certainly showed a marked shift in interest toward men and marriage in the 1950s. While dating had always been important, and marriage a life goal for most, in this era students were much more vocal and explicit about their immediate marriage plans.  

For example, regular columns in the student newspaper with titles such as “Ringings and Pinnings,” “Lover’s Lane,” “Buttons & Beaus,” “Who’s Whose,” and “Two’s Company” excitedly detailed the engagements, and marriages of CWC students into the 1960s. Illustrating their interest in including men in all campus activities, CWC

---

98 Stimpson (1975) notes that during her years of attendance at Bryn Mawr in the late 1950s, marriage was a goal and students were indifferent to politics.

99 See for example, issues of *The Western Graphic* from 1951-1963, DU Archives.
students introduced their 1956 yearbook with a note explaining the presence of men in their yearbook pages. They wrote, “Throughout the book we have included pictures of men, since they are an important part of college life.” They also elected a “King of the Campus” to accompany the many CWC beauty queens. This excerpt from a student poem in the 1957 yearbook, titled “What is a Senior,” nicely sums up the priorities of many CWC students in the 1950s, and reflects their more explicit desires to find husbands while attending college:

She’s always on the lookout for a marriageable guy,  
Then knocks him flat with a kiss and a sigh.  
She likes to study, if it’s not too long,  
And she concentrates on her favorite song.  
She likes to sleep long and to get up late,  
But the opposite is her usual, sleepy fate.  
She advocates a strictly casual life,  
And her wit is as sharp as a half-ground knife.  
All these things, I suppose, are the result of fate,  
And overlooking them—a Senior is really great! 

At the same time that some CWC students were promoting the idea that college was a place to search for a husband, others resisted this change of emphasis. For example, Western Graphic editor Mary St. John defended college women against claims that they ought to leave crowded college campuses to make room for men. She wrote,

It has been suggested that the women ‘move out’ and give the men a chance to get their college education. One of the explanations for this proposal is that many women go to college not for an education, but mainly to get a husband….We

---


101 Ibid., 2, 124.

believe that we can present a view other than that of college women out for husbands.\textsuperscript{103} 

Using the large numbers of CWC students in honor societies as evidence that CWC students were serious about academics, St. John urged her classmates to continue to “prove that girls are sincere about getting an education.”\textsuperscript{104} Clearly the tensions surrounding the ramifications of college girls and early marriage were played out among women on individual campuses, as well as more broadly in the media and educational circles.

\textbf{Subtle hints at curricular retrenchment.}

While I make the argument in this chapter that CWC did not feminize or domesticate its curriculum purely to respond to critics of women’s liberal arts and vocational coursework, I believe that the subtle hints of curricular retrenchment that appeared at this time should be acknowledged. Certainly, CWC already offered a more domesticated, “womanly” curriculum than most of the eastern women’s colleges, and therefore, it was less in the sights of critics. Yet, the College did still bravely carry on with its diverse set of options for women students, offering stability in the curriculum between the wartime and postwar eras. At the same time, one can note that the handful of new curricular programs that did get created in the 1950s (such as the medical secretary, airline stewardess, and nursery school assistant programs) were in traditionally feminine domains. In addition, the concession that socializing with men was an integral component

\textsuperscript{103} “Women—In College?,” \textit{The Western Graphic}, February 21, 1958, p. 2, microfilm, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid. This editorial received recognition by KLZ news for being one of the best for the week in all Colorado newspapers. See “Western Graphic Editorial,” March 21, 1958, p. 1, DU Archives.
of the curriculum certainly sent a symbolic message to students about the role of college education for women. The same can be said for the College’s acceptance of men into drama productions when students had gamely performed without them for nearly 50 years. Finally, subtle language choices crept into College publications throughout this era that hinted to students about the preferred societal roles for women college graduates. For example, while this language was not consistent across annual course catalogs, the 1951-1952 College catalog stated that women at CWC were trained for a vocation in order to “earn her own living if necessary.”\textsuperscript{105} It would not have been lost on students that they ought to avoid the “necessity” of needing to earn their own money.

**Student enrollment and course preferences, 1946-1959.**

Student enrollment sustained World War II-era increases in the early postwar years and then dipped slightly from 1951 to 1955, as illustrated by Figure 44. Subsequently, in the late 1950s, enrollment numbers rose dramatically, so that while there were only 386 students at CWC in 1946, there were 560 students attending by 1959. Perhaps the brief decrease in enrollment was influenced by student interest in early marriage. The later jump in enrollment could well be explained by the population explosion which hit Colorado in the mid-1950s brought by wartime attention given to the state and the development of the recreational ski industry. A historian of Colorado College writes that “by the mid-1950s Colorado was experiencing a population boom that rivaled that of the gold and silver mining era,” and that this growth greatly increased student enrollment at Colorado College (Loevy, 1999, p. 130). Likely, this same

Figure 44. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1946-1959

106 Compiled from College yearbooks, 1946-1959, DU Archives.
population growth fueled enrollments at CWC as well. Certainly Coloradans still comprised the bulk of CWC students, although throughout the 1950s enrollment diversified greatly with students attending from across the country and a handful of foreign countries each year.\footnote{College catalog, \textit{Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College}, 1958-1959, vol. 50, no. 3, p. 4, DU Archives.} For example, during the 1956-1957 academic year CWC students represented 33 states, in addition to Alaska, Hawaii, Korea, Guatemala, The Netherlands, and Greece.\footnote{“Enrollment,” \textit{The Western Graphic}, October 5, 1956, p. 1, microfilm, DU Archives.}

As the curriculum remained largely consistent throughout the 1950s with the curricular offerings established in the 1940s, it makes sense that the most popular majors at CWC throughout the postwar era were similar to those of the early 1940s. Figure 45 illustrates the most popular majors at CWC as declared by graduating students in their annual yearbooks. Business was the most commonly declared major, followed by liberal arts, education, home economics, and music as the top five. Because these were self-declared statements of majors, some students with an interest in education chose to list this as their major, yet education itself was part of the liberal arts coursework offered at CWC. Those majoring in another area, for example, home economics or music, who desired to teach in these fields might have also listed their majors as education. The numbers represented in Figure 45 suggest that although CWC continued to offer a diverse curriculum, the bulk of all students studied liberal arts for the purpose of transferring to a senior college, and business education for preparation for careers in the secretarial, airline and retail fields.
Figure 45. Most popular majors at CWC, as declared by students, 1946-1959\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{109} Compiled from self-reported majors of graduating students as listed in College yearbooks, 1946-1959, DU Archives. No data are available in yearbooks for the 1958-1959 academic year.
The large percentage of liberal arts majors at CWC indicates that many students wished to transfer to a senior college after graduating. In the spring of 1959, a College study determined that 55% of students enrolled during the 1957-1958 academic year transferred to a baccalaureate-granting institution, illustrating that CWC students were well-prepared to enter the senior college ranks.\textsuperscript{110} Thus, it is likely because student interest in transferring was so high and successful that the College decided to implement a four-year curriculum for the 1959-1960 academic year. This significant change in the CWC curriculum will be the topic of the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{110}“Other Schools Welcome CWC’eds,” \textit{The Western Graphic}, April 27, 1959, p. 1, microfilm, DU Archives.
Figure 46. Business honor society Alpha Pi Epsilon, 1940-1941 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 47. Aviation students, 1944-1945 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 48. Personality development clinic, 1941 College catalog, WHC, DPL.

Figure 49. Student voice recording, 1945 Personality pamphlet, DU Archives.
Figure 50. Excerpt from 1945 Personality pamphlet, DU Archives.

Figure 51. Posture picture session, newspaper, *The Western Graphic*, September, 1940.
Figure 52. Radio class held at station KLZ, 1945-1946 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 53. For Victory: Meeting the Demands for Trained Women, 1945, DU Archives.
Figure 54. CWC dance class, 1957-1958 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 55. CWC photography class, 1957-1958 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 56. Campus nursery school, 1956-1957 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 57. Teaching in nursery school, 1957-1958 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 58. CWC classroom, 1953-1954 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 59. CWC business class, 1957-1958 yearbook, DU Archives.
Chapter Eight: The Return of the Four-Year Curriculum, 1959-1967

Here we are a brand new class
In our junior year at last.
And if they will let us pass
We’ll return as its forecast.¹

From the 1940s through the 1970s there was an explosion of public, two-year colleges onto the American higher education landscape (Lucas, 1994). In order to distinguish themselves from these emerging junior colleges, many private junior colleges became four-year institutions. In point, between 1953 and 1964, 72 junior colleges transitioned to four-year status, and “a somewhat larger number of women’s two-year colleges became senior colleges compared to men’s colleges” (Wolf-Wendel & Pedigo, 1999). Thus, when CWC inaugurated a new, four-year bachelor of science program in medical technology for the 1959-1960 academic year, the College was following a larger trend established by junior colleges around the country. For example, Stephens College, which has been discussed as a comparative college throughout this dissertation, also became a four-year college in the early 1960s (Stephens College, 2010).

CWC President Dr. Eugene Dawson suggested in an interview with The Christian Science Monitor that CWC made this adjustment to offering a four-year degree in order to better serve the many women who wished to earn bachelor’s degrees after graduating

¹ “History Makers,” The Western Graphic, February 9, 1962, p. 4, microfilm, DU Archives.
from CWC. He stated that because so many of the two-year graduates went on to attend four-year colleges, it was “a natural step to offer them four years at CWC” (Fleming, 1960, p. 9). President Dawson also noted that “while public junior or two-year colleges [had] been expanding rapidly, the private ones [had] not done so at the same rate” (Fleming, 1960, p. 9). With this statement Dr. Dawson was clearly indicating that the College wished to disassociate from the expanding public junior colleges which served a very different segment of the student population than CWC. These colleges provided mass education to men and women from all socioeconomic backgrounds, with a focus on vocational training and fundamental skills, and with little offered in the way of extracurricular or social activities (Lucas, 1994). As had always been the case, CWC provided a more elite-level curriculum and educational environment and served largely the daughters of middle and upper-class families. In order for the College to retain its positioning as a unique and special place for women students and to differentiate itself in a changing higher education environment, an adjustment was necessary.

Another rationale CWC provided for expanding the College curriculum to include a four-year degree was the growth of student enrollment in the late 1950s, which as I indicated in Figure 44 (p. 255), did increase significantly in the latter years of the decade. Perhaps College officials felt that with larger enrollment numbers they could again justify offering an expanded curriculum and could generate the resources needed to properly support this curriculum.

---

The College also likely was encouraged by the support the decision received from the Denver community. For example, *The Denver Post* was highly encouraging of the addition of the four-year curriculum, and the paper also provided several arguments in favor of the change. *The Post* stated that there was a shortage of four-year colleges and that CWC could help to fill this gap by offering the bachelor’s degree. The newspaper also noted the statistics that indicated that women were demanding more advanced education, citing that between 1954 and 1958 the percentage of women enrolled in junior colleges increased by only 18%, while their enrollment increased by 29.2% at four-year institutions. ³ Certainly CWC leaders agreed that the College should take advantage of women’s growing interest in advanced education and their movement away from two-year degree programs, which no longer adequately prepared them for, as *The Denver Post* put it, “an increasingly complex society,” with “more opportunities for the fully educated woman.”⁴

**The New Four-Year Degree Programs**

The first four-year program introduced by CWC in 1959 was the bachelor of science degree in medical technology, which required students to complete three years of coursework on the CWC campus and one year “in a laboratory school approved by the college and…the American Medical Association.”⁵ This curriculum heavily emphasized science and medical procedures courses and required students to take classes such as


⁴ Ibid.

biology, chemistry, anatomy, physiology, microbiology, and parasitology, rounded out by a handful of courses in the humanities and social sciences.⁶

The bachelor of science degree was quickly followed by CWC’s announcement of a new four-year bachelor of arts degree program in 1960.⁷ The North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools accredited the program in June, 1961, and therefore the College was able to enroll “its first junior class in over forty years” for the 1961-1962 school year.⁸ Forty seniors, who had first enrolled as freshmen in 1959, graduated with the bachelor’s degree in May of 1963.⁹ College officials stated that this milestone reflected CWC’s efforts “to keep pace with the evolving educational needs of young women in the world of today and tomorrow.”¹⁰

All students enrolled in the bachelor of arts degree program majored in liberal arts and not a specific departmental major until 1966-1967, when majors did become an option for students.¹¹ Early on President Dawson stated that he wanted the new program to be “marked by depth and thoroughness rather than ‘course proliferation’” (Fleming,

---

⁶ Ibid., 88.


⁸ Ibid.


1960, p. 9). As the program developed, though, more specialization was allowed. By the 1966-1967 academic year students could major in art, biology, elementary education (leading to certification), English, history, music, philosophy, psychology, foreign language, sociology, theatre arts, and the interdepartmental areas of American studies, family studies, and Asian studies. The curriculum was structured so that one-third of a student’s courses were distribution requirements, one-third major requirements (if a major was selected), and one-third electives. The distribution requirements consisted of two courses each in the areas of fine arts, humanities, behavioral sciences, natural sciences, and social sciences. The College also required that students take two courses on a non-western culture, such as “Philosophy of Asia,” “Oriental Art,” “Modern Indian Government,” “Literature of the Eastern World,” or “Civilization of China.” Surprisingly, the courses “Art of the Americas,” and “Latin American Literature,” also counted toward the non-western requirement, indicating that the goal of this requirement was really to expose students to a region outside the U.S., and not necessarily beyond the western hemisphere.

In addition to these requirements, the College also mandated that students take physical education and until 1963, one semester of personality development for no

---


13 Colorado Woman’s College: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow. Report of the President to the Board of Trustees, 1966, pp. 7-8, WHC, DPL.

credit. All students also enrolled in a senior seminar in their fourth year, in which they “relate[d] and compare[d] the many ideas and methodologies…studied during college.”

With less emphasis on shared personality development coursework over the course of the 1960s, the senior seminar course came to serve as a way for students to experience a shared academic community and to culminate their studies with broad reflection on their four years at CWC. Later in this chapter I will chart the eventual demise of the personality development program in greater detail.

The requirements for the bachelor of arts degree at CWC were very much in line with how other eastern women’s colleges structured their curricula in the 1960s. For example, Barnard revised its bachelor of arts program in 1966 to more closely resemble that of the “leading women’s colleges in the East” (“Barnard Faculty Revises Curriculum,” 1966, p. 47). In doing so they required students to take one-third of their coursework in the general liberal arts and sciences, one-fourth in a field of specialization, and the remaining courses could be taken as electives. In essence, these requirements were the same as at CWC, and so it could be said that as CWC introduced a new four-year curriculum, it shaped its bachelor of arts program to mirror the curriculum found at the most well-respected women’s colleges in the East.

Even after the new four-year programs were unveiled, CWC continued to offer the associate in arts degree, and in fact the College briefly added a legal secretary program to the business department from 1960-1963. By the 1961-1962 academic year,

---


16 Ibid., 13.
CWC was in a position to offer students the broad spectrum of the BS, BA, and AA degrees all on one campus. The College catalogs described the new curriculum in this way, touching on the familiar themes of preparing students for a variety of life paths:

It [the curriculum] recognizes the multiple roles which women play in today’s world, and makes provision for these in its total program in the three broad areas of education for personal and intellectual maturity, education for home and family living, and education for vocational activities.\(^\text{17}\)

With this new ability to offer students such a diversity of options, the College fully realized its long-standing curricular vision of providing women educational choices to serve their varied needs and social roles. In comparison, Mount St. Mary’s college, which had always offered a four-year degree, first added the two-year AA degree to its curriculum in 1962 (McNeil, 1985). The introduction of the two-year degree at Mount St. Mary’s at exactly the same moment that CWC expanded to include the four-year degree illustrates that both two-year and four-year programs were necessary and useful to women students in this era. It also reflects the larger trends in American higher education at this time toward greater diversity in the forms and functions of the curriculum at all institutions (Goodchild, 2008; Lucas, 1994).

Eventually, CWC began to consolidate all of its programs into the four-year curriculum and associate in arts degrees were no longer granted after the 1965-1966 academic year.\(^\text{18}\) This involved moving the curriculum of the existing two-year programs into the liberal arts and sciences. For example, the College merged the business


department into the division of social sciences, and journalism and drama joined the humanities. Students could continue to take coursework in these areas toward their bachelor’s degree programs, although only a limited number of technical business courses counted toward the degree. Students could continue to take secretarial skills courses such as typing, dictation, and shorthand in order to gain practical experience, but not for academic credit. CWC leaders likely brought an end to the two-year programs in order to focus attention and resources on the four-year degree programs and also to strengthen the academic rigor of the College to meet its new status as a baccalaureate-degree granting institution.

The Role of Home Economics in the 1960s

Significant change came to the home economics program in the 1960s, as prescribed, two-year programs were no longer offered by 1961. Instead, CWC changed the name of the department to “home and family living” in 1961, and students could take elective coursework in the areas of clothing and textiles, food and nutrition, interior design, and family and home management. With the creation of an interdisciplinary family studies major in 1966, home economics as it had always existed was finally

---


23 Ibid., 52-55.
eliminated, and the last remaining courses of the home economics department became subsumed into other relevant departments on campus. For example, the foods courses such as “Food for the Family” and “Principles of Nutrition” were added to the division of natural science, while courses in “American Marriage” and “The American Family” found a home in the sociology department.  

Students interested in clothing, textiles, and design could take these courses from the art department.

CWC claimed to be “the only liberal arts college in the country to offer a family studies major,” and the College emphasized this program much as it had the personality development curriculum in the 1930s-1950s. Replacing home economics, this program focused less on skills used within the household and more on marriage, family relationships, and family communication. It is likely that women students of the 1960s found these issues to be much more relevant, as home economics was fading at many colleges at a time when it came to be seen as antiquated and old-fashioned (Stage, 1997).

Yet, home economics did continue to thrive on the campus of at least one women’s college in the West. At Mount St. Mary’s, home economics students took turns living in an eight-room apartment for six-week periods, much like the experience given to Scripps students in the 1930s (see Chapter 5). Upper-division students played various roles as cook, hostess, and housekeeper, and operated the apartment “in accord with the

---


25 Ibid., 45.

principles of managing time, energy, money, and resources presented in the course work for the major in home economics” (McNeil, 1985, p. 174).

Home economics may no longer have existed as a distinct program at CWC after 1961, but the culture of home economics remained alive on campus in the 1960s. The traditions of domestic education and preparation for women’s roles after college, inherent in home economics, were infused into everyday campus life through the home and family living and family studies departments. For example, the annual week-long “Focus on the Family” conference brought scholars and family professionals to campus for panels and discussions on family-related matters. Some of the first of these programs featured themes such as “The Unmarried Mother: Problem or Symptom” and “Male and Female in a Period of Transition.”

In addition to the annual conference, the family studies program regularly sponsored special extracurricular events and non-credit student seminars. “Pre-marriage, marriage, and family counseling services” were also provided to students through family studies and the resources of the Center for Family Studies in the CWC library. While the days of required home economics classes were decades in the past, the College continued to recommend “the basic family courses…to every student in the college.”

Thus, the legacy of home economics at CWC, which could be traced back to the first


28 Ibid., 15.

days of the College and which was always significant in the overall curricular plan, continued on even into the late 1960s.

**Other Curricular Changes in the 1960s**

Aside from the creation of four-year degree programs, there were other additions of note to the curriculum in this era that deserve attention. CWC added many new opportunities for students in order to elevate the stature of the College to the bachelor’s level, and likely to continue to distinguish CWC from competing colleges. As a four-year college, CWC faced even more direct competition for students in the 1960s.

As the curriculum strengthened in the liberal arts and sciences to meet the demands of the four-year bachelor of arts degree, courses in disciplines such as anthropology and Russian made their appearance on campus for the first time.\(^{30}\) Classes in argumentation and debate were offered for credit, and utilized by the CWC debate team to prepare members for competition against other colleges.\(^{31}\) These courses also readied students for participation on the local television show “Resolved,” which featured student debaters. In 1960, producers from the show invited CWC to face students from the Colorado School of Mines on the issue of hydroelectric power usage in the U.S.\(^{32}\)

---


A popular course of a less academic nature that was introduced in the 1960s was a physical education class titled “Maid to Measure.” It provided “individually planned exercises for posture improvement and weight control, with special attention to diet.” In the absence of the mandatory personality development clinic, this course provided interested students with some of the same techniques for maintaining a healthy and proper weight. The title of the course also indicated the unspoken expectation that these “maids” might one day use their healthy figures to find husbands and become matrons.

Perhaps the most unusual class offered by CWC in the 1960s was a course in Sanskrit language and culture, making CWC only “one of about fourteen institutions in the United States teaching Sanskrit.” The College believed that this addition to the curriculum would “supplement and strengthen the already well-established program in Asian Studies.” In fact, CWC recommended two semesters of the language for all students interested in advanced Asian studies at the graduate level.

CWC students showed an interest in graduate education during the 1960s, reflecting the College’s move to a four-year program and the resulting heightened expectations that students had for themselves. The College encouraged students to explore the possibilities of graduate study and even established connections to help them

---


34 “[Article Title in Sanskrit],” *The Western Graphic*, September 24, 1965, p. 1, microfilm, DU Archives.

35 Ibid.

succeed. For example, students considering a future in college teaching had the opportunity to apply to a special program for CWC students at the University of Denver. In 1964, a cooperative arrangement allowed “qualified CWC students to be selected at the end of their sophomore year, for admission to a foundation-supported three-year master’s degree program in college teaching, with the possibility of continuing graduate study through the doctorate.”\textsuperscript{37} This program likely helped many CWC women gain the confidence to pursue advanced studies not traditionally in the female domain.

**Adult education at CWC.**

CWC first began offering its program of afternoon and evening courses for adult students in 1960.\textsuperscript{38} These courses were typically open only to community members and the most advanced CWC students. When student interest was sufficient, CWC students were allowed to take foreign language courses not regularly offered on campus “through the College’s adult education program.”\textsuperscript{39} Other forms of adult and community education included summer opera workshops and very popular workshops for writers of children’s literature. These workshops were taught by CWC faculty as well as instructors from outside the College.\textsuperscript{40} Perhaps by inviting the community onto the campus, CWC hoped to raise its profile and better establish itself as a local resource.


\textsuperscript{38} “School Days Planned for Adults,” *The Western Graphic*, April 22, 1960, p. 1, microfilm, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{39} College catalog, *Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College, Catalog Issue*, 1962-1963, p. 72, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{40} *Colorado Woman’s College: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow. Report of the President to the Board of Trustees*, 1966, p. 16, WHC, DPL.
Curriculum beyond the classroom walls.

New aspects of the curriculum that went beyond traditional classroom learning included the introduction of a spring break exchange program with Bacone College in Oklahoma. This was a predominantly Native American college and offered students important opportunities to learn about native cultures and educational programs.41

Throughout the 1960s, CWC also sponsored many rigorous, in-depth symposia on critical issues of the time such as the Vietnam War, “Great Society” programs and policies, and the American political Left.42 The College also regularly offered non-credit seminars of particular interest to women students and community members on topics along the lines of “American Woman Writers as Social Critics” and “Financial Management for Women.”43 These more informal curricular offerings allowed CWC students more interaction with college students and faculty from other campuses who visited CWC to participate and also more opportunities for discussion and exchange with community members who were welcomed to participate in the symposia.

CWC Introduces Foreign Study Programs

A major addition to the curriculum at CWC in the 1960s, which was arguably the most beloved by students, was the introduction of study abroad programs in Europe.


CWC first invited students with junior standing to study and learn in Vienna, Austria during the 1963-1964 academic year. A junior-year abroad program in Madrid, Spain followed for 1964-1965, and by the 1966-1967 school year students could also attend CWC’s foreign study center in Geneva, Switzerland. The goal of the CWC foreign study programs was to foster “linguistic and cultural growth” in students and to improve “international understanding.” Students lived in residences rented by the College, and CWC faculty members served as resident directors and teachers alongside local scholars who also contributed to the programs. Participants in study abroad were required to have completed at least one year of a foreign language and have a 2.0 academic average. All classes at the CWC foreign study centers, with the exception of languages, were taught in English, and students completed their junior years of study by focusing on “the culture, literature and institutions as well as the language of the host country.” The director of the foreign studies program described it as providing CWC students “a general education


47 “Goals Important to Program Abroad,” The Western Graphic, February 16, 1965, p. 4, microfilm, DU Archives.

that reflect[ed] the liberal arts courses they would find on the Denver campus."\textsuperscript{49}

Through 1967, approximately 200 CWC students had “crossed the Atlantic to study.”\textsuperscript{50}

When these students returned to CWC as seniors, they often sought and took on influential leadership positions on campus, leading the College to boast that its foreign study centers had “become ‘political training grounds.’”\textsuperscript{51} Reflecting on the impact of CWC’s foreign study programs to the campus community, a faculty member noted that the contributions that returning students brought to the classroom based on their European experiences were “immeasurable.”\textsuperscript{52}

**Student Reactions to the CWC Foreign Studies Program**

Student reactions to their foreign study experiences were almost always resoundingly positive. For example, the student newspaper questioned women returning from Vienna in 1966 and found that most characterized their time spent studying in Europe as life-changing. The common themes expressed by students to describe what they learned while studying abroad included gaining more respect and understanding for their own culture and the cultures of other countries, newfound confidence in their abilities to succeed in a foreign environment, the ability to adapt to new people and new surroundings, and greater appreciation for art and history. The following excerpts from

\textsuperscript{49} “Goals Important to Program Abroad,” *The Western Graphic*, February 16, 1965, p. 4, microfilm, DU Archives.


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
the student newspaper illustrate the positive life lessons gained by CWC foreign studies
students and the profound impact that the experience had on their lives.53

Vienna has changed during fall, winter, and spring, and so have I. Presently, I
want to go home and try out all the things I’ve learned, and maybe most of all,
take what I learned in Vienna and apply it to my home.—Claudia Roark

Vienna has brought to me a new view of myself and of my democratic country. It
has given me a deeper feeling for music, for art, for past and present civilizations.
It has given me friendships that I’ll never forget. And, Vienna has shown me the
way to a fully new and enlightened future.—Penny Field

What is Vienna to me? Opera. Blue Danube, Spanish riding school, Vienna
woods, Baroque buildings…No—these things are here all right, I guess, but I’ve
been here a little bit longer than the traveler on the three day tour. Vienna has
been the most complete learning experience of my life, to this point. I’ve had to
live with, not just look at, a completely different culture. I feel I’m a better
American now than I was in September, and I feel I’ve had a personal growth
here that I don’t think I could have had elsewhere. For this reason, I’ll always be
more than thankful for my year in Vienna.—Gretchen Schmitt

This year in Vienna has opened my eyes to a myriad of wonders and problems:
1. the quality produced by an old and proud culture.
2. the frustration of dealing with a different frame of reference.
3. the thrill of standing in a place that exists only in pretty pictures.
4. the struggle to find yourself in environment you don’t understand.
   —Bonnie Boese

Attesting to the long-term impressions that foreign study made with CWC
students, many alumnae still recall their time abroad as their most cherished college
memory. For example, among CWC graduates who responded to a survey in 2000,
several reflected fondly on their foreign study. Kathleen (Evans) Lipscomb remembered
living in Switzerland and “learning the language and the culture,” and the “exposure to

all the art and history.” 54 When asked about their most vivid memories of CWC, Carra Lee (West) Bolger responded, “My junior year abroad—most memorable of my life.” 55 Joettta Miller cited her “Junior year abroad in Spain,” 56 and Karen (Luond) Fowdy remembered her time in Vienna spent in museums and coffee houses. 57 Gail Greenwood-Seemann’s most vivid memory of her time at CWC was “dancing til 5 o’clock in the morning at the ball in Vienna.” 58 Cementing the sentiment that CWC’s foreign studies programs had lasting influence, Claudia Beth Roark responded, “CWC also made me strong and able to persevere. It also gave me the opportunity to become a risk taker, especially because of my junior year spent in Vienna.” 59 Clearly, students benefited greatly from the opportunities they were given to study in Europe during these years. It represented just one of the many ways that CWC hoped to provide a specialized service to students that would help to establish the College as a legitimate, full-fledged liberal arts institution.

The Personality Development Program in the 1960s

Amidst so many of the dramatic changes in the curriculum that took place at CWC in the 1960s, the personality development program persevered, but ultimately the College slowly phased it out by 1967. Early on in the decade students continued to enroll

54 Kathleen Evans Lipscomb, CWC Alumnae Survey Questionnaire, 2000, DU Archives.
55 Carra Lee West Bolger, CWC Alumnae Survey Questionnaire, 2000, DU Archives.
56 Joetta Miller, CWC Alumnae Survey Questionnaire, 2000, DU Archives.
57 Karen Luond Fowdy, CWC Alumnae Survey Questionnaire, 2000, DU Archives.
58 Gail Greenwood-Seemann, CWC Alumnae Survey Questionnaire, 2000, DU Archives.
59 Claudia Beth Roark, CWC Alumnae Survey Questionnaire, 2000, DU Archives.
in the mandatory personality development course, but received no academic credit.\textsuperscript{60} Some of the new topics added for discussion in the program in 1960 included “the handling of French phrases; how to address ambassadors, senators, ministers, etc.; the correct way to make a telephone phone call, how, when, and where to wear flowers; and how to reply to compliments.”\textsuperscript{61} The 1961-1962 College catalog was the first to leave out mention of voice recordings or posture pictures as components of the personality development course.

By the 1963-1964 academic year personality development coursework was no longer required in any form.\textsuperscript{62} Yet, students were still interviewed thoroughly on admission, and given questionnaires, along with aptitude and placement tests in order to determine the students’ weaknesses and areas for personal improvement. All students were also advised that opportunities existed for individualized instruction and counseling in the areas of “health, social etiquette, beauty, modeling, grooming, budget planning, and related areas.”\textsuperscript{63} Thus, mandatory personality development coursework was gone, but interested students could still find ways to learn what they needed. With no personality development course to require and track student attendance at chapel services, the rules

\textsuperscript{60} College catalog, \textit{Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College}, 1961-1962, vol. 53, no. 4, p. 16, DU Archives.

\textsuperscript{61} “PD Program,” \textit{The Western Graphic}, November 22, 1960, p. 2, microfilm, DU Archives.


\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 62.
loosened and students could select among a number of programs and services to attend each semester.\textsuperscript{64}

It was only in 1966 that the College catalog no longer made a reference of any kind to these personality skills, and instead, the program in family studies was introduced and highlighted as being central to the College’s curricular identity. For example, the 1966-1967 catalog described family studies not just as one of several academic majors, but as “a college-wide program of both curricular and extra-curricular activities in the family area.”\textsuperscript{65} The information about family studies was also placed front and center in the catalog, as personality development had always been, indicating its importance in the overall curriculum.

While family studies classes or sponsored campus activities were never mandatory for students as personality development courses had been, in a more subtle way, it appears that the family studies program also functioned within the CWC curriculum as a balancing and equalizing force. It is likely that in the zeitgeist of the 1960s, the personality development curriculum was becoming less marketable and less attractive and palatable to students. Family studies thus filled in to further many of the ideals and content areas of personality development, without the antiquated attention to individual appearance, grooming, and etiquette. Therefore, CWC could continue to distinguish itself as a liberal arts college that also offered women that little something extra—the ability to prepare for home and family life, but now in a more modern fashion.

\textsuperscript{64} College catalog, \textit{Bulletin of Colorado Woman’s College, Catalog Issue}, 1966-1967, vol. 58, no. 4, p. 18, DU Archives.

Conversations about marriage, communication in the family, male and female roles, and women’s status in society, which were the basics of the family studies program, could still be addressed, but in a more rigorous, academic manner. At the same time, the College could continue to convey the message as it always had, that no matter what else a CWC student did, family life was still at the center of her world. The tensions regarding women’s social roles and the best way to educate them remained, and by infusing the bachelor’s degree programs with campus events focused on family life, the unspoken strain was eased for all—administrators, faculty, students, parents, and community members alike.

It is likely that one of the reasons that personality development finally faded away permanently is that for the first time in the mid-1960s, CWC received criticism for what was seen as its outdated and elitist attention to manners and etiquette. The Denver Post, in a 1965 article titled “CWC—Beauty, Money and Brains,” characterized CWC as a finishing school for White, affluent girls who were admitted based on “personality” and “fitting in” as much as on grades (Curtis, 1965, p. 11). The author noted that CWC students spent so much time learning proper etiquette that they had no interest in important issues of the day such as Civil Rights. In particular, CWC students were criticized for a lackluster attempt at a campus demonstration protesting against Alabama Governor George Wallace that attracted only seven students. The Denver Post reporter concluded, “CWC girls are so well-behaved they don’t stage ‘demonstrations’” (Curtis, 1965, p. 11). She wrote, “CWC girls, who learn how to wear white opera-length gloves, how to use a fish fork and how to pour tea, still have a hard time doing anything that doesn’t fit that ‘finishing school’ image” (p. 11).
Student reaction to this rather scathing article was mixed, with some students arguing that protesting and demonstrating just was not appropriate for the reputation of “a private girls’ school.” Other women actually staged a rally to protest the image of the school that the article portrayed. Certainly the CWC administration would have taken this negative portrayal of the College into consideration as it slowly phased out personality development and initiated the four-year curriculum. Those same characteristics of the College that reporters and community members had once applauded in the 1930s-1950s now seemed inappropriate and put CWC on the defensive. The elimination of the personality development program would have helped to reshape the outward image of the College and to focus attention away from beauty, manners, and etiquette on campus, and toward academics.

**Student Enrollment and Course Preferences, 1959-1967**

Enrollments at CWC grew steadily each year during this period, although CWC had a higher than average drop-out rate for first year students than other private, church-affiliated schools (Springer, 1966). CWC attributed this attrition to marriage and transfers. See Figure 60 for an illustration of CWC’s enrollment increase from 516 students in 1959 to over 1,000 students for the 1966-1967 academic year.

---


68 CWC’s drop-out rate for the year 1959-1960 was 44.2%, while the national average for private, church-affiliated colleges was 29.3%. See (Springer, 1966).

69 *Report to the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools*, November 5, 1964, p. 66, Box Title: Miscellaneous Publications, Photos, DU Archives.
Figure 60. Colorado Woman’s College student enrollment, 1959-1967\textsuperscript{70}

As would be expected given the changes in the curriculum at this time, liberal arts, education, and business continued to be the most popular majors, although business majors decreased significantly as CWC phased out the two-year, terminal programs in secretarial studies. Throughout most of this era students did not have specific departmental majors, and therefore, their self-declared majors really represent major areas of interest and coursework taken more than official statistics. In Figure 61 I have included the top 25 majors self-declared by graduating students in their College yearbooks to indicate the growing diversity of academic fields of interest named by students. This figure illustrates that the majority of students were studying in the arts, humanities, and sciences, although as was typical, all three of CWC’s curricular areas were represented. For example, liberal arts and medical technology represent the bachelor’s degree programs, business, air hostess, and merchandising represent specific vocational programs, and home economics and interior design represent areas of domestic education for home life.

It appears that the bachelor of arts program was much more popular than the more narrowly focused bachelor of science program. For example, in 1965-1966, when both degree programs had been offered for several years, “92 students received their Bachelor of Arts Degree and 3 received the Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology.”\textsuperscript{71} A total of 59 students received the associate in arts degree in this last year in which the degree was conferred.

\textsuperscript{71} Colorado Woman’s College: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow. Report of the President to the Board of Trustees, 1966, p. 6, WHC, DPL.
Figure 61. Most popular majors at CWC, as declared by students, 1959-1967. Compiled from self-reported majors of graduating students as listed in College yearbooks, 1959-1967, DU Archives.
CWC Becomes Temple Buell College

As explained in Chapter 1, this dissertation study of the curriculum at CWC ends here in 1967, as CWC changed its name to Temple Buell College starting with the 1967-1968 academic year. This change did not immediately bring a dramatic shift in the curriculum, but it did mark the end of an era for CWC as an institution, and the beginning of another for a College with a brand new identity. It therefore provides a logical ending point. In addition, the demise of personality development and the creation of family studies in 1967 draws the argument of this dissertation to a convenient momentary conclusion. In the 1960s, CWC once again illustrated how its curriculum could be designed to support both traditional and modern social roles for women.

Figure 62. Dr. T. K., Professor of Sanskrit, 1965-1966 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 63. Study abroad program, Vienna, 1964 CWC alumnae bulletin, DU Archives.
Figure 64. Vienna students share Austrian culture, 1965-1966 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 65. Vienna students attend ball, 1966-1967 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 66. Chemistry laboratory, 1959-1960 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 67. Science class, 1965-1966 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 68. Dr. Martha Pingel, literature class, 1959-1960 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 69. Maid to measure physical education class, 1965-1966 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 70. Students protest Denver Post article, 1965-1966 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 71. CWC classroom, 1964-1965 yearbook, DU Archives.
Figure 72. First senior class since 1920, 1962-1963 yearbook, DU Archives.

Figure 73. Students attend Vietnam War symposium, 1965-1966 yearbook, DU Archives.
Chapter Nine: Summary, Contributions, and Directions for Future Research

Throughout the previous chapters of this study I have described the curriculum at Colorado Woman’s College and chronicled changes over time during the period from 1909 to 1967. This final chapter summarizes my conclusions, identifies key contributions of the study, and suggests possibilities for future research that naturally extend from my project.

Summary

To review from Chapter 1, the research questions that have guided this study are:

1. What was the curriculum for students at CWC and how did it change over time?

2. What function did the personality development program play in the curriculum at CWC?

In order to answer these questions I utilized historical methods which involved analyzing documentary sources located in archival repositories. The majority of the sources used in this study consisted of CWC course catalogs, annual yearbooks, student newspapers, alumnae survey questionnaires, and assorted institutional and administrative papers. This variety of materials allowed me to gain an understanding of both the curriculum offered to students (what curriculum theorists would call the “intended curriculum”) and also student reactions and responses to this curriculum. I answered the first research question noted above by dividing my
analysis of the CWC curriculum into six eras, each marked by the moments of major curricular change in the College’s history. These six curricular eras were described in Chapters 4 through 8, and summaries of these chapters follow. In addition, I answered the second research question above in Chapters 6 through 8, where I specifically described how the personality development program functioned in the curriculum.

**Chapter four.**

I began my analysis in Chapter 4 by detailing the CWC curriculum from 1909-1920, the era in which the College first welcomed students on campus. During this founding period, CWC offered students a four-year liberal arts college curriculum that consciously included mandatory domestic coursework to prepare students for their future social roles as wives and mothers. This curriculum contrasted with the offerings of eastern women’s colleges, particularly the well-known Seven Sisters, as these colleges rejected any intrusion of home economics or domestic science into the liberal arts domain. Yet, in their liberal arts requirements specifically, CWC and the eastern women’s colleges were very similar, although CWC offered less elective choice. The overall CWC curriculum shared much in common with that of western and southern women’s colleges, where liberal arts and home economics were also integrated. I concluded that the merging of these two areas of study, and the College’s strong stance against women’s preparation for careers, represented CWC’s response to early 20th century debates regarding the purpose of education for women.

**Chapter five.**

In Chapter 5 I described the curriculum from 1920 to 1930, starting with an analysis of CWC’s transition to junior-college status in 1920. This dramatic shift
followed a significant drop in enrollment and lack of advanced-level students. In this period the College eliminated the bachelor of arts degree program and replaced it with a liberal-arts focused associate in arts degree, which largely prepared students to transfer to senior-level colleges. I indicated that CWC’s course requirements (in terms of academic subjects) for the associate in arts degree were comparable to those at four-year women’s colleges in the South. Yet again, CWC’s curriculum tended more toward prescribed programs with less curricular choice than other women’s colleges. In addition to the associate in arts degree, CWC continued to offer the bachelor of music degree through the 1930s.

Perhaps the most important curricular change in this decade was that CWC also introduced two-year, terminal, vocational programs in fields such as secretarial studies, home economics, journalism, and art. The creation of these programs was driven by student demand and expanded professional opportunities for women in society, which CWC highly promoted. Despite the fact that CWC encouraged students to enroll in vocational programs and pursue careers, the official rhetoric of the College regarding the purpose of education for women continued to emphasize domestic preparation for home life. I noted in this chapter that as vocational programs expanded, there was a corresponding increase in the College’s insistence on maintaining proper morality and traditional gender roles on campus. I argued that CWC officials used language regarding the protection of students and standards of ideal womanhood to soften the blow to parents and the educational community of the actual curriculum that the College offered. I also indicated that this balancing act of addressing competing demands and ideologies became a theme recurring throughout the history of the CWC curriculum. Throughout the 1920s
the College attempted to meet these demands by offering a diverse curriculum that combined liberal arts, fine arts, domestic, and vocational coursework to suit women’s evolving needs and shifting social roles.

**Chapter six.**

The expansion of CWC’s vocational curricula and the College’s first introduction of the personality development program in the early 1930s were the themes of Chapter 6, which covered the years from 1930 to 1940. In this chapter I traced the development of new, two-year vocational programs at CWC in areas such as pre-nursing, pre-library, pre-medical, and pre-legal studies, and illustrated the significant growth of existing vocational programs in home economics and business education. CWC leaders continued to heavily promote the vocational curricula and students responded favorably. This chapter charted the vast increase in vocational majors in this era and demonstrated that by the end of the decade, despite the great diversity of curricula offered, more CWC students received two-year vocational degrees than any other type. For those students who did enroll in the liberal arts program, comparisons indicate that the required academic subjects for the associate in arts degree at CWC were very consistent with those mandated at other women’s college in the U.S., including the most well-known eastern colleges.

As CWC expanded its vocational programs, the College simultaneously implemented a personality development program, which became central to the College’s curricular identity for the next several decades. CWC required personality coursework for all students, which emphasized the acquisition of beauty, charm, and poise for all women. The courses consisted of social training and individual student analysis in the form of
voice and posture evaluations and thorough health and grooming consultations. I argued in this chapter that personality development functioned as an equalizing and stabilizing force in the curriculum that allowed CWC to balance traditional and modern views on American womanhood and the meaning of women’s education.

Chapter seven.

In Chapter 7 I described the influence of World War II on the CWC curriculum in the years from 1940 to 1946. The War brought many changes to campus such as Red Cross and first aid courses, accelerated academic schedules, military drilling, and the introduction of even more vocational programs, such as those in airline hostess training, aviation, and business personnel. The goal of these vocational classes, which the College referred to as “Victory Courses,” was to prepare CWC students to enter the military, government service, or to take on new professional roles in a wartime state of emergency. I concluded that College officials used the heightened patriotic language of wartime to justify their continued expansion of the vocational curriculum. In this period, the College also greatly expanded the requirements of the personality development program, in essence doubling the mandatory hours of attendance. I suggested in this chapter that here again the College used the personality curriculum to balance competing and conflicting ideologies of womanhood and the purpose of women’s education in a period of greatly shifting social roles.

I included in this discussion student reactions to both their newfound opportunities in wartime and the personality coursework they experienced. Surveys of students revealed a mixed response to the personality program. In this chapter I also
provided information about the impact of the War at other women’s colleges to allow for a comparison with CWC.

In the period from 1946 to 1959, the curriculum at CWC returned to a prewar state of normalcy. Many women’s colleges, especially the eastern colleges, faced tremendous pressure after the War to eliminate liberal arts and vocational programs that prepared women for realms beyond the home. Yet, even in a postwar era of backlash and rekindled debate about the purpose of education in women’s lives, CWC continued to offer students a full spectrum of curricular options including liberal arts and sciences, fine arts, domestic training, and vocational preparation for specific careers. In fact, CWC’s curriculum remained remarkably stable throughout the 1950s. I argued in this chapter that CWC was able to weather the postwar years of retrenchment without critique because the College had already learned to negotiate and manage the tensions inherent in women’s education by supplementing the overall curriculum with mandatory personality development training.

While CWC did not feminize or domesticate its curriculum by removing or altering existing programs, the introduction of new curricular programs in traditionally female fields such as marriage education, nursery education, and medical secretary training reflected the College’s concessions to societal norms and expectations.

Chapter eight.

In Chapter 8 I discussed the curriculum at CWC in the years between 1959 and 1967. In this era CWC re-introduced a four-year curriculum which began with the implementation of the bachelor of science degree in medical technology in 1959. This program was quickly followed by the introduction of a bachelor of arts degree focused on
liberal arts. The College rationalized this change in mission by stating that it wished to better serve the large numbers of students who were transferring into senior-level colleges after graduation from CWC. I indicated that perhaps the tremendous growth of public two-year colleges in this era precipitated the College’s desire to distinguish CWC from these emerging junior colleges. Placing CWC in the literature on two-year women’s colleges, I noted that many junior colleges for women transitioned to the baccalaureate level in the early 1960s.

In addition to the creation of new four-year programs, CWC made several significant changes to the curriculum in the 1960s, including the introduction of foreign study programs in the European cities of Vienna, Madrid, and Geneva. Other changes consisted of the elimination of the home economics department and the creation of a college-wide, interdisciplinary program in family studies as its replacement. The College slowly phased out the personality development program over the course of the 1960s, as it fell out of favor with students and the community due to what was seen as an antiquated and elitist emphasis on etiquette and personal appearance. I suggested in this chapter that family studies came to function within the CWC curriculum as a balancing and equalizing force, much as personality development had for so many years, yet it provided a more modern and academically rigorous forum for discussions of domestic issues.
Contributions of the Study

In this section I outline five key ways in which this dissertation study contributes to the literature on the history of women’s colleges and the history of education more broadly.

A case study of a non-eastern women’s college.

Perhaps the most fundamental contribution of this study is that I have responded to multiple calls in the literature to provide detailed case studies of more diverse types of women’s colleges (Chamberlain, 1988b; Eisenmann, 1997; Harwarth, 1999). As I discussed in Chapter 2, most histories of women’s colleges have focused on campuses in the eastern United States, and in particular, have emphasized the well-known Seven Sister colleges. This study offers a much-needed addition to the literature by providing a richly detailed analysis of the curriculum at a lesser-known women’s college located in the western United States, thereby moving away from the east coast bias inherent in so much of the research on the history of women’s education. This study also abandons the “prestige-centric” nature of most studies (Eisenmann, 1996, p. 858). Educational historian Margaret Nash (2008) writes that “‘Women’s education’ can no longer be equated with a few elite institutions, as it now is well documented how many other sorts of institutions women attended” (p. 147). My goal with this dissertation has been to build on this new knowledge and emerging body of literature on diverse institutions in order to provide information about CWC that illustrates the broader spectrum of educational options available to women students in the early and mid-20th century.

---

1 I have labeled this section “contributions” of the study rather than the more commonly-used “implications,” in order to highlight this historical study’s links to the literature.
Along the way I have also provided information about other lesser-known women’s colleges in the West aside from CWC, such as Mills College and Mount St. Mary’s College, when literature was available. A more in-depth comparison of the curriculum at CWC and that at other women’s colleges will be an important subject for future research. Eisenmann (2001) argues that more synthesis is needed in the historiography of women’s education, and this dissertation offers one of the building blocks required to achieve “a wider interpretation of women’s educational history” (p. 453).

**Taking seriously two-year women’s colleges.**

A second contribution of this dissertation study is that it contributes to the literature on the history of private, two-year women’s colleges. I connect CWC’s transition to junior college status in 1920, and its re-introduction of the four-year curriculum in 1960, to larger trends in the history of two-year colleges for women. I also provide details in the dissertation about Stephens College, another private, two-year women’s college whenever possible in order to highlight lesser-known schools at every available opportunity. As I noted in Chapter 5, scholars Wolf-Wendel and Pedigo (1999) argue that two-year women’s colleges have been largely ignored in the historical record. Thus, this study takes these colleges seriously and offers some small first steps toward recognizing the value of these institutions.

**The mental-hygiene movement in practice.**

Another contribution of my dissertation study is that it extends the literature on the mental hygiene movement in American education. As I discussed in Chapter 6, Cohen (1982, 1983) makes it clear that personality programs evolved out of the mental
hygiene movement in the early 20th century and then quickly became popular at American colleges. Yet, little has been written about the introduction or adoption of such a program on a particular college campus. My study offers a specific, detailed account of how one college implemented a personality development program on its campus. I am also able to illustrate how this program functioned within the overall curricular plan of the College, and even how students responded to the personality curriculum. Thus, I have established a basic foundation of data and knowledge from which future comparative studies can build.

Women’s colleges at mid-century.

As I established in the literature review in Chapter 2, the study of the history of women’s education in the post-World War II era is a newly emerging line of research (Eisenmann, 2006). This dissertation contributes to this expanding area of study by detailing the curriculum at CWC during World War II and also into the postwar decades of the 1950s and 1960s. My analysis of this era at CWC supports Eisenmann’s (2002, 2006) findings that women’s education in the mid-20th century cannot be defined solely by curricular retrenchment and critique. As I argued in Chapter 7, CWC did not alter its curriculum in the postwar years to adapt to the return of traditional social roles for women.

Curriculum historian Barry Franklin (2008) argues that a “topic that gets short shrift in current research is the curriculum after mid-century” (p. 237). Thus, this dissertation’s foray into the curriculum at CWC in the 1950s and 1960s also contributes to the field of curriculum history more broadly.
Debates over the purpose of women’s education in the 20th century.

A final contribution of this study is that it adds to the literature that describes the constant debates that occurred over the purpose of women’s education in the early and mid-20th century. More particularly, this dissertation offers evidence for how the debates over women’s education, and the competing ideologies about women represented by these debates, were played out at CWC. As reviewed in Chapter 2, Weneck (1991) has illustrated how the rift between Barnard College and Teachers College, both at Columbia University, reflected the debates and the two diverging paths of women’s education at the turn of the century. Weneck indicates that Barnard College (like all Seven Sister colleges) favored a liberal arts curriculum for women, while Teachers College offered women students a vocational curriculum. My study describes how both of these curricula were balanced and reconciled on a single women’s college campus throughout most of the 20th century. New studies might also consider how other women’s colleges managed tensions in their curricula.

Directions for Future Research

This last section of the chapter offers suggestions for future studies based upon my research on Colorado Women’s College and my experience gained from this project about the archival materials available.

Career paths of CWC graduates.

One possibility for a future study about CWC would be to analyze the professional and career choices of CWC graduates. There is currently no published information about the career paths that CWC graduates followed in their lives, and such a
study would allow for a discussion of how the curriculum offered at CWC in different eras may have influenced students’ professional choices and options.

In order to begin to understand the work lives of CWC students, I collected significant amounts of data on their career choices by culling information from alumnae news columns in the student newspapers and from alumnae bulletins and assorted alumnae publications found in the University of Denver archives. These data summarize career information as self-reported to alumnae publications by CWC graduates.

My preliminary findings indicate that until 1940, and then again after the World War II era, by far the most common profession entered by CWC students was that of elementary and secondary school teacher, despite the relative diversity of curricular offerings at CWC. This tends to concur with the research of Newcomer (1959) and Wechsler (1997) who argue that women became teachers based on shrewd, practical decisions about career openings for women and not based on their natural inclinations. Newcomer suggests that women graduates typically took “the line of least resistance” (p. 178).

My data suggest that CWC graduates from the World War II era more commonly reported entering the fields of secretarial work, business, and nursing than K-12 teaching, which is consistent with women’s expanded professional opportunities during wartime and CWC’s promotion of these career fields. Aside from teaching, business, and nursing, some of the other career fields frequently reported by CWC graduates for the years discussed in this dissertation were fine and performing arts, government service, higher education, air hostess/stewardess, and retail. Figures D1 to D7 in Appendix D present the complete data that I have collected.
The CWC College yearbooks provide insightful information into the career ambitions of many students, and a fruitful approach to a study of CWC career paths might be to compare and contrast the hopes and dreams of CWC college students with their actual career outcomes.

**Extracurricular activities at CWC.**

A natural next step in understanding the complete curriculum at CWC would be to explore the history of extracurricular activities on campus, as the College always expressed that the extracurriculum was just as important as classroom learning to its overall curricular vision for students. An in-depth analysis of the extracurriculum would shed light on the differences between the types of activities that CWC mandated and those that students created for themselves.

In my research for this study, I have noted that CWC students developed a wide variety of extracurricular activities that served many purposes. For example, students invented clubs for social purposes, for geographic networking with others from their own regions, and to prepare for and learn about specific future careers. Students also used their extracurricular opportunities to gain leadership experience and to practice a variety of social roles. Many students also used extracurricular activities on campus to experiment with a wide range of gender identities. For example, CWC students played male roles in College plays, flew airplanes, and in the early years some women even volunteered to “perform” as men and act as dates at College social functions. In contrast, CWC students were also infatuated with annual campus beauty pageants and fashion shows.
Just as I have described in this study how the collegiate curriculum reconciled competing ideas and debates about women and their education, a project on the extracurricular activities at CWC might allow for an analysis of how students themselves balanced traditional and modern ideas about womanhood in their daily student lives.

**The CWC student identity.**

A detailed study of the backgrounds of CWC students, including information about their social class, racial, and religious identities would provide a more complete picture of the CWC campus and the students it served. In particular, such as study would allow for greater understanding of how student identities might have influenced the curriculum that CWC offered. It would also provide a better understanding of student interest in particular campus programs and career paths.

My research for this dissertation indicates that tuition rates at CWC were significantly higher than those at the publicly supported University of Colorado and were on par with those charged at other private colleges in Colorado such as Colorado College (Benezet, 1999) and the University of Denver.² In 1956, Colorado College administrators claimed to be searching for “rich” students to pay the high cost of tuition (Benezet, 1999, p. 13), and in this year CWC students paid the same rate of $450 annually without room and board. This information, in conjunction with data I collected about the occupations of CWC parents would lead me to assume that CWC attracted an upper-class student body.

---

² Tuition data for the University of Colorado can be located in CU course catalogs found in the archives at Norlin Library, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO. Tuition information for the University of Denver can be found in DU course bulletins, DU Archives.
While my preliminary observations suggest that CWC largely served affluent White students, women from diverse cultures also enrolled in every era. For example, a small number of Native American students attended before 1930, and Asian students were present on campus from the 1920s onward. Black women were specifically barred from the College in the 1940s, although CWC admitted a few Black women starting in the 1950s. College yearbooks would indicate that when non-White women attended they were allowed access to all College social events and participated fully in campus life. Yet, cultural insensitivities abounded as White students often dressed in blackface for skits and racially diverse and international students were always photographed wearing native costumes.

A better understanding of the religious backgrounds of students and how CWC’s religious affiliation as a Baptist college influenced the curriculum offered would also be an important future study. Statistics casually offered in CWC publications indicate that most students identified as Christian, although not necessarily Baptist, and that Jewish students attended as well. Clearly, an analysis of race, class, and religion at CWC would result in findings of interest to the field of women’s education.

**Using additional archival materials.**

Future studies of Colorado Women’s College might also benefit from the use of archival sources beyond those I analyzed for this dissertation project. For example, student literary publications such as the *Prism* literary magazine and *Scribbler* inserts published in student newspapers could provide further insight into student perceptions and attitudes regarding their CWC experiences.
Other sources such as the personal papers of faculty and administrators, located in the University of Denver archives, could offer information about the experiences of women faculty at CWC. This would be of particular interest as CWC always had large numbers of women faculty on campus, which was not always the case at local coeducational colleges (Westermeier, 1976) or even at all women’s colleges (Palmieri, 1995). The personal papers of CWC English professor Deatt Hudson and CWC’s first woman president, Marjorie Bell Chambers, are two examples of potential sources from the archives.

Finally, oral history interviews could be conducted with living CWC alumnae in order to collect first-hand accounts of student experiences and reflections. Perhaps these interviews could be initiated from information found in existing CWC survey questionnaires.

The western women’s college.

In this dissertation I provided a detailed study of the curriculum at a women’s college in the West. As there are so few published studies in this area, my research on CWC and other lesser-known women’s colleges in the West provides a first glimpse into the characteristics of “western” women’s colleges. Further studies should more closely examine and compare these types of institutions such as Mills College, Scripps College, and Mount St. Mary’s College in order to delineate any of their possible similarities.

While it is clearly too early to argue for a definitive category of the “western” women’s college, my study illustrates that CWC certainly defined and marketed itself in this way. As I have distinguished Colorado Women’s College in this study, CWC also attempted throughout its history to distinguish itself as a western women’s college.
Final Thoughts

As I complete this historical study the words of historian Robert Darnton resonate strongly with me. He writes:

Any historian who has done long stints of research knows the frustration over his or her inability to communicate the fathomlessness of the archives and the bottomlessness of the past. If only my reader could have a look inside this box, you say to yourself, at all the letters in it, not just the lines from the letter I am quoting. (Darnton, 2009, p. 75)

At times I have been overwhelmed by the enormity of information found in the archives, and I still find myself realizing that there is so much information there that I have seen and have not yet described or conveyed. Like Darnton, I wish I could somehow show readers of this dissertation the thousands of pages I have viewed in CWC yearbooks, course catalogs, and newspapers. I can only hope that I have given the reader a small window into this campus and its curricular past. There are many more stories to tell, and many more studies to come. This is just a beginning.
References


Antler, J. (1982). Culture, service, and work: Changing ideals of higher education for 


W.W. Norton & Company.


Junior college: At Stephens in Missouri girls are taught to solve women’s 7,400 problems with classes in beauty, riding, voice. (1937, June 7). *Life*, p. 66.


Radke, A. G. (2002). “Can she not see and hear, and smell and taste?”: Women students at coeducational land-grant universities in the American West, 1868-1917

(Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE.


Smith, D. G. (1990). Women's colleges and coed colleges: Is there a difference for

the impact of women's colleges. *Journal of Higher Education, 66*, 245-266.

Solomon, B. M. (1985). *In the company of educated women: A history of women and
higher education in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Springer, M. S. (1966). *Weighted application blank for entry to Colorado Woman's

(Eds.), *Rethinking home economics: Women and the history of a profession* (pp.


Capricorn Books.


Primary Source Collections Cited

Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Public Library, Boulder, CO. (local newspapers).

Colorado Historical Society, Stephen H. Hart Library, Denver, CO. (CWC marketing pamphlets, programs of campus events).

Colorado Women’s College Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Penrose Library, University of Denver, Denver, CO. (CWC course catalogs, yearbooks: Odaroloc, Colo-Wo-Co, The Spinster, Skyline; student newspapers: Colo-Wo-Co, The Western Graphic; scrapbooks, marketing pamphlets, alumnae survey questionnaires, annual reports, administrative papers, University of Denver course catalogs).

University of Colorado, Boulder, Archives, Norlin Library, Boulder, CO. (CU-Boulder course catalogs).

University of Colorado, Denver, Archives and Special Collections, Auraria Library, Denver, CO. (Oral history tape of Mary Kirke Wilson).

Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO. (CWC course catalogs, marketing pamphlets, administrative papers, oral history transcript for Gladys Colette Bell, local and regional newspapers).
Appendix A

The History of Women’s Higher Education in Coeducational Colleges, 1833-1920

Historians analyzing the lives of 19th century American women generally focus on abolitionism and suffrage as the main social movements of the era. As a result, the more quiet battle for women’s entrance into the nation’s male dominated colleges and universities is often ignored. Yet, the issue of coeducation sparked wide public debate, and as educational historian Jana Nidiffer (2000) argues, “although suffrage remained a goal, most political energy on behalf of women from the late 1860s to the turn of the century was focused on winning the chance to go to college” (p. 24).

While some women did find homes in the emerging women’s colleges, significantly more women were educated in coeducational settings throughout the Progressive Era. For example, in 1870 roughly 40% of all women in college were educated in coeducational colleges and universities. Their enrollment increased to 70% in 1890, and reached 90% in coeducational schools by 1920 (Gordon, 1990; Nidiffer, 2000).

As these numbers suggest, coeducation was an important phenomenon that deserves attention, and an understanding of the history of coeducation greatly informs the history of women’s colleges and the themes of this dissertation. In this essay I review the current literature on women’s higher education in coeducational settings and suggest ideas for future research in the field. My aim is to investigate what scholars have written concerning the origins and expansion of coeducation, as well as the impact of coeducation on women students and faculty. In order to limit the scope of this topic, I have elected to focus on the period between 1833 and 1920, as these years mark women’s first entrance into a coeducational college and the last year of the Progressive Era, by
which time coeducation had become well established and was considered the norm for both women and men students (Rudolph, 1990).

The Origins of Coeducation in America

Historian Lynn Gordon (1990) notes that “by the mid-nineteenth century, most Americans accepted coeducation in primary or secondary schools” (p. 17), but this was not the case with higher education. It was feared that educating men and women together would call into question the separate spheres of their existence and raise concerns about the appropriate roles for educated women in society. Therefore, it is somewhat ironic that the “dangerous experiment” of coeducation began at a private, religious institution in Ohio.¹

**Oberlin College.**

The Oberlin Collegiate Institute was founded in 1833 by Reverend John J. Shipherd and Philo P. Stewart. It grew out of the Protestant evangelism of the Second Great Awakening, and its mission was to train Christian missionaries, teachers, and social reformers of all sexes and races (Ginzberg, 1987). Evangelical leader Charles Finney, who became the first president at Oberlin, believed that “coeducation provided a healthy social atmosphere, as well as practice for future ministers in dealing with women who would one day be their congregants or spouses” (Gordon, p. 17). Whatever the motivation for coeducation, Oberlin provided a model for others to follow. Between 1833 and the Civil War in the mid-1860s, approximately six other coeducational schools were founded, including Antioch (1853), founded by well-known educational reformer Horace

---

¹ Ruth Bordin (1999) and Patricia A. Palmieri (1987) both note the historical use of the phrase “experiment” to define the education of women in the 19th century.
Mann, Olivet College, and Grinnell College (Solomon, 1987). Historian Barbara Solomon (1987) suggests that “with its emphasis on propriety, Oberlin’s mode of coeducation gave it an appearance of safety which may help explain the swiftness with which the joint education of the sexes spread” (p. 84).²

There were 15 women in the first Oberlin class of 44 students, and women and men took classes together from the very start. All students followed the classical curriculum of English, history, moral philosophy, science, and mathematics, but women were barred from taking Latin, Greek, and Hebrew (Nidiffer, 2000; Solomon, 1987). This pared-down curriculum was known as the “Ladies Course,” and in 1837 a group of women demanded to be enrolled in the more rigorous “Collegiate Department” with the men. The request was granted and in 1841, Mary Caroline Rudd, Mary Hosford, and Elizabeth Prall graduated with the A.B. degree. From this time on, women could choose their course of study. It important to note that Oberlin was also one of the first institutions to admit African American students, and in 1862 Mary Jane Patterson became the first African American woman to graduate from an American college (Nidiffer, 2000, p. 15).

While men and women studied together at Oberlin, all was not equal on the campus. Gordon (1990) notes that women “were not allowed to deliver graduation orations, or any other public speeches, and were expected to perform domestic work, while male students did the heavier chores” (p. 17). In addition, all social functions were sex-segregated. Solomon (1987) argues that women generally did not resist these

² Rudolph (1990) offers a less optimistic interpretation of the spread of coeducation, noting that before the 1860s, “fewer than half a dozen other American Colleges adopted coeducation” (p. 311).
inequities, but she and others note that Antoinette Brown and Lucy Stone, who would later become prominent suffragists, were two students who did challenge the status quo at Oberlin (Ginzberg, 1987). Creating an interesting debate in this literature, Lori Ginzberg (1987) argues that historians have been overly critical of Oberlin’s treatment of women students. She argues that although the college did not challenge traditional gender roles, it was groundbreaking in its efforts and still experimental enough to be considered threatening to society as a whole.

**The expansion of coeducation.**

Most scholars agree that the dramatic and widespread expansion of coeducation in the second half of the 19th century came about as the result of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 (Nidiffer, 2000; Rudolph, 1990). The Morrill Act provided public land for the creation of state colleges and universities, and after its passage new colleges quickly began spreading throughout the Midwest and West. Most land grant colleges opened as coeducational institutions, as smaller western towns could not economically afford to support separate colleges for women and men. In addition, historian Rosalind Rosenberg (1988) argues that “as these institutions developed, taxpayers demanded that their daughters, as well as their sons, be admitted” (p. 110).

The University of Iowa became the nation’s first public coeducational university when it opened in 1855. It was soon followed by the University of Wisconsin in 1863, the Universities of Indiana, Kansas, and Minnesota in 1869, and the Universities of Michigan and California in 1870 (Bordin, 1999; Gordon, 1990; Rudolph, 1990). Each newly founded school contributed to the growth and further success of coeducation, but some authors argue for the primary importance of one institution over another. For example,
Ruth Bordin (1999) argues that the entrance of women at Michigan was a turning point in the history of coeducation because Michigan was the largest public university in the country, and it was known for maintaining the standards of the elite eastern men’s colleges. On the other hand, Frederick Rudolph (1990) suggests that the founding of Cornell University in 1872, the first coeducational institution in the East, put an end to the “massive skepticism” toward coeducation (p. 316).

In addition to the Morrill Act, scholars have suggested several other factors that contributed to the success of coeducation. One significant observation is that the Civil War had created a shortage in male students and many colleges resorted to enrolling women simply to survive (Bordin, 1999; Rosenberg, 1988; Rudolph, 1990). In fact, Rudolph (1990) suggests that “coeducation saved many of the one-time men’s colleges.” (p. 324).

The emerging industrial revolution in the Northeastern United States, which moved labor from the household into the factory, also played a significant role. Lynn Gordon (1990) argues that as less work was available for women to perform in the private sphere, it became necessary for women to work outside the home before marriage. Families therefore, began to see the benefit of educating their daughters for future employment.

The growing need for teachers in the country’s expanding elementary and secondary school system also contributed to the success of coeducation for women. By 1870 women comprised three out of every five teachers in the U.S., in part because teaching children did not challenge society’s traditional notions of womanhood, and women teachers could be cheaply compensated (Bordin, 1999). The states recognized
that private women’s colleges were far too expensive for most women, and they offered coeducation in the public colleges as a pragmatic response to their need to sustain the public common school movement (Nidiffer, 2000). Ogren (2003, 2005) also argues that state-funded normal schools, which focused on teacher preparation, played an important role in the development of coeducation.

Finally, Lynn Gordon argues that the entrance of women into coeducational institutions of higher education can also be attributed to the dutiful work of reformers and women’s rights activists. Gordon (1990) writes:

> Collegiate coeducation usually did not come about naturally or because of American democratic traditions. For nineteenth-century Americans, there was nothing “natural” about young men and women of marriageable age associating as equals...Access to higher education in the North, Midwest, and West became a reality when women themselves—mothers, civic leaders, potential students, or women’s rights advocates—pressured state and university officials to open the doors of colleges and universities. (p. 24)

Early women’s rights leaders such as Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Julia Ward Howe supported coeducation because they believed it was the only way for women to truly be educated on the same level as men.³ They also felt that coeducation would foster more natural and healthy relationships between the sexes (Rosenberg, 1988). The literature on women and coeducation notes that women’s efforts were most greatly rewarded at Cornell University, where coeducation evolved as the result of a sustained campaign by women including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Maria Mitchell, who became a prominent professor at Vassar College (Gordon, 1990; ³ Some scholars have argued that although they were not favored by feminists, women’s colleges may actually have done more to challenge traditional women’s roles than coeducational colleges. See Rosenberg (1988, p. 120).
Nidiffer, 2000; Rosenberg, 1988). It is important to acknowledge that most supporters of women’s higher education did not also support the women’s rights movement, which provides evidence of the pragmatic concerns motivating many women’s desire for education (Gordon, 1990). It also hints that many women may have feared that supporting women’s rights might have jeopardized the gains they were making in the realm of education.

By 1872 ninety seven colleges in the U.S. were coeducational, with the majority located in the West. “By 1880 over 30 percent of all American colleges admitted women and in another twenty years 71 percent of all American colleges were coeducational” (Rudolph, 1990, p. 322). These figures included the land grant colleges, but also some of today’s leading private universities such as Stanford, Boston University and the University of Chicago. Even with all of its success, coeducation remained extremely controversial throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. This controversy was exemplified by the public debate surrounding the publication in 1873 of a best-selling book titled *Sex in Education: Or, a Fair Chance For the Girls*, by Dr. Edward H. Clarke. Clarke believed that a masculine education could put women’s health at risk, as too much studying “drew blood away from the ovaries to the brain, particularly if the female student overtaxed herself during the ‘catamenial function’ (menstruation)” (Gordon, 1990, p. 18). Based on these medical and biological claims people began to fear that college educated women would be rendered incapable of having children. As a former

---

4 Grace Hebard, a political economy professor at the University of Wyoming, was an exception to this generalization, as she avidly supported the suffrage campaign and was a close friend of suffrage leader Carrie Chapman Catt. To learn more about her life see Scharff (1989).
faculty member of the Harvard medical school, Clarke’s opinions were well-respected and his arguments fueled the opposition to coeducation. Prominent women’s rights leaders such as Julia Warde Howe published responses and attempted to quiet the discussion with little success (Bordin, 1999). One scholar notes that “although he particularly opposed coeducation, Clarke also condemned women’s colleges like Vassar for educating women in the same manner as men” (Gordon, 1990, p. 18).

**Coeducation in the South**

As with most of the literature on the history of higher education, the research on women and coeducation focuses primarily on colleges in the North and West. Yet, several scholars observe that the educational experiences of both African-American and White women living in the South followed very different patterns. In one of the most informative works to focus on southern women, *The Past in the Present*, historian Amy Thompson McCandless (1999) argues that opposition to coeducation for White women was much greater in the South than in the West, or even the Northeast. While most colleges outside of the South eventually overcame their objections for financial reasons, McCandless notes that the southern states, which were the poorest in the country, did not. She observes that this was because southern decision-making was ruled not only by an objection to coeducation, but also by a powerful objection to integration. It was feared that concessions granted to White women would also spur similar demands by African Americans (McCandless, 1999).

**The education of southern White women.**

One of the outcomes of the greater resistance to coeducation in the South was that White southern women gained access to coeducational institutions much later than
women in the rest of the country. For example, it was not until 1910 that women had access to schools with the same quality of faculty and curriculum as coeducational colleges in the North and West. In fact, even respectable women’s colleges did not emerge until the 1890s (Gordon, 1990).

Southern women had very little access to state land-grant universities, as most southern states chose to meet the federal requirement of distributing land-grant funds equally to all sexes and races by creating separate institutions for White women and African-Americans (McCandless, 1999). By 1900, only six White state schools were coeducational, including the University of Tennessee, the University of South Carolina, and the University of Alabama, which each allowed coeducation in 1893 (McCandless, 1999). McCandless (1999) argues that the more newly established southern states were more willing to establish public coeducational institutions, but that some schools such as the University of Virginia resisted until as late as 1970.

Some of the arguments offered by school officials for excluding women from White state universities included that women would lower the curricular standards, ruin university traditions, distract men from their studies, and “be corrupted by the masculine nature of campus life” (McCandless, 1999, p. 93). Even the schools that did allow women did not create friendly environments for women on campus, as men were always considered to be the “real” students. As a result, women faced discrimination and intimidation regularly. For example, at the University of Florida, “a woman who dared to enter the law library would be ‘shuffled’ by male students, who would rub their feet

---

5 It is interesting to note that in 1900, 66% of the nation’s women’s colleges were in the South, reflecting their preference for single-sex educational institutions (McCandless, 1999, p. 84).
against the tiled floors until she left” (McCandless, 1999, p. 98). McCandless concludes that in the end coeducation gave southern White women important new educational opportunities, but it did not create a system of educational equality, or even begin to challenge the traditional notions of womanhood that were so strongly established in southern culture.

**The education of southern Black women.**

The higher education of African-American women in the South was quite different, as the large state schools and White women’s colleges did not integrate until the 1960s (Gordon, 1990). Ruth Bordin (1999) illustrates that Black women did have access to some of the state universities in the North, such as the University of Michigan, but within the South they had very limited options.\(^6\) Linda Perkins (1988) argues that due to these limitations, “most of the earliest Black college graduates of the mid-nineteenth century, male and female, were Oberlin graduates” (p. 70). In fact, by 1890, only 30 Black women in the United States had earned bachelor’s degrees, while approximately 2,500 White women had graduated from college (Perkins, 1988).

Unlike southern White women, Black women in the South faced little resistance to their education from members of the Black community, as education was considered a strategy for liberation and the uplifting of the race (Perkins, 1988).\(^7\) Also in contrast to

---

\(^6\) Bordin (1999) notes that Sophia Bethena Jones, who graduated from Michigan in 1885, became the first African American woman to earn a medical degree. Ida Gray became the first African American woman to earn a doctor of dental science degree from Michigan in 1890. One of the first Black undergraduate students was Emily Harper Williams, who graduated with a degree in Literature in 1896.

\(^7\) Perkins notes that as racial progress was made, patriarchy began to be more prominent within the Black community. See Perkins (1988, p. 85).
White women, African-American women were more likely to attend coeducational institutions than women’s colleges. As historian Karen Anderson (1989) notes, “because the Black community could not afford the luxury of a separate system of women’s colleges, the vast majority of Black women students, faculty, and administrators were located in coeducational Black schools” (p. 284). Most of these coeducational Black schools throughout the South were private denominational colleges that gave women vocational or teacher training, as opposed to a traditional liberal-arts education (McCandless, 1999). Jeanne Noble (1988) argues that the emphasis on domestic training and a home economics curriculum for Black women was most likely influenced by the need in White society for properly trained domestic help.8 While the private denominational colleges appear fairly conservative due to the emphasis they placed on vocational training, McCandless (1999) argues that their racial and gender attitudes were quite advanced. For example, they were the first schools to hire Black faculty and to educate Black and White students together.

**The Impact of Coeducation on Women Students**

One of the most interesting debates in the literature on women and coeducation pertains to the question of how women in the first generation of college graduates, those who enrolled between 1860-1890, experienced campus life. In her work on the first women at the University of Michigan, educational historian Ruth Bordin (1999) argues that women played a central role on campus from the start. She states that “except that they had no women role models on the faculty, their experience was not very different

---

8 Noble (1988) observes that Black women had few occupational choices, including teaching and working as domestics in White homes.
from that of their male peers” (p. 13). Arguing that the 1870s were a “golden era” for women, Bordin (1999) notes that women studied with men, joined male clubs, formed their own societies, wrote for campus newspapers, and generally participated fully in all aspects of campus life aside from fraternity life and athletics.

In contrast, Lynn Gordon (1990) analyzes campus life for women at the University of California and observes that “during the first thirty years of widespread collegiate coeducation (1860-1890), women students were ignored, ridiculed, and isolated from campus life” (p. 25). She writes that male students regularly called women “Pelicans,” (p. 73) in reference to their being skinny and ugly. It seems that at Berkeley at least, women had very little campus presence other than as the brunt of jokes in newspapers and yearbooks. In summing up the coeducational experience for women, Gordon (1990) observes that coeducational campuses offered women more intellectual opportunities than the women’s colleges, but provided many fewer chances for social engagement and leadership roles.

The writings of Rosalind Rosenberg (1988) tend to support Gordon’s analysis, as Rosenberg also argues that women were poorly treated at coeducational schools. At Wesleyan University women were barred from student organizations, excluded from the yearbook, and segregated from men in the lecture halls. In addition, male students beat up other men who were seen talking to women students. Rosenberg (1988) writes that male professors also participated in humiliating women. She suggests that one of the reasons behind this male behavior is that men resented the presence of women on campus
because it reminded them that they were not at one of the elite eastern men’s colleges such as Harvard or Yale.  

While conditions may have been difficult for women, both Rosenberg (1988) and Gordon (1990) agree that institutions that were coeducational from their founding, such as the University of Chicago, did a better job of integrating women into campus life. For example, Gordon (1990) argues that the University of Chicago created a better atmosphere for women because it had never developed the traditions of “rushing,” hazing, and class-fighting that were so popular among college men (p. 103).

The living conditions for women on campus were not that different from those of male students. Almost no dormitories existed until after the turn of the century, so women who did not live with their families had to make other living arrangements. Some families moved to a particular town so that their daughters could attend school, but most women found rooms in local boardinghouses (Nidiffer, 2000). Ruth Bordin (1999) argues that most women had no difficulties finding a place to live, and she notes that most women lived with roommates. Those who did not eat at their rooming establishment formed “eating clubs,” which involved sharing the expense of hiring a cook to prepare meals (Bordin, 1999, p. 13). In contrast, Gordon (1990) argues that at Berkeley boardinghouse keepers questioned the propriety and reputations of women college students and “preferred to rent exclusively to men” (p. 54).

---

9 Nidiffer (2000) notes that in response to being excluded from campus publications, women would often publish their own “women’s editions” (p. 91).

10 Rosenberg (1988) argues that when women’s dorms were eventually constructed in the 1910s, some women missed the freedom and independence of boardinghouse living.
In the first years of coeducation women tended not to develop social relationships with men, but instead formed intense romantic partnerships with other women, often known as “Boston Marriages.” By the early 1900s, these relationships came to be viewed by society as sexually deviant, and they were no longer tolerated on coed campuses, although they continued to flourish at the women’s colleges (Bordin, 1999). As coeducation became more common, dating became a more regular part of campus life, but Gordon (1990) argues that coeducation “plagued romantic relationships because it led to role confusion” (p. 109). In the end, only half of all women college graduates of the first generation married, but many women at coeducational schools married men from their same institutions (Rosenberg, 1988). Most women who did not choose to marry forged professional careers for themselves as teachers, settlement house workers, professors in the nation’s women’s colleges, and social workers. It was almost impossible to combine a career and family life, and thus most women of the first generation were faced with a difficult choice (Gordon, 1990).

By the turn of the century, women were entering coeducational institutions in unprecedented numbers, and some schools even enrolled more women than men (Rosenberg, 1988). Women were also achieving great academic success. As evidence of their achievement, Bordin (1999) notes that at Michigan women were earning more Phi Beta Kappa honor society keys than men—so many that the society became known as the “Woman’s club” (p. 20).

As a result of women’s success as college students, a backlash against coeducation spread throughout the country in the early 1900s. College leaders and opponents of coeducation argued that women were “feminizing” the university, as they
tended to dominate courses in the humanities, languages, and the emerging domestic science and home economics departments, while men moved into the sciences (Nidiffer, 2000). ¹¹ Yet, for the most part women were simply taking courses in the fields that would prepare them for the few careers available to women graduates (Clifford, 1989). ¹²

The second component of the turn of the century backlash against women’s education was what came to be known as the “race suicide argument.” Men such as Charles Eliot, G. Stanley Hall, and President Theodore Roosevelt worried that due to the fact that college educated women married less frequently and had fewer children than other women, the nation was not replenishing its best classes of people (Nidiffer, 2000; Palmieri, 1987). This racist argument was widely published and led to abrupt changes for women of the second generation of students on coeducational campuses.

One of the most important changes was that many colleges, such as Stanford and Boston University, began to establish enrollment limits for women students, and a few colleges, such as Wesleyan, brought an end to coeducation completely (Nidiffer, 2000; Rosenberg, 1988). Nidiffer (2000) notes that as part of the backlash, women at the University of California no longer received the Phi Beta Kappa keys they earned, as the honor was reserved for men who would need to find jobs after graduation. Perhaps the most lasting affect of the backlash was that questions returned about the proper form of

¹¹ For an in-depth look at the history of one the earliest home economics departments, see Nerad (1999). It is interesting to note that Rudolph (1990) argues that the eastern men’s colleges saved the humanities from the threat of “feminization.” Yet, he does not address the societal forces that were pushing women into and men away from the humanities.

¹² Clifford (1989) notes that women were drawn to the humanities because fields such as history, English, and languages prepared women to teach in the emerging public high schools.
education for women. In order to prepare more women students to take a traditional role in society, women were steered into “course fitted to women’s domestic interests,” and eventually women’s curricular choices became much more narrow and segregated (Rosenberg, 1988, p. 118). As a result, by 1900, 45,000 of the 61,000 women students in coeducational institutions were enrolled in teacher training and home economics courses (Clifford, 1989, p. 16).

**The Impact of Coeducation on Women Faculty**

Despite the Progressive Era backlash, women students made significant inroads into the world of coeducation by the turn of the century, but unfortunately the same cannot be said for women faculty. Most coeducational colleges were very reluctant to hire women faculty, even though they produced many fine scholars. For example, Ruth Bordin (1999) argues that women were not well represented in the faculty at Michigan, although women had pursued doctoral degrees since the beginning of coeducation. Western universities were the most likely to hire women faculty for financial reasons, but even they became less willing as schools developed and prospered (Clifford, 1989).

Some of the obstacles that women faced included anti-nepotism codes that barred spouses from teaching at the same schools, and segregation within the university community. The nepotism rules hurt the many women who were married to academic men, and the segregation of women in coeducational institutions reflected the belief that all women faculty should be placed in “womanly” academic departments (Nidiffer, 2000). Nidiffer notes that regardless of their academic field of study, most women were

---

13 For biographical portraits of several of the most prominent women faculty of the Progressive era, see Nidiffer (2000) and Clifford (1989).
hired for positions in domestic science departments. “By 1911, over 60 percent of all female professors at coeducational institutions were housed in one discipline—domestic science” (Nidiffer, 2000, p. 135). Bordin (1999) makes an interesting point that there were even fewer women faculty at Michigan than at other coeducational state schools because it did not have many of the traditional female departments such as library science, social work, or home economics.

The few women faculty who found homes for themselves at coeducational universities usually faced discrimination from university administrators and fellow faculty. Most campuses denied women from joining the Faculty Club, and as a result women faculty often joined faculty wives, administrative assistants, and women librarians to create a Women’s Faculty Club. Geraldine Clifford (1989) also notes that some colleges barred women from attending faculty meetings. In order to confront the many difficulties they faced in finding faculty positions, Clifford (1989) argues that many women utilized their family and institutional connections. For example, Rebecca Pennell was granted a faculty position at Antioch College, where her uncle Horace Mann was president. In addition, Ada Comstock, whose father was a regent at the University of Minnesota, began teaching in the Rhetoric department at Minnesota in 1900.

**The Emergence of the Dean of Women**

During the early years of the Progressive Era a new path emerged for women faculty to take in finding jobs at coeducational campuses, and this was the creation of a new position titled “Dean of Women.” By 1890, the second generation of women
students was filling the nation’s colleges and universities.\textsuperscript{14} These young women represented a broader range of society, as more and more women of all backgrounds entered college, and they were often thought at the time to be less academically serious than the first generation of pioneers (Gordon, 1990; Rosenberg, 1988).\textsuperscript{15} These women married in greater numbers than the first generation and showed an interest in combining family and work after graduation. It was believed that this generation needed to be more closely supervised than earlier women students, as they tended to be more involved in socializing and extracurricular activities. Partly in response to the anti-coeducation backlash that feared the socializing of women and men students, and in order to help college administrators deal with what became known as “the woman problem” on coeducational campuses, schools across the country began hiring women faculty members to serve as deans of women (Nidiffer, 2000). As these were positions that combined administrative duties with faculty status and teaching, Clifford (1989) argues that the growth of this new job did more than anything else to bring women into the university community and to provide women with faculty positions.

The University of Chicago was the first major university to assign a dean of women when it hired University of Michigan graduate Alice Freeman Palmer in 1892.

\textsuperscript{14} Solomon (1985) has identified three generations of women college graduates: 1870-1889, 1890-1909, and 1910-1930. Gordon (1990) argues that there were only two generations, those who graduated between 1870-1890 and 1890-1920. I have elected to adopt the latter interpretation, as it appears from the literature to be the more common assumption. See Nidiffer (2000, p. 155, note 2). Gordon also suggests that what is known as the second generation of women college graduates was actually the first generation in the South.

\textsuperscript{15} Gordon (1990) argues that the second generation was not less academically serious, but simply more interested in marrying after college.
In her biographical look at the first deans of women, educational historian Jana Nidiffer (2000) illustrates how Palmer, along with women such as Marion Talbot (Chicago), Ada Comstock (University of Minnesota), Mary Bidwell Breed (Indiana), Lucy Sprague Mitchell (Berkeley), and Lois Mathews (Wisconsin), oversaw the activities of women students. Bordin (1999) argues that the doctrine of *in loco parentis* ruled college campuses after 1890, but Nidiffer is clear that the deans of women did not rule severely over their students.

Instead, to the dismay of many campus administrators, the deans of women used their positions to make life better for women students on coeducational campuses. Using the model of the elite women’s colleges, the deans of women utilized a strategy of separatism on coeducational campuses, creating for women a world unto themselves (Gordon, 1990; Nidiffer, 2000). While women continued to attend classes with men, they confronted the hostility to their campus presence by creating their own extracurricular activities.

Nidiffer (2000) argues that the deans of women focused on providing to students the services, such as housing, medical care, and physical education facilities, that were often available to men but not to women. They served as mentors to their students, and women benefited from having their first allies on campus.

Like most members of the first generation of women college graduates, the majority of women holding the position of dean of women were not married. Nidiffer (2000) argues that “the personal lives of the early deans reflect the marriage-and-career

---

16 For more on the life of educational leader Alice Freeman Palmer see Bordin’s biography (1993).

17 For more about the doctrine of *in loco parentis*, see Bordin (1999, p. 35).
dilemma typical of women of the Progressive Era” (p. 140). For example, of all of the women in Nidiffer’s comprehensive study of the deans, only Alice Freeman Palmer and Lucy Sprague Mitchell were able to successfully combine work and marriage, and only Mitchell had children. In her biography of Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Joyce Antler (1987) argues that this dilemma constituted the central theme of Mitchell’s life. Antler (1987) writes:

> the deepest interest in this life story goes beyond Lucy Mitchell’s record as a key figure in progressive education; it lies in a woman’s creative struggle to resolve the conflict between demanding, innovative professional work and full engagement as a wife and mother. This abiding problem, for herself and other women, was at the center of Lucy Sprague Mitchell’s life, and she was exceptionally articulate about it. (p. xiii)

Over time, differences in priorities and desires for family life created a divide between the deans of women and their students. As the students of the second generation focused more on marriage and children after college graduation, they no longer looked to their unmarried and childless mentors as role models (Clifford, 1989; Gordon, 1990).

Eventually, the position of dean of women was phased out in the 1960s when colleges began to hire men to serve in the position of dean of students (Nidiffer, 2000).

Still, the deans of women have left a lasting and important legacy. In addition to improving campus life for women students, they also created a place for women as professional administrators on college campuses. Nidiffer (2000) highlights their work to professionalize the position of dean through the creation of the National Association of

---

18 Nidiffer (2000) notes that by the 1990s, less than 20% of senior administrators in student affairs were women.
Deans of Women (NADW), and notes that they were the pioneers of the modern fields of career guidance and student affairs.\textsuperscript{19}

**Conclusion**

This review of the literature on the history of women’s higher education in coeducational settings has focused on the many themes that run throughout the work on this topic. By outlining these themes I have provided further background and context for understanding the development of Colorado Women’s College, as it emerged within a higher education landscape dominated by western coeducational universities.

In addition to identifying core themes, my reading in this area has also pinpointed weaknesses in the literature and questions for future study. I conclude by offering some of my own insights drawn from the literature.

1. Jana Nidiffer (2000) and Ruth Bordin (1999) both acknowledge that in the days before the deans of women appeared on campus, faculty wives played an important role in caring for the first women students at coeducational colleges. There have been no comprehensive studies done on this group of women, and I am particularly interested in looking more deeply into the informal roles that women faculty wives played on college campuses.

2. From this review of the literature it appears that all of the major studies on women at coeducational campuses have focused on the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago, and the University of California. While these colleges were some of the largest and most influential, I believe the time has come for scholars to analyze the

\textsuperscript{19} Nidiffer argues that the NADW often excluded African-American women from participating in professional conferences because the events were held at hotels that would not serve black patrons (Nidiffer, 2000, p. 146).
impact of coeducation on some of the other more isolated and geographically diverse coed campuses. It would be very valuable to see if and how student life for women might have been different in various regions of the country. Studies of western coeducational colleges beyond the University of California would also provide important new details. As I have already suggested in this literature review, scholars are not in agreement as to how women experienced coeducation, so more geographically varied studies might allow for more clarity on this issue.

3. One of the most obvious omissions in the literature is that scholars have so far neglected to seriously address the social class backgrounds of the first women students at coeducational colleges and universities. I am interested to know if these women were granted the freedom to be pioneers due to their wealth or perhaps their lack of class status. It seems likely, especially based on the biographical information available for a few of the most distinguished graduates, that most of the first women students were rather wealthy. Yet, the land-grant colleges were fairly inexpensive and situated in rural areas, providing the possibility that middle and working class families may have been in the majority over time. It would be particularly revealing to see how the class backgrounds of students changed between the first and second generations of women graduates. (Sherrie Inness’ (1995) discussion of maids at the women’s colleges provides one example of how women and social class can be explored on college campuses).

4. Finally, while the literature on women and coeducation acknowledges that women pursued graduate studies at all of the major coeducational colleges, there is yet to be a comprehensive study on this topic.
References


363
Essays from the Mount Holyoke College Sesquicentennial Symposia (pp. 64-86).

New York: W. W. Norton & Company.


Appendix B

The History of Women Public Schoolteachers in the U.S., 1830-1920

In the mid-19th century, American women entered the field of teaching in mass numbers and dramatically transformed the profession. This rapid emergence of women into teaching, and their subsequent dominance of the field, at least in terms of numbers, is most commonly known in the literature as the “feminization of teaching.” Much attention has been paid by scholars to this phenomenon and educational historian John Rury (1986) has gone so far as to call the feminization of teaching “the most unappreciated transformation of American schools in the nineteenth century” (p. 8).

In this essay I will explore the many themes that emerge from the literature on the history of women as teachers in public elementary education, most notably the causes and outcomes of the feminization of the teaching profession. I will also examine ideas in the literature about the typical woman teacher, teacher education programs, and the contrasting working conditions of women teachers in the rural West and South, and the urban Northeast. In order to limit the scope of this literature review I will focus my attention on the years between 1830 and 1920. These dates mark the beginning of women’s entrance into teaching and the end of the Progressive Era, by which time women were the majority of all public school teachers. I am providing this review to give context and background for better understanding teaching as a career option available to women in the 20th century.

In Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teaching, historians Alison Prentice and Marjorie Theobald (1991) argue that to write the history of women teachers “is to confront a central theoretical problem in understanding women in
the past: how to evoke the oppressive structures that maintained a patriarchal order while at the same time affirming that women were not the passive victims of that oppression” (p. 9). Following their observation, this essay will pay particular attention to how women teachers were exploited by the systems in which they worked, but also how women used teaching to confront traditional notions of womanhood. In this way women teachers are portrayed as realistic human beings and not simply as stereotypes and caricatures, as is too often the case (Holmes & Weiss, 1995).

**The Feminization of Teaching**

At the start of the 19th century there were almost no women teachers in the U.S. working in publicly supported schools. Teaching was a male job that women considered off-limits for themselves. The few women who did teach worked in private female academies or in small dame schools, where women taught very young children in their homes (Kaestle, 1983). In addition, there was a small minority of women who taught in the district schools of the Northeast, which were the first publicly supported schools in the country, and the precursors to our modern day public schools (Kaestle, 1983). In these schools, women were generally only allowed to teach during the short summer sessions. This was due to the fact that enrollments were low in the summer as older boys did not attend while doing agricultural work. It was believed that women could not properly discipline older male children, therefore, it was only deemed appropriate for women to work in the summer teaching girls and younger boys. Women were also first hired to teach in the summer sessions because it was more difficult to find male teachers during this time of year, as they too could find more lucrative agricultural work (Kaestle, 1983).
Women started entering the field of teaching in great numbers after 1830, as a result of the efforts of common-school reformers and their push to create a system of free public schools for all children in the decades following the American Revolution and the creation of the new Republic (Kaestle, 1983). The most well-known of these reformers were middle-class Anglo-Protestant men such as Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, John Pierce, and William Seward. The common-school reformers hoped to improve primary education across the country by making schooling mandatory, implementing longer school days and school terms, building better school facilities, and creating programs for teacher training (Keastle, 1983).

Scholars have suggested different motivations for the emergence of the common-school reform movement, but most agree that it was both a response to Republican beliefs about the need for educated citizens in a Democratic society, and a reaction against the immigration and industrialization of the 19th century. For example, most reformers believed that the masses of newly arriving immigrants who came to the U.S. in the 19th century needed to be educated, but also assimilated and Americanized through the creation of free public schools (Kaestle, 1983). In addition, Carl Kaestle (1983) notes that common-school reformers were inspired by Prussia’s adoption of compulsory education laws in the 1830s. The reformers argued that “America could not ignore such efficient systems of education and hope to compete politically or economically with nations like Prussia” (p. 73).

Whatever the motivations of common-school reformers, the reforms that they suggested were financially burdensome, as compulsory education required major investments in new school facilities and many more new teachers. In order to make
reform financially feasible, leaders in the common-school movement began to support the hiring of women teachers, who they could compensate at one-half or one-third the rate of men teachers. Reformers and school leaders justified this inequitable pay scale by arguing that women would not need to provide for a family, and would only teach for a few years before marrying and leaving the profession (Kaestle, 1983) As a result of these attitudes, women teachers made lower salaries throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries than postal workers, ministers, and even blue-collar manufacturers (Carter, 1989). The mindset of reformers is captured in the following excerpt from a Littleton, MA school committee document from the 1850s:

The younger portion of scholars might be taught by females, more successfully and with less expense than by males. God seems to have made woman peculiarly suited to guide and develop the infant mind, and it seems to your Committee very poor policy to pay a man 20 or 22 dollars a month, for teaching children their A,B,C’s, when a female could do the work more successfully at one-third of the price. (Holmes & Weiss, 1995, p. 137)

The common-school reform movement was highly successful in achieving its goals, and as historian Carl Kaestle (1983) notes, the first 80 years of the new Republic witnessed “a period in which education underwent a profound shift toward common schools that were publicly funded, centrally regulated, and professionally managed” (p. 221). As early as 1860 all regions of the country with the exception of the South had established tax-based school systems, and by 1918 all states had compulsory education laws (Kaestle, 1983).¹ In addition, the plan to hire women as teachers at lower salaries was also highly successful. While they were almost non-existent in 1800, women

¹ See also Cohen and Scheer, (1997d). They note that Massachusetts led the way by adopting the first compulsory education laws in 1852.
comprised 60% of all teaching positions in 1870, 66% in 1890, 70% in 1900, and finally peaked at 86% in 1920. Scholars also note that in Massachusetts, where the common-school movement originated, women were already dominating the profession by 1850 (Holmes & Weiss, 1995; Kaestle, 1983).²

Along with common-school reformers, women’s rights advocates also promoted the hiring of women as teachers, as they saw an opportunity for women to expand their influence in society. The most well-known woman advocate for hiring women as teachers was Catherine Beecher, a prominent 19th century writer, educator, and social reformer. Beecher founded the Hartford Female Seminary in 1823 and wrote extensively about the benefits of women teachers to schools and to the women themselves. She argued that teaching prepared women for marriage and motherhood and that it was a respectable profession for women because it did not challenge traditional ideas about women’s roles and the separate spheres of the sexes (Cohen & Scheer, 1997c; Hoffman, 1981; Sklar, 1973). Instead, reformers like Horace Mann and Catherine Beecher suggested that women did not improperly move beyond the domestic sphere when they became teachers because schools were simply an extension of the domestic sphere of home and family (Weiler, 1998). Therefore, when women stepped into the workforce to teach young children, they were merely creating a bridge for children between the home and the school. Influenced by humanistic educators and theorists such as Pestalozzi, who proposed that children were generally innocent and good, the reformers argued that women would actually be better suited than men to teach young children. They assumed

² See also Clifford (1989).
that women would be more gentle and loving with children, and less likely to use corporal punishment (Cohen & Scheer, 1997c; Kaestle, 1983).

Scholars write that the feminization of teaching occurred first in the urban areas of the Northeast, where men could more easily find other job opportunities, and then spread to the Midwest and West, and finally reached the South. Most men left the field because they did not like being associated with “women’s work,” but those who stayed generally went into school administration and became principals and superintendents. Some men also became lead teachers in schools where one lead teacher would be hired to supervise several women. This hiring of men into administrative positions created the beginning of the gender hierarchy in education that continues to exist today (Blount, 1998; Holmes & Weiss, 1995). One example from Salem, MA illustrates how this hierarchy was reflected in teacher salaries in the 19th century. In 1842 a male lead teacher in a Salem school made an annual salary of $700.00, while the school’s three assistant teachers were each paid $150.00 for the year (Holmes & Weiss, 1995).

Even with all of the inequity, women were happy to take positions as teachers because it gave them opportunities that they could never before have imagined. Jackie Blount sums up the advantages to teaching by noting that it offered a woman the ability to justify her own education, the chance to live away from home, economic and social independence, the ability to choose whether or not to marry, and the control of a physical space (the classroom) in the public arena (Blount, 1998). In addition to these benefits, women also flocked to teaching because it was more “respectable” and less grueling than
working in a textile mill, and as Susan Carter (1989) argues, the inequities of teaching did not appear as severe when there were so few other alternative career possibilities.\(^3\)

Women were also willing to heed the call of common-school reformers and enter the profession in droves because it was becoming evident in the mid-19\(^{th}\) century that most women would need to work at some point in their lives. Kathleen Weiler (1998) argues that with the growth of the industrial economy, women’s household labor became less valuable and parents began to encourage their female children to find work outside the home. Historian Geraldine Clifford (1991) notes that the transformation of the 19\(^{th}\) century economy and the role of women within this industrial economy was so dramatic that “perhaps in this new society, the very survival of the family would depend on the married women at work, rather than exclusively at home” (p. 130).

**The Typical Woman Teacher in the Common School**

While issues concerning the feminization of teaching dominate the historical discussion of women teachers, other themes do emerge from the literature. For example, using demographic data, scholars have focused attention on describing what the typical woman teacher looked like in the 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries. There is agreement that most teachers were native-born White women who generally worked for about five years before leaving the field to get married. John Rury (1989), whose work focuses on the social characteristics of teachers, notes that most women came from educated middle-class backgrounds early on, but that by the 20\(^{th}\) century daughters of immigrant families started to enter the profession. At the turn of the century there were 27,000 foreign born teachers in the United States, including women from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

\(^3\) See also Clifford (1989).
Henriksen, 1997; Rury, 1989). The average age of women teachers was 26 years in 1900, although some teachers in the West were as young as 15 or 16 years old (Hoffman, 1981; Rury, 1989). Almost all teachers were single (about 90% of them in 1900) because most states, with the exception of New York, banned married women from teaching (Blount, 1998).

In fact, Clifford (1989) writes that 60% of all states had laws against hiring married women. Reformers and school officials saw married women as a threat to the traditional order, as they did not provide a good example to students that married women belonged in the home with their own children (Hoffman, 1981). Yet, ironically this trend reversed by the 1930s and 1940s, when unmarried teachers were criticized for being unhealthy and sexually deviant spinsters, and married women were courted into the profession (Weiler, 1998).

Teacher Education

Another theme in the literature on the history of women teachers focuses on the various ways that teachers were educated and trained. The first schools designed specifically to educate women for careers as teachers, known as normal schools, were established throughout the Northeast and Midwest in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The very first normal school was founded in Lexington, MA in 1837, when it enrolled 25 students in its first class (Holmes & Weiss, 1995). Historian Mary Cordier (1992) notes that the first state supported normal schools in the West were established in Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa in the mid-19th century.

For a discussion of teachers in New York City see Rousmaniere (1997).
The normal schools emphasized pedagogy over learning in the traditional academic disciplines, and students, called normalites, generally studied for one to two years before taking a teaching position (Blount, 1998). In addition, normal schools offered students the chance to teach in a practice school before accepting a teaching job (Holmes & Weiss, 1995). The culture of the female normal school was fairly rigid, and Geraldine Clifford (1989) has described them as “lay convents” (p. 297). Even though the normal schools have received the majority of the attention in the literature, scholars agree that most teachers did not graduate from a normal school or four-year college. Instead, young women attended short-term teacher institutes that were sponsored by a local school district or school board, or special summer sessions at female academies and colleges (Cordier, 1992; Herbst, 1989; Warren, 1989). These short-term teacher training sessions were popular because they were much more affordable and accessible to students. There was particular concern that students in remote areas of the West were not being properly trained. As a result, the National Council on Education, at their 1895 meeting in Denver, CO, emphasized the need for more informal teacher training institutes in the West (Cordier, 1992; Holmes & Weiss, 1995).

**The Working Conditions of Women Teachers in the Common Schools**

Scholars have largely reconstructed the working conditions and daily lives of teachers from examining teachers’ personal writings in the form of letters, memoirs, autobiographies, interviews, and even fiction (Cohen & Scheer, 1997b). What comes across from this investigation is that working conditions depended greatly on where a teacher worked, as daily life was very different in the urban Northeast than in the rural schools of the West or South. Overall, in the 19th century most women were teaching in
rural settings, but by the 20th century urban schools were in the majority (Holmes & Weiss, 1995).

Yet, wherever they taught women teachers faced many of the same obstacles. For example, all teachers were subjected to constant public scrutiny. They were expected to set the moral standards for their communities, and were generally not allowed to drink alcohol, swear, ride in a carriage with a man, or attend the theatre (Hoffman, 1981; Weiler, 1998). Another factor of daily life that did not vary by geographic region was that most women teachers used recitation as their most common teaching method. This technique was useful for dealing with large class sizes, because children worked independently to memorize information from their textbooks and would later recite this information to the teacher. The drawback to this method was that it was highly teacher-focused, and teachers were pressured by Progressive reformers throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries to utilize more child-centered learning techniques (Fuller, 1989; Holmes & Weiss, 1995).

The working conditions of women teachers in the rural West.

One of the greatest challenges to teachers in the rural West was the land and environment itself, as women faced very difficult living conditions. Teachers usually boarded with a family in town, and sometimes helped with household chores, in addition to teaching, to pay for their room and board. Teachers had very little privacy in these arrangements and often had no amenities such as running water or a bathtub (Fuller, 1989; Holmes & Weiss, 1995). The conditions of teachers’ schools were not much better than their living arrangements, as most rural towns did not have the resources to erect new buildings. Many teachers had no option other than to teach in sod houses, dug-out
rooms, private homes, or abandoned buildings (Cordier, 1992). The following letter from a Missouri teacher in 1850 provides an example of the poor condition of many rural schools:

And I must not forget the Schoolhouse which is a log house thirty-five by thirty with four windows & two doors, the south are boarded up & in the four windows of twelve panes each there are ten panes of glass. The cracks are filled with mud plaster & there is no “loft” & the shingles are very holey so that when it rains we take the books up & stand in one place till it begins to drop down & then we move to another spot & then another. (Kaufman, 1984, p. 183)

Within these schools women teachers constantly battled rodents, snakes, and insects, and were expected to clean their schools and maintain the classroom stoves for warmth. Depending on the number of children in a particular community there could be a handful of students, or as many as 75 children in a one-room schoolhouse. This was a great challenge to rural teachers, who might have to teach students ranging in age from 5 to 20 years of age (Cordier, 1992; Fuller, 1989).

In rural communities the school was the social center of a town and teachers were usually expected to teach Sunday school, form literary societies, and generally bring “civilization” to a community (Cordier, 1992; Kaufman, 1984). In their letters teachers often wrote about the wide variety of their responsibilities and the difficulties of fulfilling the expectations of a rural community. For example one teacher wrote:

I not only taught, but was also an administrator, mother, doctor, nurse, judge and jury, artist, cook, librarian, custodian or janitor, carpenter or fixer, advisor, psychologist, disciplinarian, and humanitarian. I might say that I was a ‘Jack of all trades and a master of some.’ In this rural community I was very close to the children and all the parents and many others in the area. Their problems often became my problems, which sometimes made my task even harder. (Cordier, 1992, p. 31)
The rural teachers who receive the most attention in the literature were the Northern women who were recruited to go west to teach. The most famous of these women were the 600 students recruited by the National Popular Education Board, founded by Catherine Beecher in 1848 (Cordier, 1992; Kaufman, 1984). The main reason that these particular women have been highlighted is that the historical record usually dictates what scholars write, and the women of the National Popular Education Board have left behind generous resources. As women who left their families to teach, they wrote frequent letters back home to families, friends, and teachers, and the personal papers of 200 of these women are still in existence today (Kaufman, 1984).

Catherine Beecher trained the recruits of the National Popular Education Board at her school in Hartford and then funded their journeys west to teach. Most of these journeys lasted from two to four weeks, and generally involved transportation by rail, steamship, and coach (Kaufman, 1984). Most of the women were moved to teach in the West by the missionary spirit of their Protestant evangelical religious faith, and they were required to testify to this faith before being sent to teach. Yet, women also offered reasons such as wanting adventure and the chance to see more of the country (Kaufman, 1984). Over half of the women that Beecher sent west were orphans, or had lost at least one parent. In the end it seems that only the most economically vulnerable were willing to make the sacrifice of leaving the known world behind for the chance at making a living for themselves in an unknown territory (Kaufman, 1984).

In their letters teachers wrote about loneliness, sickness, and the lack of medical attention available in their rural settings, and in fact, 21 of the National Popular Education Board teachers died while serving. Yet, the women also wrote about the great
pride they felt in the work they were doing, and two-thirds of the women actually stayed in the West longer than the two-year commitment required of the program (Hoffman, 1981; Kaufman, 1984).  

The working conditions of women teachers in the rural South.

Similar to what has been written about the West, the historical literature on women teachers in the South has focused on northern women who were recruited to move south to teach at the end of the American Civil War, as opposed to noting the teaching experiences of native-born southern women. In total, about 7,000 predominantly White northern women were recruited by missionary societies to go south to teach freed slaves and their children in the newly established freedmen’s schools (Hoffman, 1981). A few well-known Black women, such as Charlotte Forten and Fanny Jackson Coppin from Philadelphia, also went south to teach, but many Black women were turned away from the missionary societies (Forten, 1997; Perkins, 1989). Most women who went south with groups such as the American Missionary Association taught for an average of three years, although Nancy Hoffman (1981) provides examples of women such as Oberlin graduates Sallie Holley and Caroline Putnam, who made permanent lives for themselves in the South. Once teachers arrived at their southern

---

5 The women who stayed were generally those who did not have family waiting for them back home. It is interesting to note that these women had to commit to remaining single during their two years of service to the National Popular Education Board (Kaufman, 1984).

6 Again this is a result of the sources that are available. Hoffman (1981) notes that 500,000 letters from Northern teachers who went south are still in existence as part of the American Missionary Association Collection.

7 Perkins (1989) notes that many Black women teachers in the South were educated at Oberlin College, the first college to admit African American and women students.
destinations, they were on their own to determine the best ways to educate the adults and children in their communities. Many teachers utilized an innovative and popular textbook written by the well-known social reformer Lydia Maria Child, which highlighted the accomplishments of African Americans in American history (Hoffman, 1981).

One particular group of northern teachers that went south to teach was known as the Jeanes teachers, as the group was funded by Quaker philanthropist Anna T. Jeanes. The Jeanes teachers were paid 45 dollars per month to teach school and also provide literacy and health courses to adults, and by 1910 there were 129 teachers in 13 southern states (Littlefield, 1999).

Women teachers in the rural South faced even worse living and working conditions than teachers in the West. There was very little money available for public education and few resources available to teachers. Historian Linda Perkins (1989) notes that at Fanny Jackson Coppin’s teacher training school, the Institute for Colored Youth, teachers were prepared for the realities of the South and were “taught to draw and to make maps, since educational aids were rarely available” (p. 356). In addition, they were educated about health and medicine because they would be working in rural areas with little access to doctors or medical facilities. Fortunately, Black churches regularly provided housing for schools and teachers, and often supplemented the wages of teachers (Perkins, 1989).

Historians Carl Kaestle and Linda Perkins agree that the South had always been behind the rest of the nation in the creation of a centralized system of publicly funded schools, as the institution of slavery had greatly influenced attitudes about public
education (Kaestle, 1983; Perkins, 1989). Before the Civil War it had been illegal to educate slaves, and most White children were educated by private tutors. At the end of the Civil War, Perkins (1989) notes that “although the South could barely afford one single school system, the fear of race mixing, racial equality, and Black progress resulted in the establishment of a dual system for blacks and whites” (p. 345).

The one positive outcome of this dual system of education was that it allowed more native-born southern Black women to enter the teaching force in segregated Black schools, especially in the early 20th century as the Northern missionary teachers returned home. Perkins (1989) argues that Black women began to see teaching as a way to “uplift the race,” (p. 345) and eventually they represented about 20% of all teachers in the South in 1900 (Blount, 1998). Black women teachers faced even greater discrimination in the field than White women, and received even lower wages. For example, in the segregated public school system of Alexandria, VA in 1895, “the average annual salary paid to White males was $1,000 and to ‘colored’ males $533. In comparison, White women earned on average $405 per year and ‘colored’ women $375” (Holmes & Weiss, 1995, p. 222). Even facing such difficult circumstances Black teachers persevered, especially because Black families greatly preferred Black teachers for their children (Holmes & Weiss, 1995). Linda Perkins (1989) argues that although they had few

---

8 Kaestle (1983) also argues that the South did not have the population density required to make a centralized school system feasible.

9 See also Holmes & Weiss (1995).

10 Cordier (1992) makes the argument that as schools desegregated in the West, the number of Black women teachers actually declined. It would be interesting to know if this held true in the South.
resources to spare, some Black families even left the public schools and sent their children to private “pay” schools in order to allow their children to be educated by Black teachers who they could trust with their children.

**The working conditions of women teachers in the urban Northeast.**

Urban teachers, who worked primarily in the large cities of the Northeastern United States, such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City faced a very different set of living and working conditions than the rural teachers of the West and South. Some of the major differences were that city teachers usually lived at home with their parents, and instead of teaching in one-room schoolhouses they worked in multiple-classroom schools that were graded by age (Fraser, 1989). While graded schools had smaller class sizes and allowed teachers to work with students of similar age and ability, Kate Rousmaniere (1997) argues that the negative aspect of multi-class schools was that they alienated and isolated teachers from each other.

Probably the greatest challenge for urban teachers was that they were given the task of teaching the waves of immigrant children who migrated to American cities in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Most city teachers faced entire rooms full of students who did not speak English, and they were responsible not only for teaching them a new language, but also for imparting American values and morals, which added greatly to their workloads (Hoffman, 1981; Rousmaniere, 1997). In addition to “Americanizing” their students, teachers were also asked by their school boards and superintendents to make personal visits to their students’ homes in order to reinforce American ideals to parents (Hoffman, 1981). Teachers also emphasized the importance of discipline and

---

11 Fraser (1989) writes that Boston founded the first graded school.
hygiene to families, and some even inspected their students daily for personal cleanliness (Rousmaniere, 1997). It was believed that this kind of moral education would help to solve the problems of the inner city and create more cohesiveness and unity amongst the diverse populations of American cities (Kaestle, 1983, Rousmaniere, 1997).

Another major obstacle that urban teachers faced was that they were forced to teach a much more rigid curriculum than teachers in the West or South, and they had far less independence (Hoffman, 1981). At the turn-of-the-century, Progressive ideas about bringing scientific methods into the classroom were taking hold throughout Northeastern cities, and schools began to be structured and organized more hierarchically. Scholars note that as the industrialization of America expanded, schools were influenced by business and they “paralleled the hierarchical organization of factories and business enterprises” (Hoffman, 1981, pp. 9-10). Teachers suffered from these reforms because they found themselves at the bottom of the newly implemented hierarchies. In addition, they faced greater amounts of supervision by administrative managers, who were hired to make sure that classroom teachers did not deviate from the prescribed curriculum. Cohen and Scheer (1997a) write that “supervisors were trained to stalk classrooms, searching for breaches in teaching form and technique,” and they note that “this new kind of supervision often degenerated into tyranny” (p. 193). Women were rarely hired to work as supervisors, or even to teach outside of the lowest grades (Rury, 1989). For this reason, the inequalities between the salaries of women and men teachers were highest in urban areas. Thinking about this transformation of the urban school setting, I agree with

---

12 See Rousmaniere (1997) for an example of how schools were analyzed using a business model. It is important to note that this is not only a contemporary phenomenon.
Jackie Blount (1998) when she argues that “it was not coincidental that teachers’ independence and decision-making powers were stripped away just as women dominated the profession numerically” (p. 37). Yet, city teachers did not simply passively accept these working conditions. Instead, influenced by the suffrage movement and the labor movement, women teachers in urban areas united for better working conditions (Cohen & Scheer, 1997d; Weiler, 1998). As Kate Rousmaniere (1997) writes:

> With the centralization of city schools in the 1890s came a period of unprecedented political activity among American teachers, who organized to fight for salary raises, job protections, and employment benefits. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, teachers in Chicago, Atlanta, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and other urban centers organized militant campaigns for recognition as political players in the shaping of school policy and their own working conditions. Between 1919 and 1920 alone, more than 143 local teacher unions were organized. (p. 17)

### Recent Trends in the Literature

To conclude this literature review, I will examine the most recent trends in the literature on the history of women teachers in the U.S, as there is much new research providing wonderful ideas for future study.

1. Louise Anderson Allen (2002) is moving beyond the classroom to discover the work of teachers in community and institutional settings such as museums. For example, her recent essay examines the life of Laura Bragg, who was a museum curator in Charleston, SC in the early 20th century. Bragg was one of the first curators to create traveling museum exhibits for use in elementary schools, and her “Bragg boxes” became the precursors to today’s museum trunk programs for children.

2. In addition to identifying the activities of teachers who did not work in the classroom, scholars are also beginning to document the lives of classroom teachers...
outside of the school setting. For example, Kathleen Weiler (1998) has written about the formation of school women’s clubs in early 20th century California, which were social clubs that supported teachers and women’s issues.

3. The newest research also focuses on teachers as wage workers and activists, documenting their involvement in the early 20th century labor movement. More particularly, Kate Rousmaniere (1999, 2002, 2005) has recently published two essays and a full-length biography that analyze the life of Margaret Haley, an influential teacher and labor organizer, and the first president of the powerful Chicago Teachers’ Federation. Rousmaniere’s work will surely create even more interest in looking at the historical participation of women teachers as not only participants, but leaders in the labor movement.

4. Finally, while Mary Cordier (1992) writes briefly about the establishment of teacher education programs for Native American women in the West, the history of Native American women teachers is almost completely ignored in the literature. While their history may be visible in other general histories of Native American culture, this aspect of the literature needs to be much more widely addressed by educational historians. Therefore, there is the possibility for exciting new research in this area.

---

13 For more about women teachers as activists, see Crocco, Munro, and Weiler (1999).
References


Perspectives on the history of women and teaching (pp. 3-33). Toronto:
University of Toronto Press.

perspective. New York: Teachers College Press.

problem of teacher identity. In K. Weiler & S. Middleton (Eds.), Telling
women’s lives: Narrative inquiries in the history of women’s education (pp.

Sadovnik & S. F. Semel (Eds.), Founding mothers and others: Women
educational leaders during the Progressive Era (pp. 147-162). New York: New
York, Palgrave.

Albany: State University of New York Press.


CT: Yale University Press

teachers: Histories of a profession at work. (pp. 211-212). New York: Macmillan
Publishing Company.
Appendix C

The Education of Girls in Early America

In this essay I review the literature on the education of girls in early America in order to provide further background and context for broadly understanding the history of women’s education. My focus will be largely on the lives of young White girls living in the British North American colonies, in part because very little information is readily available on the education of African American or Native American girls who also lived in the colonies at this time.¹

Most scholars of women’s history would argue that women’s and girls’ access to education in the British North American colonies increased dramatically after the Revolutionary War (Kerber, 1980; Norton, 1980). In this literature review I will examine the various educational institutions available to girls in the early colonial period (1600-1700), the late colonial period (1700-1783), and in the postwar era of the early Republic (1783-1820). By comparing these three time periods, I hope to illustrate how the Revolutionary War influenced the kinds of educational institutions accessible to girls.

Educational Institutions for Girls in the Early Colonial Era (1600-1700)

In the early days of the British American colonies there was very little formal education available to boys or girls. Educational historian John Rury (2002) notes that in the 17th century “fewer than 1 in 10 children attended school at any one time” (p. 33). Formal education in the colonies was voluntary, and the fundamental purpose of all

¹ Norton (1980) notes that in “rare instances black children learned to read and write” (p. 258). In addition, Sara Evans (1997) provides an example of an exceptional young slave girl named Phyllis Wheatley, who was educated by her owners in the colonial era. For information on the education of Native Americans see Reyhner and Eder (1989).
education and training was to teach colonists how to read so they could interpret the Bible. Only the most privileged learned how to write (Rury, 2002; Spring, 1997). Historian Joel Spring (1997) notes that the kind of education available to a colonist depended greatly on where an individual lived. He argues for example, that the New England colonies came closest to creating a system of schools, while the middle colonies contained a few private schools, and “the southern colonies for the most part neglected the education of the general public” (Spring, 1997, p. 29).

The literacy rates of women in the early colonies were significantly lower than those for men, and this illustrates greatly the lack of educational opportunities available to women (Rury, 2002). Rury (2002) argues that women’s literacy rates were low because colonial society believed that women did not need to read. Women were not recognized as official members of the church and “were expected to rely on their husbands to read the Bible” (p. 51).

Yet, Spring (1997) and Monaghan (2003) assert that the one reason that women and girls received any education at all was because the Protestant religion practiced by the colonists, particularly in New England, expected women to be responsible for their own salvation. Therefore, women needed to learn how to read the Bible on their own. Spring also notes that it was important for girls to learn to read because they would later grow up to be responsible for teaching basic reading skills in their own households. Monaghan (2003) adds that while reading instruction for girls was common, writing instruction was not. She writes that “evidence from signatures…on documents reveals how much the ability of women to write remained behind that of men throughout the entire colonial period” (p. 4).
The history of the education of women in the early colonies is difficult to uncover because it is not found in familiar places. Educational historian Lawrence Cremin (1970) argues that the history of education has been too narrowly defined as the history of schools. I would agree with this greatly, as we must look beyond the formal institutions of education in the early colonies in order to understand the education of girls. While boys from prosperous families in the 17th century colonies could attend the few small grammar schools that existed to receive a classical education, these institutions were closed to girls (Norton, 1980). In addition, there were nine colonial colleges that emerged before the Revolutionary War, the first being Harvard College in 1636. Yet these colleges were also closed to female students, as “women’s intellect was considered inferior to men’s (Norton, 1980, p. 259).2 Most girls learned the skills they would need to grow up and maintain a colonial household from their parents, churches, and interactions with other women throughout the course of daily colonial life (Rury, 2002). Many girls learned skills such as “food preservation, soap making, cooking, and sewing” from their own mothers, or as apprentices to other women in the community (Rury, 2002, p. 41). Some girls also “boarded out” with other families who might need the assistance of a girl to help maintain their household. In these cases, families were responsible for teaching basic reading and writing skills to their boarders (Kaestle, 1983; Rury, 2002). Occupational and trade related skills were generally taught only to boys. Yet, one of the only predominantly female occupations in the early colonies was midwifery, and Barbara Solomon (1985) writes that “practitioners transmitted valued skills from one generation to the next, often from mother to daughter” (p. 3).

2 See also Cott (1977), Rury (2002), and Spring (1997).
The Dame School

The only formal institutions of education open to girls in the early colonies were the dame schools, which were small schools where very young children, both girls and boys, went to learn elementary reading and writing skills. These schools were generally attended by the children of a particular neighborhood and were almost always taught in the home, usually the kitchen, of an elderly woman in the community (Rury, 2002; Spring, 1997). Historian Mary Beth Norton (1980) argues that the women who taught in dame schools almost never had any special qualifications, but simply opened these small schools as a way to make a living for themselves. She also notes that in many cases dame schools functioned more like “baby-sitting establishments” than as real schools (Norton, 1980, p. 259).

The most common schoolbook used in the dame schools was The New England Primer, which was “used by instructors to teach reading and the Protestant catechism” (Mondale & Patton, 2001, p. 21). Students were also given a “hornbook,” which was a “printed copy of the alphabet and a short prayer mounted on wood and covered with transparent cow horn” (Mondale & Patton, 2001, p. 21). The primary instructional methods utilized by dame school teachers were recitation and memorization, as children were taught to memorize the alphabet, prayers, and the texts of their schoolbooks (Spring, 1997). The dame schools remained popular up through the end of the 18th century primarily because of their low cost and ready availability. By 1789 there were so many dame schools in the city of Boston that a law was passed requiring dame school operators to be licensed (Kaestle, 1983).
While dame schools offered girls at least some basic education and allowed women an early entrance into the realm of teaching, it is important to note that overall these schools played a very minor role in the education of girls or boys in the early 17th century colonies. As John Rury (2002) notes, “The various avenues of informal education that existed at the time, ranging from apprenticeship to literary circles, may have done more to transmit essential skills than the schools” (p. 54).

**Educational Institutions for Girls in the Late Colonial Era (1700-1783)**

By the 18th century education became more important to all colonists, as the colonial economies became more commercialized and sophisticated. Individuals began to interact more with each other and with the world beyond their own town borders, which meant that they needed to be able to communicate better both orally and in writing (Sklar, 1993). In particular, it became important for girls in trading families to learn to read and write, as their families often needed their assistance in running newly established businesses (Solomon, 1985). In addition, women were beginning to outnumber men in some of colonies, due to men’s ventures into the western frontier and onto the seas to trade with other parts of the globe. For this reason many families began to believe that it would be important to educate daughters so they would be able to find employment and take care of themselves if they never married (Solomon, 1985). The outgrowth of this new need for education in a changing colonial society led to the expansion of education for girls in the British North American colonies.

**The New England District schools.**

Throughout the 18th century the New England colonists began to build district schools in their towns and communities that are considered by some scholars today to be
the first precursors to our modern day public schools. These schools were paid for by public funds and taught elementary reading, writing, and math skills. Most New England district schools were limited to boys and classes were taught by men, but by the mid 18th century many began to allow girls to attend in special summer sessions taught by women. Historians note that Dedham and Sutton were two of the first towns in Massachusetts to allow girls in summer sessions around 1760 (Cott, 1977; Sklar, 1993).

Historian Kathryn Sklar (1993) notes that the district schools were similar to dame schools, but children attended in town buildings instead of private homes, and teachers were paid with public funds. Girls were allowed to attend in summer sessions because boys only attended for 4 to 5 months per year, and took the summers off to work in the fields and provide agricultural labor. The buildings were therefore available for use in the summer months. Historian Linda Kerber (1980) argues that girls were allowed to attend district schools in the summer because “education costs were low during these months, for schoolhouses did not need to be heated, and teachers were young women paid substantially less than their male counterparts” (p. 201).

Eventually some New England towns began to allow girls to attend district schools in other limited and segregated ways. For example, Carl Kaestle (1983) notes that “in 1766, Medford, Massachusetts, admitted girls to its schools in the afternoon, after the boys were dismissed” (p. 28). Women teachers who had proven themselves in the summer sessions for girls also began teaching boys in the regular district school sessions, see for example, Rury (2002), Sklar (1993), and Spring (1997). Much less is known about early 18th century schools in the middle and southern colonies. Norton (1980) notes that girls from prosperous families in the south were taught by tutors hired for their brothers because no schools existed for girls.
particularly because they could be paid much less than men, which allowed more schools to survive (Sklar, 1993).

Kaestle (1983) argues that district school classrooms were often large, including 40 to 50 students, and were difficult to manage because students varied so greatly in academic level. Teachers generally attempted to group students into different classes, but this was also difficult because students did not share common reading materials. Instead students learned from whatever books their parents gave them to take to school. Kaestle also notes that women teachers were much less likely than men to use corporal punishment, and therefore as more women became teachers in the district schools, fewer children were beaten in the classroom.

**Adventure schools.**

Another educational institution available to girls in the 18th century colonies was the adventure, or sometimes called venture, school. These schools existed primarily in the urban cities and were generally run and taught by women or married couples in their own homes. The curriculum focused on teaching what were known as “ornamental accomplishments,” such as decorative arts, music, dance, and letter writing. Mary Beth Norton (1980) notes that “by the 1760s, adventure schools teaching music, dancing, drawing and painting, fancy needlework, and handicrafts flourished in every colonial city along with other similar establishments offering some instruction in advanced writing, grammar, and arithmetic” (pp. 259-260). For the most part, only middle-class and wealthy families could afford to send their daughters to adventure schools, but those who did attend often went to more than one school at a time. For example, Bostonian Anna
Winslow attended one school for sewing and a separate school for writing instruction (Norton, 1980; Winslow, 1996/1894).

One of the most well known adventure schools was a school established by Anthony Benezet in Philadelphia in 1754, which is now recognized by scholars for its exceptionally rigorous curriculum. While most adventure schools did not offer academically advanced training, or provide the classical training in Latin and Greek that boys could receive at this time, they were important because they offered the only advanced education available to girls before the 1780s (Norton, 1980).

**Educational Institutions for Girls in the Early Republic (1783-1820)**

The Revolutionary War of 1776-1783, which created a new Republic out of the British North American colonies, had a profound affect on the educational opportunities of women and girls. Linda Kerber (1980) notes that “the years immediately after the Revolution witnessed a great expansion of educational opportunity, an expansion sustained by the belief that the success of the republican experiment demanded a well-educated citizenry” (p. 189). Due to their role as teachers and mothers, the education of women and girls became important to the success of the republic. As Kerber (1980) notes, “the influence women had on children, especially sons, gave them ultimate responsibility for the future of the new nation” (p. 229). While some believed throughout colonial America that too much education would “unsex” women, post-Revolutionary rhetoric argued that education could make women “better wives, mothers, and mistresses of households” (Norton, 1980, p. 265).

Kerber (1980) suggests that the rhetoric of the Revolution created a popular belief that the role of women in society was to act as “Republican Mothers,” and she argues that
what she calls the ideology of Republican Motherhood became the powerful force behind promoting greater educational opportunity for women. For example, Kerber (1980) writes:

Motherhood was discussed almost as if it were a fourth branch of government, a device that ensured social control in the gentlest possible way. If the Republic indeed rested on responsible motherhood, prospective mothers needed to be well informed and decently educated. (p. 200)

Kerber (1980) writes further that “the Republican Mother was an educated woman who could be spared the criticism normally addressed to the Learned Lady because she placed her learning at her family’s service” (p. 228).

Several educational reformers in the new Republic utilized the post-Revolutionary rhetoric to seize the opportunity to call for changes in the education of women and girls. Two of the most influential of these reformers were Benjamin Rush and Judith Sargent Murray. While Rush advocated that women be given a broad utilitarian education to prepare them to be good mothers of the Republic, Murray was much more radical in her approach. Influenced by the great British feminist thinker Mary Wollstonecraft, Murray proposed that men and women and girls should be given the same educational opportunities as men in order to develop their rational thinking abilities (Norton, 1980).

**The Female Academy**

As a result of this new ideology of Republican Motherhood and the work of educational reformers, many new schools for girls began to emerge in the years after the Revolution. These new schools were most commonly known as academies, and while some offered co-educational instruction, most girls received instruction in an all-female
environment (Thompson, 1947). Norton (1980) argues that what differentiated academies from colonial adventure schools was their academic curriculum. For example, she notes that along with teaching ornamental accomplishments, “they stressed the study of such academic subjects as composition, history, and geography, thus helping to close the gap that had traditionally separated the education of girls from that of their brothers” (p. 273). In addition, the academies were private schools that were located not in the urban centers, but in small towns that drew students from around the new nation. Students often boarded at the schools, and classes were conducted in permanent buildings, not individual homes. The schools generally hired a staff of teachers to conduct classes, so in this way the academies were more permanent and institutionalized than most of the early colonial schools. Because they were the first substantial secondary schools in the United States, the academies are often given credit as being the first precursors to the modern high school (Norton, 1980).

Two of the most influential academies for girls were The Young Ladies’ Academy of Philadelphia, founded by Benjamin Rush in 1787 and Sarah Pierce’s Litchfield School, established in Litchfield, Connecticut in 1792 (Brickley, 1993; Kerber, 1980; Schwager, 1993; Sizer & Sizer, 1993). While Pierce’s school was taught by female teachers, the Young Ladies’ academy employed male teachers for its female students. These are two of the earliest academies, and they were taken as the models for many others. They were both highly popular as evidenced by the fact that the Litchfield School

---

4 Solomon (1985) notes that by 1850, there were over 6,000 academies throughout the country. Cott (1977) has identified 34 academies that offered instruction to both boys and girls between 1783 and 1805. Yet, girls were usually taught in a separate room from the boys.
attracted students from as far away as the British West Indies, and the Young Ladies’ Academy enrolled one hundred girls within a year of opening (Gordon, 1979; Kerber, 1980).

Linda Kerber (1980) writes that most of the new girls’ academies required “each student to keep a journal of the day’s lessons and sermons,” and she argues that “these journals show the extensive reliance on rote learning and on working one’s way slowly, lesson-by-lesson, chapter-by-chapter, through a text--a technique common in boys’ schools as well” (p. 214). Yet, Kerber also notes that the curriculum of the new academies for girls could be more innovative and adventurous because it had no tradition to follow, and she writes that most academies for girls eliminated the classics from the curriculum. In addition, many teachers wrote their own texts, such as Sarah Pierce, who wrote a world history text for her students (Kerber, 1980). Scholars have also pointed out that the academy curriculum fostered competitiveness between students, as classmates often fought each quarter for academic prizes (Gordon, 1979; Nash, 2001).

Educational historians Kim Tolley and Margaret Nash disagree over the differences in the curriculum for boys and girls in the academies of the early Republic, and this has led to an interesting debate in the literature. Nash (2001, 2005) argues that the curriculum for boys and girls in the academies was generally the same due to the fact that most boys’ schools eliminated the classical curriculum focused on Latin and Greek at the same time as the academies for girls. Nash (2005) concludes that “the most salient difference in educational opportunities was that of class and race, not gender” (p. 99).

In contrast, Kim Tolley (1996) argues that academies for boys continued to focus on a classical curriculum and offered very little scientific study, while science became a
substantial part of the curriculum for girls. For example, she notes that natural
philosophy, astronomy, chemistry, and botany were the most popular subjects at girls’
academies between 1742 and 1871. Tolley (1996) argues that the classical curriculum
prevailed at boys’ schools primarily due to the fact that it was tested on college entrance
exams, male teachers had themselves been trained classically and did not want to alter the
curriculum, and there were few career opportunities in the new Republic for young men
as scientists.

Before concluding this discussion on the founding of post-Revolutionary
academies for girls, it is important to acknowledge that almost all of the literature on this
topic is focused on schools established in the North, and ignores the South. Mary Beth
Norton (1980) argues that the literature does not focus on the South because they lagged
significantly behind the North in establishing academies for girls, primarily because the
South did not recover as quickly from the impact of the Revolutionary War. Norton
points out that southern families who wanted advanced education for their daughters
usually sent them to academies in the North. Yet, historian Catherine Clinton (1982)
suggests that not enough attention has been paid to the founding of academies for girls in
the South in the years following the War.

Clinton argues that many northerners ventured into the plantation South in order
to establish schools, and she asserts that the character of these schools was quite different
from northern schools. For example, southern academies were much more rigid and strict
in their dealings with students, and disobedience was punished by the denial of meals and
loss of privileges. Clinton (1982) notes that it was believed that “a strict and severe
training at academies would fulfill the expectations of bachelor planters seeking fit
females to marry and to mother their children” (p. 59). While Clinton (1982) argues that southern education was transformed in the post-Revolutionary years by the introduction of female academies, she concedes that the changes that took place were “short-lived (as compared with the North) and produced far less of an impact on local culture” (p. 40).

Conclusions

Some of the important legacies of the postwar female academies are that they not only provided education to girls and young women, they also “fostered women’s consciousness” that united them in common purpose (Cott, 1977, p. 125). Academy graduates were the first educated generation of female Americans, and they went on to become the leaders of the 19th century abolition and women’s rights movements (Norton, 1980). In addition, famous academy graduates such as Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher, and Mary Lyon grew up to found some of the first women’s colleges and teacher’s colleges in the United States, connecting the academies directly to the women’s college movement (Norton, 1980). And finally, perhaps the greatest legacy of the academies was that they educated the thousands of young women who would become the teachers in the common schools of the 19th century (Norton, 1980). As this review of the literature has indicated, an understanding of the developments in the history of education for girls and women in early America, provides a bridge to understanding the major highlights of women’s education in the 19th and 20th centuries.
References


Appendix D

Careers Reported by CWC Graduates, 1909-1967

Figure D1. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1909-1920

Data have been compiled by the author from alumnae columns in student newspapers, and published alumnae bulletins, 1954-1967, DU Archives.

1
Figure D2. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1920-1930
Figure D3. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1930-1940
Figure D4. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1940-1946
Figure D5. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1946-1959
Figure D6. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1959-1967
Figure D7. Percentage of reported careers by CWC graduates, 1909-1967