

PREPARING WOMEN TO LEAD: THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN'S COLLEGE  
EXPERIENCES ON ALUMNAE LEADERS

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PREVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

Seven women leaders who are alumnae of Cottey College, a small, private, liberal arts college in the Midwest, were interviewed to understand how attending a women's college influenced their personal and professional lives. The study examined individuals, activities and experiences significant to participants during their college years, characteristics of the college that built or enhanced leadership skills, leadership experiences that influenced participant's views of self and community and the definitions of leadership participants bring to the larger dialogue. The women leaders also reflected on the challenges they see to women's colleges in the future and offered advice to administrators, faculty and staff of these colleges. Study participants most often and substantially referenced themes associated with the learning environment, the living environment, early leadership opportunities, presidential contact, and conflict and its resolution as promoting their growth. They found this women's college provided them with an accepting, nurturing and engaging context in which to develop academically and personally. Specific experiences and activities taught them leadership skills and encouraged them to see themselves as leaders. As the number of women's colleges in the U.S. continues to decrease, participants indicated articulating the benefits of single-sex education is essential to continued enrollment at women's colleges.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### *Women's Colleges and Women's Leadership Development*

Smith College Provost and Dean of the Faculty Susan Bourque appeared on the campus of Cottey College, Nevada, Missouri, in October 2003 to pose a critical question to representatives gathered from women's colleges across the U.S., as well as to Cottey students and faculty. How, she asked, do we define the work of women's colleges today? Given 25 years of research on outcomes of women's colleges and women's education and a pattern of indisputable success, what is the place of these rare institutions in the landscape of higher education? "The work of women's colleges is to liberate women from narrow definitions of themselves ... to free them from a narrow sense of what their goals and aspirations should be," she noted. The key issue, she said, is empowerment through a statement of mission and goals widespread and widely shared in an institution. "We [also] have a responsibility ... in the kind of research that allows us a full and deeper understanding of women's lives and experience .... That means a commitment to the kind of research on women's experience as distinct, not as secondary, not as complementary, and certainly not compensatory." Women's colleges, she argued, teach students to take women's experiences and knowledge and consider what they might look like if judged on their own merits. Women's colleges also help students to define the relationship between what happens in the educational institution and the resulting responsibilities to the world.

Those responsibilities create the need for women's colleges to address leadership development. "We talk about empowerment to study and to try out different fields, but there's been a kind of tension, I would argue, about ... dealing head on with the question of leadership and women's exercise of leadership. There's something that's not ladylike

about wanting to run things, about wanting to be in charge.” Bourque suggested that encouraging young women to risk leadership in diverse academic fields, politics and public policy development, where women are underrepresented, is specifically the work of women’s colleges. “It’s our institutions that teach women how to lead, in the leadership [center] that you have here and the kinds of classroom interaction and the kinds of leadership models you see before you.”

One form of higher education has consistently focused on female students alone – the all women’s college. First designed to educate women when no other institutions would and first to focus on turning out women of culture and manners, women’s colleges were safe harbors in which daughters might study, sharpen intellects and, perhaps, develop careers. They evolved into organizations where women might be educated and trained for a world of possibilities, a laboratory for feminist thought and women’s studies, and a breeding ground for potential leaders who might pave the way for other women (Horowitz, 1984; McCandless, 1999).

The value of women’s college environments includes:

- a recognition of the voice and learning style of the female student;
- attention to the fields of math and sciences where, typically, girls and young women have failed to perform or enter;
- greater focus on academics and removal of many of the social concerns that inhibit women’s performance;
- an introduction of women to the leadership positions they might hold, greater opportunities for leadership practice, and a fostering of leadership skills to serve them in their future personal and professional lives (Bales & Sharp, 1981).



“Undoubtedly women’s institutions, in the absence of men, provide more of certain opportunities for female student leadership,” noted Solomon (1985), author of *In the Company of Educated Women* (p. 208). Miller-Bernal (2000), in her comparison of women students’ experiences in single-sex and coeducational colleges, agreed. “Many of the arguments in the United States in favor of women’s colleges are made on pragmatic grounds: they produce better results” (p. 3). These results -- a greater percentage of advanced degree earners and leadership in fields dominated by men -- arise from equity, according to Miller-Bernal. This equity is found in role models available to women students in women’s colleges and leadership skills development opportunities. Equity also arises from a “supportive atmosphere for women students in a ‘room of their own’ where they do not have to defer to men in the way ordinarily demanded by our larger male-dominated society” (Miller-Bernal, 2000, p. 4).

Because women’s colleges have and continue to develop women leaders in this unique environment, they should be increasingly identified and promoted as an important contributor to educational equity and excellence and a source of training for leaders. Public education on the value of women’s colleges and promotion of unique opportunities available at those colleges will ultimately support the survival of the 56 women’s colleges that remain active in 2007. I propose examining a specific group of women -- those identified as leaders in their professional fields or personal lives -- who attended Cottey College, a private, two-year, liberal arts women’s college. The study will assess the influence of a women’s college experience on their leadership development.

#### *Purpose and Research Questions*

The purpose of this study is to understand how attending Cottey College influenced women alumnae leaders. A pilot study conducted in the summer of 2002

focused on two Cottey College graduates. This dissertation comprises an interview study of seven women leaders to gain insight into the contributions of Cottey College's leadership development programming and its single-sex environment to the participants' personal and professional leadership endeavors.

The grand tour question for the dissertation is "How has attending an all-women's college, specifically Cottey College, influenced the personal and professional lives of outstanding women leaders?" The limited study of seven such women indicates attending Cottey College influenced their lives significantly and in ways that they continue to learn about and evaluate many years after completing their formal education.

Research questions that guided this study include the following:

- What definitions of leadership do these women bring to the larger dialogue?
- How has attending a women's college influenced these women?
- What individuals or experiences were significant to these women during their college years?
- What characteristics of the college built or enhanced leadership skills?
- What events or individuals encountered at Cottey shaped their leadership?
- What leadership experiences influenced these women's views of self and community?
- What challenges do these women view as facing women's colleges today?
- What advice do these women have to offer administrators, staff and faculty members of women's colleges for leadership skills building?

*Potential Audiences and Importance of the Study*

Potential audiences for this study are diverse. Administrators, faculty and staff at Cottey College and other women's colleges may learn about best practices. They have the opportunity to identify environmental characteristics of this women's college that promote leadership development and feminist pedagogy that supports developing leaders. They may also discover characteristics of an educational environment that fail to promote women. At Cottey College, the results contribute to program evaluation of the interdisciplinary course in leadership development, as well as Student Life and academic program initiatives designed to support student leadership. Data collected and conclusions reached may be referenced when discussing the college with potential students. Young women seeking to optimize their post-secondary educational opportunities and parents seeking to optimize their educational dollar might use such information to make final college decisions.

Studies that reveal positive developmental experiences of women leaders at women's colleges would complement the current literature referenced by college administrators, faculty and staff participating in recruitment efforts and institutional development initiatives, as well as further develop the context for assessing what women's colleges do best. Other women's colleges might use this study as a basis for evaluating their own programs or to validate the success of women's colleges in developing leaders.

The findings of studies like this one might also be extended to secondary and primary single-sex education, as well as special programming for women in coeducational settings. The No Child Left Behind Act allows for development of single-

sex environments in public school districts. Work at women's colleges has the potential of informing administrators and teachers developing K-12 programming.

Feminist theorists and women's studies scholars seek to understand how to best support and educate women students and what contexts or situations promote the excellence of women. This study may contribute to that dialogue. As noted by Ribbens and Edwards (1998), feminist researchers highlight the issues involved in gaining access to, interpreting, analyzing and theorizing research participants' experiences and accounts. Feminist researchers apply information gathered to "a sphere that has been characterized as 'female' or 'women's matters,' and pushed out to the edge of public social knowledge and private lived experiences" (Ribbens & Edwards, 1998, p. 2).

The study will also appeal to audiences interested in leadership theory and development. "The study of leadership and developing the capacity for leadership is important, in part, because of the explicit purpose of most institutions to develop leaders for roles in the larger society" (Tidball, Smith, Tidball & Wolf-Wendel, 1999, p. 62).

### *Definition of Terms*

This study allows for the enhancement of a definition of leadership by women who have exhibited what their communities consider success in leadership positions. Understanding how these particular women leaders define leadership and the context in which they operate as leaders will further enhance the strong definitions already available in the area of leadership theory. For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined to elicit an understanding of the topic:

Leadership: The art of mobilizing "other people – by the force of their own free will and despite hard work and potential risk – to want to climb to the summit" (Kouzes

& Posner, 2002, p. 13). This definition allows for inclusion of women's leadership in both public and private lives.

Leadership Development: "The process by which a person grows in the use of her skills to empower others to accomplish a goal or vision" (Clark, 2002, p. 9).

Identity Development: "It is in the realm of identity that a woman bases her sense of herself, as well as her vision of the structure of her life. Identity incorporates a woman's choices for herself, her priorities, and the guiding principles by which she makes decisions" (Josselson, 1987, p. 3).

Transformational Leadership: This leadership reflects a commitment to a "common enterprise" and capability to "sustain a vision that encompasses the whole organization. [T]he organization finds its greatest expression in the consciousness of a common social responsibility, and that is to translate that vision into a living reality" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 202). This kind of leadership is collective, symbiotic, causative, creative, morally purposeful, and elevating.

Transformational Learning: A study of the development of transformative leaders "theorizes that transformative learning for the women ... involve[s] the movement from alienation to agency, and from inauthenticity to being true to oneself" (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, pp. 143-144).

Transactional Leadership: Although the focus of this study will be on transformational leaders, some of the participants may reflect a more managerial form of leadership. Transactional leadership involves purposes that are "separate but related" as opposed to "moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethic aspiration of both the leader and the led" (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 153).

Feminist Pedagogy: Feminist pedagogy has four themes: “concern with distribution of power in the classroom, the idea that reflection on one’s emotional reactions is central to learning, the importance of social responsibility and action, and recognition and inclusion of diversity” (Davis, Crawford & Sebrechts, 1999, p. 15).

Voice: Based on the work of Gilligan (1993) and informed by contemporary use in women’s college circles, voice is defined as an ability to vocalize one’s opinions and experiences in a truthful and powerful manner. Hayes and Flannery (2000) defined it on three levels: literal speech or speaking style, the expression of women’s identity, and the exercise of women’s power and influence.

Women’s College: An institution that has identified its mission as primarily related to promoting and expanding educational opportunities for women. Most institutions of higher education currently have majority female enrollments; women’s colleges have all female enrollments in full-time traditional programs (Harwarth, Maline & DeBra, 1997).

The exploration of women’s college experience on women leaders, then, examines the multifaceted developmental experience that results in the authentic expression of voice and vision connected to living and learning in a “room of one’s own” or in the company of other young women. Of assistance in the study of this unique and increasingly rare educational experience is an understanding of the history and evolution of women’s colleges; what – besides a single-sex student population – distinguishes them from coeducational institutions; and the outcomes of a women’s college environment studied by other researchers.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Introduction*

The literature review includes the history of women's colleges and research into their effectiveness. It identifies the arena for debate surrounding the benefits of attending single-sex postsecondary institutions. Additional review of women's leadership and women's leadership development literature focuses on the work of many researchers who have qualitatively and quantitatively examined the optimum conditions for young women to develop their own "voices." The research also addresses how young women obtain skills and views of self that encourage leadership exploration. This section concludes with a summary of research into the success of women's college alumnae.

### *A Brief History of Women's Colleges*

Before the Civil War, three colleges admitted women, and all were in Ohio: Antioch, Oberlin and Hillsdale (Harwarth, Maline & DeBra, 1997). Secondary schools for girls, called academies or seminaries and often viewed as Protestant nunneries, had increased in popularity beginning in 1820. Their roles: Introduce women to liberal arts and pedagogy of value to teachers and mothers (Antler, 1982; Horowitz, 1984; McCandless, 1999). However, feminist leaders criticized seminaries for their lack of academic content and their inability to receive or develop sufficient endowment support (Harwarth, Maline & DeBra, 1997). In actuality, curriculum at the seminaries varied, and some did provide programs equal to male counterparts of the time.

Both a proponent and constructive critic of seminaries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mary Lyon, founder of Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, promoted the value of women's higher education, and her work became a model for many other women's colleges, including Cottey College. Virginia Alice Cottey, the founder of Cottey

College, read *The Life of Mary Lyon* many times, and once remarked to her sister, Dora, “Mary Lyon would never have dillydallied as I have. I’ll start my school and the Lord will help me see it through” (Campbell, 1970, p. 71).

Because of the difficulty distinguishing between women’s seminaries with college curriculum and women’s colleges with academic offerings equal to programs at higher education institutions for men, it is almost impossible to find consensus on a timeline of early women’s college emergence. According to Newcomer (1959), lower schools that developed into four-year colleges leading to an A.B. degree prior to the Civil War included the following: Oxford Female College (1852), Illinois Conference Female College (1854), and Ingham University (1857). Wesleyan College, chartered in 1836 as Georgia Female College was one of the first established as a college, as was Mary Sharp College in Winchester, Tennessee. Mary Sharp required Latin and Greek and offered a four-year A.B. Mount Holyoke was founded in 1837, and Sharp College in 1851. Sharp closed in 1896. Another women’s college, Elmira College in New York, that has since become coeducational, is said to have been the first women’s college with standards comparable to men’s colleges (Woody, 1929).

Other well-known women’s colleges established in the mid- to late-1800s would later be identified with the Seven Sisters. Vassar College opened in 1865, Wellesley College and Smith College in 1875, Radcliff in 1893, Bryn Mawr in 1885, and Barnard in 1889. All of these met high academic admissions and program standards. In contrast, by 1870, the number of state universities accepting women stood at eight (Newcomer, 1959).

One Wellesley College president, Alice Freeman Palmer, attended the University of Michigan, and came of age when women’s college graduates were examined closely



for outcomes. Would they turn into model wives or suffragettes? “Thus, it would have been difficult for early college women to remain inarticulate about either their own aspirations or their views concerning women’s roles” (Frankfort, 1997, p. 17). Palmer testified to a woman’s most sacred role as wife and mother, “but she believed that these roles could be expanded so that women – particularly educated women – might reach the young and infirm in the larger society as well as in the home” (Frankfort, 1997, p. 18). Ultimately, Palmer left college leadership to marry.

In contrast to Palmer stands Martha Carey Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr, who in 1899 made news by accusing a Harvard University president of having “sunspots” on his brain (Frankfort, 1997, p. 26). Carey Thomas rejected traditional women’s roles, chose scholarship as the “proving ground” for women, saw women’s colleges as sources of educational equity, and advocated graduate studies for women.

Women’s colleges that followed these early predecessors included Sarah Lawrence and Bennington, representing a progressive movement focusing on individual interests and aptitudes to determine programs of study or field work as a method of study. At the same time, Scripps maintained conservatism, believing students should learn a common store of knowledge (Newcomer, 1959; Horowitz, 1984).

Women’s colleges emerged and evolved into three types: independent private colleges, Catholic colleges, and public colleges (Harwarth, Maline & DeBra, 1997). Many of them encountered great success as a result of specific missions and student bodies. Beadie (1999) studied institutional characteristics of successful New York Academies of the New York Regents system from 1838 to 1850 and found single-sex and denominational affiliation as indicators for success. McCandless (1999) indicated women’s education in the South suffered “diminution,” but has received greater attention

by historians. “The southern colleges were different in tone from those in the North,” explained Harwarth (1997) and her colleagues in *Women’s Colleges in the U.S.: History, Issues, and Challenges*. Harwarth wrote that in the South, there was little question of women entering any occupation. In the North, women’s colleges were an implicit threat to a separation of the sexes in the workplace. But, according to McCandless, “Just as the debate over change and continuity in the region’s history reveals the complex nature of the South’s economic, political, and social structure, so too does an analysis of women’s collegiate experiences reveal the contested nature of educational developments” (1999, p. 257). Women’s colleges in the South have long histories leading to contemporary successes. Hence, colleges like Sweet Briar and Texas Woman’s College also have their place in the discussion of emerging single-sex higher education.

Although the mission of educating women remained central to all women-only institutions, the history of women’s colleges indicates two oppositional institutional purposes. “Mary Lyon wanted her seminary to change the consciousness of the young women under her charge,” while other institutions “looked to the seminary tradition with its connection to the asylum as a means to protect the virtue of the first female collegians” (Horowitz, 1984, p. 32).

Wells College, established in 1866, exemplified the debate surrounding the education of women, whose suitability for learning was under scrutiny. Women, it was argued, could suffer physically and psychologically from higher education. The greatest source of opposition at the time came in the form of a book titled *Sex in Education; or a Fair Chance for the Girls* by Edward H. Clarke (1875), the findings of which were challenged quickly by *Sex and Education, a Reply to Dr. E.H. Clarke’s “Sex in Education.”* Wells began as a seminary, a Christian, homelike environment dedicated to

“true womanhood” that qualified students to “fulfill their duties as women, daughters, wives, or mother” and “practice that pleasant demeanor” benefiting the nation as a whole (Miller-Bernal, 2000, p. 19). But within several years, “the curriculum at Wells ... changed from being self-consciously tailored to fit what were believed to be women’s aptitudes and needs, to being standard for the time for students of either sex” (Miller-Bernal, 2000, p. 23).

Efforts to combat the stereotypes also came from the Association of Collegiate Alumnae (ACA), founded in 1881, and which later became the American Association of University Women. During the 1880s, ACA studied 705 women college students and “discovered that 60 percent experienced no change in health, 20 percent had a slight deterioration, and 20 percent reported that they were in better health at the end of their college years” and that student health trends reflected childhood health (Frankfort, 1977, p. 87).

Women’s colleges in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century boasted curriculum equal to coeducational counterparts, and the study of physiology proved a “subculture,” reflecting the beginnings of women’s colleges’ emphasis on sciences and mathematics programs.

Whereas almost all other departments of physiology were situated in medical schools ... several elite women’s colleges developed full-fledged departments ... staffed by women with Ph.D.s that offered undergraduate majors and even master’s degrees. ... [W]omen physiologists taught at Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Connecticut, Douglass, Flora Stone Mather (Western Reserve), Goucher, Hood, Hunter, Mount Holyoke, North Carolina, Rockford, Simmons, Skidmore, Smith, Vassar, Wellesley, Wheaton, and Winthrop colleges. (Appel, 1994, p. 27)

Regardless of the larger social and political debate, early graduates of women's colleges dedicated themselves "to become wives and mothers, generally eschewing the career path" (Antler, 1982, p. 29). Exceptions to this path include three graduates of the Progressive Era who typified those choosing increased social activity: Jane Addams, Sophonisba Breckinridge and Julia Lathrop (Harwarth, Maline & DeBra, 1997). During the Depression, women attained a high number of doctoral degrees, specifically 15% of those awarded, but often these women graduated to be underemployed (U.S. Department of Education, 1995, p. 236).

The health of women's colleges has been undeniably linked to the social movements that followed World War II. Important to understanding American women during this period is knowledge of the women's movement and feminism (Harwarth, Maline & DeBra, 1997). Women's colleges' significance waned as coeducational institutions increasingly provided opportunity for women in light of decreasing male enrollments. By the 1950s, an examination of 34 women's college catalogues showed religious aims as less apparent. The study found civic and social responsibility appearing as a goal in 15 catalogues, vocational or professional training in 15, developing powers of independent thinking and judgment in 14, and developing the whole person in 10 (Newcomer, 1959, p. 59).

With the G.I. Bill, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Higher Education Act of 1965 and, finally, Title IX in 1972, the value and mission of women's colleges were inherently challenged by political climate. The number of women's colleges peaked from 1950 to 1970 and then began a decline. In 1954, Mueller alluded to the difficulties women's colleges were experiencing that would challenge them well into the next two or three decades.

In spite of their excellent pioneering, women's colleges have been the special target for those critics who fail to keep in view the many varieties of educational objectives and the weight and worth of different educational traditions. Under continuous and often misdirected fire, these colleges have conscientiously searched their souls, remolded their programs, and kept both their tempers and their students. Their alumnae seem unable to qualify for any special deficiency, either lower marriage rates, poor homemaking, or lack of civic responsibility. They are apparently pursuing their legitimate functions with satisfying success.

(p. 11)

Mueller (1954) cited women's colleges' student government programs, attention to women's studies, curricular strength, and small student bodies as indicative of why these institutions were worth considering in the changing landscape of higher education. She identified 145 women's colleges: 77 Roman Catholic, 19 Protestant, 11 state or municipally supported, and 38 privately-controlled.

According to Showalter (2001), one indictment of women's colleges published in 1975, *Token Learning*, argued that even the best women's colleges in the country shifted in objectives from "opening the fullest range of opportunities for women" to "a tacit feminist mystique of gentility and service, educating followers rather than leaders" (pp. 264-65). Millett (1975), the author of *Token Learning*, suggested, "American women's colleges could serve a major function 'as centers of hope and encouragement devoted exclusively to the encouragement of excellence in women'" (p. 265). This feminist argument both in favor of and against women's colleges led Showalter, then a faculty member at Douglass College, to write a report, "The Future of Douglass College: Women and Education," pushing the institution to "provide students and faculty with a

genuine sense of identity and leadership” (2001, p. 266). The movement to incorporate political activism in campus life took on new import even at the Ivy League of women’s colleges. According Bird (1975), by the 1970s, women’s liberation became “a permanent feature on all Seven Sisters campuses” (p. 231). Millett, an activist and a critic of Barnard’s and Bryn Mawr’s reception of her message, marveled at the reception of the message of women’s liberation on the Smith College campus. “For not until Smith probably had I ever tasted politics or seen power working for people,” she wrote (1975, p. 219).

Reasons for the decline of women’s colleges also included: increased competition in higher education, more women enrolling part-time, more women enrolling at public institutions and decreasing enrollment at small residential, liberal arts colleges (Tidball et al., 1999). As a result, the number of women’s colleges, which varies slightly depending on the source, shrank from over 200 in 1960 to 96 in 1986, and to 83 in 1993. Those surviving credited endowments, program expansions, and recommitment to the mission of women’s college for their success (Harwarth, 1999). The Women’s College Coalition (WCC) calculates closer to 300 single-sex postsecondary institutions in 1960. Some of the remaining colleges decided to admit men; others committed themselves to retaining a single-sex environment. Those that became coed included Vassar, Goucher College, Wheaton College, Queens College, Skidmore College, and Connecticut College. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic women’s colleges were the most common type of women’s colleges, and led the way in vocational training in teaching and social services (Studer-Ellis, 1995).

“Feminism brought new opportunities and new demands,” wrote Horowitz (1984). “The women’s colleges reclaimed their historic task to develop women’s minds

free of the gender stereotypes of American society .... The women's colleges addressed the question of women's intellectual choices and asserted women's strength in the sciences" (p. 352). So despite "hard times," many women's colleges maintained, renewed, and improved their commitment to women's education and promoted the value of single-sex education. "... [W]omen's colleges in the 1990s have achieved higher-than-average residential enrollments (73 percent as compared with 61 percent for all small colleges), as well as higher-than-average enrollments with liberal arts curricula (41 percent as compared with 27 percent for all small colleges)" (Tidball et al., 1999, p. 28). This recommitment to mission manifested itself in undergraduate and graduate programming and substantial endowment growth. "Today only the few women's colleges that have large enough endowments and sufficient alumnae support can remain single sex" (Solomon, 1985, p. 207). Cottey College shares the characteristics Solomon identified in survivors.

The survivors have also faced a reconciling of the two historic models of women's education. One model prior to 1960 "paid attention to women's experience as defined by the dominant cultural norms of the society." The second model was defined by men's experience that still "devalue[d] women by ignoring women's experience and cultural production" (Elliott, 1985, p. 48-49). The experience of Stephens College in Missouri, which changed from a two-year to four-year liberal arts college, exemplified a movement beyond the two models to a new curriculum in the 1980s. The curriculum incorporated the "insights, perspectives, and data from new scholarship on women as an integral part of a liberal arts curriculum" (Elliott, 1985, p. 57). At Stephens, all courses were required to include information and values critical to women and minorities, and women's studies was identified and defined as a liberal education area. In addition, for

upper-division education, students were required to take a senior colloquium under the Women's Studies Department to integrate curriculum into life plans. The transition to this new feminist model was not without internal opposition. Nevertheless, it characterized a woman-centered approach to higher education that distinguishes women's colleges in 2007. These colleges are poised to continually integrate new knowledge about women students into their programs.

Research on women not only has created a new body of knowledge, but is reshaping our understanding of the traditional curriculum: periodization in history, genres in literature, the role of the "private" or "domestic" sphere in politics, and the choice, design and interpretation of scientific research question. (Schuster & Van Dyne, 1985, p. 4).

The Women's College Coalition tracks 57 women's colleges (with one of those colleges announcing its plan to enroll men in 2007-2008). The following table offers information on the number of women's colleges outlined in this brief history.

**Table 1. Number and Types of Higher Educational Institutions**

Year	Total Number of Institutions	Men Only	Women Only
1870	582	343	70
1890	1,082	400	217
1910	1,083	292	163
1930	1,322	198	212
1950	1,808	228	267
1970	2,409	228	238
1990	3,598	174	106

From Tidball, M.E., D. G. Smith, C.S. Tidball, & L.E. Wolf-Wendel. (1999). *Taking women seriously: Lessons and legacies for educating the majority*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, p. 20.

Data on women's colleges from the U.S. Department of Education showed enrollment and degrees conferred in women's colleges, by institution during the academic year 2002-2003 and 2003-2004.