Writing in 1974, historian Jill Conway issued a warning: the trend toward coeducation in institutions of higher education over the previous decade was fraught with dangers for women students, women scholars, and women graduates alike. The historical record (which had lain virtually unexamined during the recent campaigns) provided clear evidence that coeducational institutions had neither met women's intellectual needs nor fostered equality. The growth of coeducation over the previous century had, in fact, resulted in "a declining position for women scholars within the American university."¹

By the early 1970s, political forces in higher education and the contemporary women's movement had converged on the issue of woman's place in the university. Conway's warning followed in the wake of dramatic developments: new federal amendments outlawing sex discrimination in university policy and procedures, vigorous efforts among women faculty to

I wish to thank Sally Gregory Kohlstedt for her many incisive and helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay. I also thank the editors at Signs for their generous suggestions.

¹ Jill K. Conway, "Coeducation and Women's Studies: Two Approaches to the Question of Woman's Place in the Contemporary University," Daedalus 103, no. 4 (Fall 1974): 239-49, esp. 244.
document their condition in the academy and to reassess scholarship on women within their various disciplines,² the graduation that spring of the first women to have been admitted as “freshmen” to Princeton and Yale; and of particular significance to Conway’s discussion, the emergence of women’s studies as a formidable challenge to the traditional undergraduate curriculum. Conway estimated that some one thousand colleges and universities offered women’s studies courses and programs.³ Her forecast, however, was wary. Alluding to the historical experience of women in sex-segregated departments and in the service professions, Conway argued that the development of separate women’s studies programs inherently risked the relegation of women to marginal positions within the university.

Taking stock of women’s declining status in higher education more generally, Patricia Albjerg Graham argued a few months later that the history of women in academe throughout the twentieth century had been one of increasing marginality, not only by virtue of confinement to gender-linked programs but also in relation to types of institutions and roles within the established disciplines. Graham proposed a new research agenda focused on the experience of women who had occupied the bottom rungs and peripheral positions within the university, and she called for a reexamination of institutions where women traditionally had predominated: nonelite women’s colleges and normal schools, teachers’ colleges, Catholic women’s colleges, small coeducational schools, and university departments such as domestic science and elementary education.⁴

The purpose of this essay is to review the literature that has emerged over the past decade in response to these challenges and to assess its direction and impact. Progressive historian Thomas Woody’s monumental two-volume History of Women’s Education in the United States,⁵ published in 1929 in the aftermath of the suffrage movement, ought to have established irrevocably the fact that educational reform for women was one of the most dramatic and complex developments of the nineteenth century. Yet in spite of the political context of Woody’s work, neither the traditional saga of schooling in America nor the revisionist scholarship that emerged in

⁴ Patricia Albjerg Graham, “So Much to Do: Guides for Historical Research on Women in Higher Education,” Teachers College Record 76, no. 3 (February 1975): 421–29.
the 1960s analyzed the impact of women's reform efforts, scholarship, or institutions. The debates of the early 1970s over coeducation and women's studies, however, forced the consideration of gender into ongoing analyses of education as a dynamic of social change, and investigations into the current status of women yielded evidence that challenged historical wisdom. Increased access to education had not resulted as a matter of course in women's intellectual, political, or social emancipation.6

The fact that the new scholarship on women's educational history was rooted in these controversies has also, however, shaped the direction of the research and resulted in the neglect of several important areas of inquiry. First, there has been a preponderance of research on women's higher education—the stage on which the debates of the seventies took place. There has been a relative dearth of research on dame schools, female academies, seminaries, kindergartens, and normal and training schools. Similarly, scant attention has been paid to girls in elementary and secondary schools and in nonformal settings, and this has led to an unevenness in our understanding of women's experience across the broader spectrum of educational history.7

Second, the discussions of the early seventies reinforced the dichotomy between single-sex and coeducational settings as a predominant framework for analysis. As a consequence, less attention has been paid to who controlled women's education than to the gender composition of student populations. Professional achievement patterns, for example, have been analyzed primarily by comparing graduates from women's colleges with women who attended comparable coeducational institutions. An analysis that considered woman's authority over the educational process, on the other hand, would emphasize the contrast between women who graduated from woman-controlled institutions and those who attended colleges or universities dominated by senior male faculty or male presidents. We might ask, for instance, whether there were differences between the early nineteenth-century subscription schools owned and taught by women (some of which were coeducational) and those controlled by men. Recent


research suggests that all-girl academies founded by women differed significantly from those led by male reformers.8

A final legacy of the context in which the research of the past decade was accomplished is that, initially at least, studies of professional women, educational leaders, and elite institutions tended to predominate. Studies of women educators and institutions outside New England have been relatively few, and on the collegiate level, attention to the eastern women's colleges still prevails. We know very little, moreover, about the migration of women educated in the East to other parts of the country or what impact their experience in private academies and colleges might have had on the development of public education in other regions.

In spite of these limitations, however, the research that has been accomplished over the past ten years, on topics as seemingly disparate as republican educational ideology, teaching as a profession for women, and the movement for women's higher education, reveals major continuities in the experience of American women. Most fundamentally, societal prescriptions regarding women's domestic roles, especially their responsibilities as mothers, have served to differentiate women's education from the education of men. At the same time, these prescriptions have fueled the campaigns of woman's advocates. Teaching grew over the course of the nineteenth century as the professional manifestation of this ideology and provided paid employment, and sometimes leadership roles, for women across boundaries of race, class, and religion.

A decline in the status of women educators is, however, equally widespread in the larger context of women's educational history. The phenomenon that Conway, Graham, and others described in relation to university scholars at the turn of the twentieth century is evident in the teaching profession as early as 1840. The movement of women teachers from colonial dame and subscription schools and from the early academies into public school teaching by the mid-nineteenth century represented a decline in women's authority over the profession even though women's opportunities increased numerically. This pattern was repeated across regions as urban school systems came to dominate the American landscape, and it appeared again as women moved into the university.9

8 I am indebted to Lynne Brickley for this insight into the early academies.
9 Alison Mackinnon, a historian of Australian education, focuses on this pattern and argues that, far from representing the "feminization of teaching," the movement of women teachers into public schools represented a loss in women's control over their workplace—a process more accurately described as the "proletarianization of teaching." With the notable exception of David Tyack's and Elisabeth Hansot's research on women teachers in urban public schools, few questions concerning the locus and control of women's education have been asked in the American context. See Alison Mackinnon, "A New Point of Departure," History of Education Review 13, no. 2 (1984): 1-14, esp. 3; David B. Tyack, The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974); and David
Republican education

The differential purposes which underlay the education of women and men in America can be seen by looking at women's status in the republican era more generally. Linda Kerber, for instance, argues that a distinctive political purpose led to dramatic improvements in female education following the American Revolution. Kerber demonstrates that gender distinctions were deeply rooted in American educational ideology as a function of postrevolutionary formulations regarding women's relationship to the republic. Though American men had not moved directly to the definition of women as citizens, women were assigned a political role as the educators of sons who would become citizens—a duty for which the Republican Mother required improved education.

The concept of Republican Motherhood, Kerber argues, was a device to integrate the domestic relationships within which women were defined in Western political theory with the political ideology of the new republic. Filling in the gap left by Enlightenment theorists in the colonies as well as those in France and England who had failed to articulate a political role for the republican woman, American thinkers such as Judith Sargent Murray, Susanna Rowson, and Benjamin Rush had begun by 1790 to argue that American women needed to be specially educated so that they might in their personal conduct reflect the political independence of the new nation. Republican women were to be rational, self-reliant, literate, and immune to the vagaries of fashion. The Republican Mother, as Kerber portrays her, "dedicated her life to the service of civic virtue; she educated her sons for it; she condemned and corrected her husband's lapses from it."10

We should recognize, of course, that not all groups of early Americans subscribed to the dominant ideology. Joan Jensen, in her study of early Quaker schools for women, argues that the ideology of Republican Motherhood had little efficacy in the Quaker community. Quakers, who for the most part did not actively support the Revolution, responded to the political fervor of the war years by emphasizing "a revival of the inner light

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and separation from the world.” The impetus to improve female education among Quakers, explains Jensen, preceded the American Revolution. Education of both boys and girls was emphasized for purposes of religious training rather than for political responsibility.11

Practices regarding the education of Quaker women certainly did not conflict, however, with those that emerged in the years following the Revolution; in fact, they influenced them. Quakers had long been pioneers in women’s education. As in Massachusetts, dame schools had existed in Pennsylvania as early as the late seventeenth century. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (the Quakers’ representative decision-making body) was providing schooling for poor parents who were unable to educate their children adequately. Anthony Benezet, in 1778, opened a grammar school in Philadelphia with the express purpose of educating rural mothers who, like all Quaker mothers, bore the responsibility of providing basic education to their children. After 1790, women ministers took the lead in advocating advanced education and teacher training for women, envisioning a plan in which women would assume responsibility for educating the poor, blacks, and women, even at advanced levels. The period between 1800 and 1840 in Pennsylvania was characterized by a proliferation of boarding schools for young women that were among the earliest and most advanced in the country.

In spite of their distinctive features, however, the purposes for educating both Quaker women and Republican Mothers were grounded in women’s domestic responsibilities. Thus Kerber’s analysis of the paradox inherent in the prevailing rationale for women’s education holds true for the Quaker experience as well. Kerber argues that while the Republican Mother was entitled to new and improved education, her new political role served also to reinforce a subordinant status and to enhance the rationale for educating women differently from men. Thus, this intimate relationship between women’s domestic roles and their presumed educational needs actually embodied an anti-intellectualism that conditioned beliefs about women’s mental capabilities well into the twentieth century.

Still, in spite of the limitations inherent in the ideology of Republican Motherhood, we should beware of underestimating the positive impact it had on women’s education. By placing American reforms in a comparative context with female education in England and Europe, Mary Beth Norton highlights the revolutionary nature of advances in America during the last decades of the eighteenth century. The most forward thinkers in England—Hannah More, Erasmus Darwin, and Thomas Gisborne—continued to emphasize ornamental accomplishments for girls at a time when

even conservative American reformers Benjamin Rush and Noah Webster were advocating the cultivation of women’s intellectual powers. Norton concludes that the vast expansion of academies for girls and an “upsurge in reformist impulses” was a phenomenon utterly unique to the American experience: foreign educational theorists showed no interest in the creation of independent, rational female adults. American reformers, on the other hand, most notably Judith Sargent Murray, Sarah Pierce, and Susanna Rowson, even went so far as to propose and to execute educational programs that would, in Pierce’s words, “vindicate the equality of female intellect.”

Female literacy

The dramatic increase in female literacy during the early republican period provides another measure of the advancement in women’s education nurtured by the Revolution. Nancy Cott and Linda Kerber both analyze estimates from Kenneth Lockridge’s *Literacy in Colonial New England*¹³ and conclude that major improvements in female education took place between 1790 and 1830. Cott points to the significant disparity in literacy between colonial men and women which had been alluded to earlier by Thomas Woody and other historians and goes on to confirm this disparity with evidence from numerous literary sources.¹⁴ Kerber shows that even in learned families women’s literacy fell far short of men’s (aside from a few exceptional couples like John and Abigail Adams). Lockridge’s figures seem to demonstrate that this literacy gap actually increased during the colonial period, so that by 1780 New England women’s literacy, based on the ability to sign, was half that of men’s. Male literacy had risen from about 50 percent during the first generation of New England settlement to 80 percent or more by 1780, while female literacy rates rose from 30 percent to about 40 percent by 1700 and then stagnated for most of the eighteenth century—a phenomenon Lockridge attributes to the public schools’ discrimination against girls. By 1850, however, the first federal census to measure basic literacy reported that the number of northeastern women who could read and write was nearly equal to that of northeastern men, though, as Jensen reports, black female literacy seriously lagged. In Penn-


sylvania only 50 percent of black women were literate in 1850; percentages for white women in Pennsylvania, even in rural areas, were comparable to those for women in Massachusetts, who were approaching complete literacy. Jensen attributes this differential, in part, to the in-migration of blacks from southern states where teaching blacks to read and write was outlawed.

Kerber argues, moreover, that because literacy served, directly, as a key to the modern world, "no social change in the early Republic affected women more emphatically than the improvement of schooling." To understand the social implications of differential male and female literacy, she points out, we must consider that female culture, in its reliance on the spoken word, was premodern at a time when male culture increasingly depended on written communication—an important measure of modernization in a society. The practical competencies and cosmopolitan outlook that literacy fosters, Kerber suggests, may therefore have lagged for women and reinforced the separateness of women's and men's experience.

The academy experience

Mary Beth Norton argues that we must look at individual institutions, at the actual training girls received in the many academies that were founded after the Revolution, and at the lives of early academy graduates in order to discover "the enduring effects of the revolutionary redefinition of woman's place." The development of the female academies was, she suggests, a major advance, for it suddenly, "within the space of two decades, made higher education available to young American women from middling and well-to-do families." The female academy, Norton claims, put into practice the republican rhetoric about the education of American girls: it stressed academic subjects and thus helped to close the gap that traditionally had separated the education of girls from that of their brothers, it provided a new occupational and intellectual role for women as teachers, and it produced a new cohort of women leaders.

Few other historians have similarly identified the early female academy as a critical turning point in women's education. Ann D. Gordon's article on the Young Ladies Academy of Philadelphia is one of the few published scholarly studies of an individual female academy; Lynne Templeton Brickley's study of Sarah Pierce's Academy in Litchfield, Connecticut, is

16 Norton, 255.
17 Ibid., 273.
still in dissertation form. This lack of secondary source material on early female academies has led even the historians most familiar with women's education of the period to underestimate both the magnitude of female institution building during the eighteenth century and the centrality of the female academy to women's later access to coeducational public high schools, all-male academies, and colleges.

Surveying the level of education achieved by the 222 women born before 1810 whose biographies are included in Notable American Women, Norton found a dramatic increase in the availability of advanced schooling for those women, born in the 1770s, who were of school age when the first republican academies were founded in the mid-1780s. The percentage of her sample who received advanced instruction, after remaining constant at roughly 22 percent for those born from the beginning of the eighteenth century to 1769, more than doubled to 46 percent for women born in the 1770s; it climbed to 63 percent for those born between 1780 and 1789; and then reached 74 percent for those born during the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Norton also suggests that the significance of the early academy can be traced through the lives of individual graduates who achieved fame in the nineteenth century—leaders of the abolitionist and woman's rights movements, and educational reformers such as Zilpah Grant, Mary Lyon, Emma Willard, and Catharine Beecher. This evidence leads her to conclude, in fact, that the "egalitarian rhetoric of the Revolution provided the woman's rights movement with its earliest vocabulary and the republican academies produced its first leaders."21

The entire discussion about the influence and purpose of the republican girls' academy, however, lacks the important context of contemporary developments in boys' education. Ann Gordon, though still constrained by the lack of scholarship on comparable female institutions, does address this problem in her discussion of the Young Ladies Academy. This academy, which opened in 1787, offered girls an education that was remarkably similar to that available to boys. Gordon suggests, in fact, that the college

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19 Lynne Templeton Brickley, "Sarah Pierce's Litchfield Female Academy, 1792-1833, Litchfield, Connecticut" (Ed.D. diss., Harvard University, 1985), and ""Female Academies Are Every Where Establishing"" (special qualifying paper, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1982). Using an unusual group of sources, including late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century histories of education, state chronicles, town histories, and books on schoolgirl art and needlework, Brickley has identified over 360 secondary-level schools for girls established throughout America prior to 1830. Not only did all of these schools teach academic subjects (some used the texts in use in the male colleges), but many, including those in the South, enjoyed well-established reputations, long histories, and large enrollments—attributes that run counter to the persistent claims that what schools did exist were small and ephemeral.

20 Norton, 288–89.

21 Ibid., 299.
graduates who founded the Young Ladies Academy applied the content and method of their own training to the education of girls as an expression of the changing attitudes of republican men toward the education of women. As Gordon summarizes, "The academy provided a miniature platform on which late eighteenth-century sexual politics came to life."22

In this context, Gordon makes an important observation which should serve as a warning against confusing rhetoric about female education with actual training and practices. In the case of the Young Ladies Academy, girls were taught the same subjects, with the same books and methods of instruction, as boys. The rationale given, however, differed when the curriculum was applied to the education of girls. For instance, Gordon points out that writing skills, which were emphasized in the education of boys for their utility in public life and business, were said, in the case of girls, to be a mark of social status; arithmetic, which by the eighteenth century had become important to the conduct of business, commerce, and the trades, was justified as a suitable subject for young ladies because as wives they might be called upon to assist their husbands or to watch the family finances. Depending on how we interpret this tension between the public discussion and the new competencies that girls privately were gaining through their studies, we might conclude, as does Cott, that the emphasis placed on utilitarian education during the eighteenth century had different ramifications for men and for women—that “education for men in America had to increase in scope . . . in order to be functional,” but utilitarian education for American women “narrowed their prospects because it was based on a limited conception of woman’s role.”23 Or, we might argue that while the ideology of republican womanhood certainly conditioned the experience of young women students, no amount of rhetoric about limits on women’s lives could totally negate the broadening effects of rigorous intellectual training and academy attendance.

Gordon’s research shows that, for at least some women, academy attendance served to nurture ambitions and skills. The experience of functioning as individuals in the school community led to the discovery of a new social role—one that was very different from the domestic responsibilities of the daughter at home. Girls learned to compete and to be judged by their competence in each subject; prizes and awards reinforced girls’ desires to achieve; and the practice of emulation, adopted directly from the boys’ schools, taught young women to value public recognition. The culture of the republican girls’ academies, then, may have fostered qualities in women that their founders never anticipated—indeed, independence, ambition, and public leadership.

This outcome certainly had come to be feared by the 1830s when

22 Gordon, 69.
23 Cott (n. 14 above), 109.

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educators of young women such as William Woodbridge and George Emerson were waging a campaign against rituals of competition in the education of girls because, as Nancy Green reports, they were believed to "unfit females for the duties of their sex, encourage boldness, vanity and selfishness at the expense of humility, devotion to duty, and the desire to do right for its sake."24 Green argues that it was this concern with the pernicious effects of competition on the female character in particular which fueled the general debate over the practice of emulation among educational theorists of the antebellum period. The academy experience, then, highlighted the central paradox in women's educational history—that education for women served the conservative function of preserving dominant cultural values of domesticity and subservience, while at the same time it provided women with the skills, the insights, and the desire to advance nontraditional values and, in some cases, even radical change.

Anne Firor Scott, in her study of Emma Willard's school, places educational advances for women at the heart of the nineteenth-century woman's movement. Though the explicit purpose of Troy's founder was "to educate women for responsible motherhood and train some of them to be teachers," in retrospect, Scott argues, "the school can be seen to have been an important source of feminism and the incubator of a new style of female personality."

Emma Willard was a prime example of this new female personality and an important purveyor of new forms of behavior for American women: though she was a woman of her time, rooted in social conventions, she was also a woman of the future. Scott argues, in fact, that Willard and others like her who were able to integrate new values with traditional notions of women's proper role were effective agents of change because of their seeming conservatism. Their public statements, however, have misled historians, as well as the women's peers, into thinking of them simply as exemplars of true womanhood—pious, submissive, and bound to the concept of domesticity.

The same might be said of the Troy Female Seminary, Scott argues. Its attention to the intellectual development of women was subversive; its mission of training women to become teachers, while cloaked in the


rhetoric of Republican Motherhood, was a radical reformulation of women's sphere to include professional work; and its championship of women's advancement reached far beyond the private confines of the school to a vast public audience through the influence of Troy alumnae who taught in the common schools and who established a network of some two hundred schools modeled after "the Troy plan" as far away as Ohio, Indiana, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. Scott concludes, therefore, that recent historians have been wrong to dismiss the early seminaries and pre–Civil War colleges as bulwarks of tradition. Moreover, she argues, when we consider the large number of women who, like the Troy women, tended to be traditional in their behavior but were "to some degree affected by the 'woman movement,'" we see that the changing state of women's self-perceptions "was not simply a matter of a few radicals, but rather one of the major phenomena shaping nineteenth century social history." It was through schools founded by such women and schools in which such women served as teachers that these changing roles were disseminated.

Scott derives her conclusions, in part, from biographical data compiled on more than 3,500 of the 12,000 women who attended Troy between 1821 and 1871. These alumnae, as Scott describes them through both statistical portraits and personal documentation, included many examples of the "new woman" of the nineteenth century. One alumna founded normal schools, another ran a farm; Troy graduates went on to become geologists, medical missionaries, translators, and midwives; an unusually large number worked with their fathers or beside their lawyer, minister, or businessman husbands—a phenomenon that suggests the married life of women who received advanced educations may have differed substantially from that of women who did not have the same intellectual training. In fact, Scott's statistical analysis confirms her suggestion that Troy students were quite different from the general population: a rather high proportion (22 percent) remained single; when they did marry, Troy alumnae tended to have small families (an ironic outcome, Scott notes, for women whose education ostensibly was to prepare them for motherhood); an unusually high percentage of married women continued to work after marriage (6 percent); and of those alumnae who became teachers, many (an estimated 40 percent) made teaching a serious career.

What still is unclear, however, is whether this experience was truly unique. Scott claims that Troy was a first in its provision of higher education for women and that Willard's emphasis on training women to become teachers, her organization of an alumnae network, and her curricular and organizational innovations were unprecedented. Brickley contends that

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Sarah Pierce and others anticipated many of Willard's achievements a generation before Troy was founded.

It is clear, in any case, that Willard did advance the cause of women's education dramatically; because of her influence on the development of the common schools, Willard's reforms were broadcast nationwide. She was elected supervisor of schools by the male voters of Kensington, Connecticut, in which capacity she established both a demonstration school for training teachers and the Woman's Association for the Common Schools. In her work at Troy, Willard developed a curriculum that was far more innovative in its pedagogy and in the introduction of such courses as science and geography than anything the male academies or colleges of the period had to offer.

In fact, Scott's study illustrates Barbara Miller Solomon's observation that many of the most important curricular innovations of the nineteenth century were the products of women educators who were free to "experiment" in their schools for girls. Solomon's massive and detailed survey of American women's education not only rehabilitates the reputation of the female academies in this regard but also links their leaders to educational reforms more generally. Solomon cites examples of curricular reform and pedagogical innovations emanating from the female academies across a variety of disciplines, especially in the sciences.27

Focusing on the sciences, Deborah Jean Warner documents an amazing array of scientific lecture series, courses in girls' schools and academies, and textbooks directed exclusively to female audiences.28 Many of the leading texts used in boys' schools as well as in female academies were written by women educators, Almira Phelps being perhaps the best known and most successful. Some girls' schools boasted courses, and even scientific apparatus, more advanced than those available at the leading men's colleges. Sharon Female Seminary, one of the Quaker schools studied by Jensen, by 1851 was offering courses in "natural philosophy, chemistry, astronomy, physiology, geology, botany, and other branches of science." Jensen discovered that this so-called ephemeral school (it lasted only twenty years) "boasted over $4,000 worth of astronomical equipment . . . and a large collection of fossils and minerals."29

The important point, of course, is that the diffusion of feminist values that Scott identifies in her interpretation of Willard's work may prove to have been even more widespread than the Troy data indicates. Moreover, such educators' belief in women's unlimited intellectual capabilities and


29 Jensen (n. 11 above), 13.
their advocacy of a new public role for women influenced the future of public schooling as their graduates became teachers.

Women and the history of teaching

Who those teachers were, what impact they had on American education, and how the profession of teaching affected nineteenth-century women are questions that recently have led to a reexamination of the teaching profession from several new perspectives. Richard M. Bernard and Maris A. Vinovskis’s well-known research on antebellum teachers in Massachusetts provides a reconstruction of patterns of female employment in the schools based on census data, annual school reports, and other historical studies. These data indicate that in Massachusetts (a state whose early commitment to public education was not typical but which, largely through the reform activities of Horace Mann, influenced practices in other states) women teachers outnumbered male teachers throughout the antebellum years. In fact, the absolute number of male teachers actually declined between 1834 and 1860, while the percentage of women in the teaching force “bolted upward” from 56.3 percent to 77.8 percent. This did not mean, of course, that women teachers represented a substantial percentage of all Massachusetts women at any given time: at no point during the antebellum period did teaching provide employment to even 2 percent of white women ages fifteen to sixty; and thus it might seem that the teaching profession could have had only a minor impact on women of the period. In estimating the percentage of antebellum white women who ever had taught, however, Barnard and Vinovskis found that approximately one out of five white women (and probably one out of four native-born white women) was a teacher at some time in her life.

Bernard and Vinovskis focus on two aspects of the teaching experience for women—teacher training and the organizational structure of the teaching profession. According to their data, most Massachusetts teachers were poorly prepared, having attended only common schools; they were young (most were between sixteen and twenty-five); they regarded teaching as a temporary career (the average tenure for public school teachers in 1845–1846 was 2.1 years); and vertical mobility for women in public schools was minimal (female principals were few and never were allowed to supervise male teachers; women teachers most often were assigned the younger children). The inferior status of women in the schools was compounded, moreover, by the fact that on the average women earned only 40 percent of the salary paid their male counterparts. This leads the authors to conclude that “self-respect must have been a difficult ideal” for women teachers. On the other hand, the reality of earned income for those women employed for the first time, they argue, “probably outweighed

The limitation of this conclusion, of course, is that it relies on published reports of school officials and schoolmen for information on the conditions under which women taught and learned in antebellum America.

Geraldine Joncich Clifford argues that a solution to this dilemma exists in the study of diaries, journals, personal correspondence, and autobiographical accounts of anonymous women teachers. Her research provides substantial confirmation that teachers’ own perceptions often differed markedly from the perceptions of educational spokesmen (and from the interpretations of recent historians). The common practice in nineteenth-century rural communities of “boarding around” the local teacher in the homes of school families, for example, often was not, from the teacher’s perspective, the despised practice that historians have claimed, nor was it disdained by ordinary teachers as it was by spokesmen for the teaching profession. Clifford found that many rural youth relished this “escape from their even-more confining homes and neighbourhoods.”\footnote{Geraldine Joncich Clifford argues that a solution to this dilemma exists in the study of diaries, journals, personal correspondence, and autobiographical accounts of anonymous women teachers. Her research provides substantial confirmation that teachers’ own perceptions often differed markedly from the perceptions of educational spokesmen (and from the interpretations of recent historians). The common practice in nineteenth-century rural communities of “boarding around” the local teacher in the homes of school families, for example, often was not, from the teacher’s perspective, the despised practice that historians have claimed, nor was it disdained by ordinary teachers as it was by spokesmen for the teaching profession. Clifford found that many rural youth relished this “escape from their even-more confining homes and neighbourhoods.”} Also, in contradiction to recent historical conceptualizations of nineteenth-century schools as factories, bureaucracies, and the battlefields of home-school conflict, Clifford claims that the letters and diaries of teachers she has read portray countless schools in which individual initiative, local discretion in implementing or ignoring state directives, parent-teacher cooperation, and community support were the salient features of public schooling. On the other hand, Clifford’s data confirm Vinovskis and Bernard’s portrait of the typical common school teacher as young and ill-prepared. Except for the small minority of teachers who had received normal-school training, Clifford agrees that there is little evidence that the newer pedagogical ideas or educational reform movements concerned nineteenth-century teachers.

Clifford’s most important contribution to this discussion, however, is her claim that a teaching career—however brief, and despite the low pay
and emotional and physical costs—provided women with "a psychic reward unique to their gender." The woman teacher, unlike most nineteenth-century women, could choose to postpone or to reject "the domestic imperative." Clifford describes the "growing self-respect, autonomy, and assertiveness" she discovered in the papers of young country girls whose teaching often took them to schools far from their homes. 32

Jensen depicts a similar pattern among the Quaker teachers even earlier in the century. She argues that Quaker women such as Rachel Painter, who attended the Westtown School, a boarding school established in 1799, enjoyed unprecedented independence and intellectual satisfaction during their years at school and, even more important, in their employment as teachers thereafter. Writing to her cousin in 1817, Painter described her pleasure in her students' successes, her sense of competence in executing the "responsibility attach'd to [her] important station," and her satisfaction in earning a salary by which she could keep herself "gently and lay up 300 hundred [sic] D. per annum." 33

Of particular interest is Clifford's observation that teachers' duties also included business bargaining in the male-dominated world of public officials and school trustees, and that women's public lives as teachers occasionally propelled them to seek larger audiences as abolitionists, suffragists, or temperance workers. Kathleen Berkeley's research on women teachers in the Memphis schools in the years following Reconstruction offers striking evidence of political activism among women teachers (in the case of Memphis they agitated for equal pay) and suggests that the schools may even have served as vital training grounds for the suffrage campaign. Berkeley's study corroborates Clifford's observations that through the process of teaching women developed political skills. Women teachers, she argues, felt a collective identity that helped them to organize for other causes. 34

New friendships, collegial support, and "sentiments of sisterhood with other young women teachers" were, according to Clifford, "commonplace experiences." 35 Women teachers developed networks and assisted one another in finding schools—a phenomenon, Clifford points out, that is utterly missing from standard histories of the teaching profession. Clifford concludes, moreover, that in spite of nineteenth-century rhetoric, and contrary to historiography that has linked teaching with women's domestic sphere and defined its growth as a conservative counterforce to women's

32 Clifford, "History as Experience," 196.
33 Jensen (n. 11 above), 14.
35 Clifford, "History as Experience," 196.
advancement, teaching made a significant contribution to nineteenth-century feminism.

**Women's life-cycle patterns**

Inherent in these discussions is the notion that the development of teaching as an occupation for women marked a new phase in the life cycle of nineteenth-century women—a time of relative independence between the domestic duties of the daughter at home and the equally dependent station of the married woman in her husband's home. Clifford highlights the personal freedom that women teachers (even those whose earnings went to support younger siblings) uniquely experienced during this phase of their lives and argues that teaching increasingly provided women with an opportunity to extend that period of education and nonfamilial responsibilities.

Nowhere, however, is this concept more rigorously tested than in David Allmendinger's study of the young women who prepared for teaching at Mary Lyon's Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. Using a variety of sources, including college files, manuscript census data, town records, genealogies, and other biographical materials, Allmendinger was able to reconstruct the family structure and social origin of a large percentage of the 1,400 women who attended Mount Holyoke during its first thirteen years. Allmendinger points out that merely by attending Mount Holyoke, the women who studied there during this period were "taking part in an experience that was altering the female life cycle." Holyoke students and their counterparts at Troy, at the state normal school at Bridgewater, and at similar institutions were adding at least three years of education to their life cycles; they also, Allmendinger explains, were making the female life cycle more complex by adding the option of remaining single and self-supporting.36

Though most Holyoke women did marry (81 percent), a significant minority did not (19 percent, as compared to 6–8 percent of the female population as a whole).37 Moreover, even those women who eventually married did not know at the time they entered Mount Holyoke when or if they would marry. Allmendinger argues that demographic changes had begun to alter parental expectations and the traditional female life cycle of some women in the hill towns of rural New England and New York even as early as 1800. Due to the same forces of population growth and declining land resources which drove the sons of these rural families to seek new land


37 Ibid., 40.
in the West or to train for occupations other than farming, women began to experience a “gap” of about five years between maturity and marriage. Increasingly, then, Allmendinger explains, parents of modest means needed to plan for the support of their daughters during this interval and, perhaps, for their entire adult lives.

Allmendinger, then, describes a very different phenomenon in his economic life-cycle interpretation of the impetus to advanced education for women than traditionally has been attributed to the early academies, seminaries, and women’s colleges. Mount Holyoke students were not the daughters of the privileged, and it was neither exemption from economic productivity nor single-daughter status that provided the necessary condition for their advanced education. Instead, like the young male students in the provincial New England colleges whom Allmendinger has described elsewhere, the Holyoke women sought higher education for vocational reasons. They came from what Mary Lyon described as the “country middle classes” and were required by circumstances to contribute to the family economy. Allmendinger calculates that over half of the Holyoke graduates between 1838 and 1850 came from families in the lower economic brackets: over half were farm families whose real estate holdings in 1850 were valued at $3,000 or less—below the average value of estates in mature farming areas. Scattered personal records and an analysis of the attendance patterns of Holyoke students show that economic problems often forced women to interrupt their studies, to interchange years of work and schooling, or to rush through Holyoke at an accelerated pace in order to save money. The structure of Mount Holyoke families, moreover, may have compounded the economic incentive to teach, as half of the families had only one son or none at all, and nearly all boasted a “surplus” of daughters to support—a circumstance that made the investment in a Holyoke education particularly attractive to these families. As teachers, these daughters could help support their families before marriage or remain single and be self-supporting.

Unfortunately, Allmendinger’s data on Holyoke, Scott’s on Troy, and Bernard and Vinovskis’s data on students who attended the four Massachusetts state normal schools are not comparable, and Allmendinger only can suggest possible contrasts between the Holyoke students and young women who attended other institutions. Allmendinger assumes that Mount Holyoke students were more intensely driven by economic considerations than were students at other antebellum academies and seminaries. Mary Lyon introduced cost-cutting measures at Holyoke that held the price of a year’s attendance to only one-third the cost of Troy or Ipswich. It is still unclear, however, to what degree tuition differentials

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reflected distinctive student populations. A substantial number of Troy students, for instance, were given instruction on credit charged against their future earnings as teachers.

Whether Holyoke students were distinctive in their social backgrounds and economic need, then, or whether Allmendinger’s portrait might suggest the family attributes of a larger population of women teachers, is difficult to assess in the absence of other detailed analyses at the household level. Sarah Gordon provides evidence, for example, that a small number of similar hill-town families sent their daughters to Smith College to be trained as “teacher specials.”

The migration of teachers from New England

Kathryn Kish Sklar in her study of the evangelical and community roots of Mount Holyoke reminds us that it was also the religious commitment of many Holyoke women—a commitment reinforced and nurtured by Mary Lyon—that drove them into the fields of teaching and missionary work initially.40 Because single women were denied the sponsorship of missionary organizations, many young unmarried women turned to teaching in answer to their “higher calling.” After marriage, some of these same women were able to serve alongside their husbands in foreign fields or in the West.

Teaching in the West provided an important opportunity for young women teachers during the antebellum period, and Mount Holyoke graduates and normal-school students from New York and New England were among the number who first left their homes in the East to embrace a new life and calling in the West. Those who migrated west under the sponsorship of the Board of National Popular Education, an evangelical organization in Hartford originally conceived by Catharine Beecher, have been studied by Polly Welts Kaufman, who claims that the experience of religious conversion and a missionary zeal may have been the essential preconditions that helped these teachers gain the courage necessary to leave their homes and go west. The experience of teaching in the West, moreover,

39 Sarah H. Gordon, “Smith College Students: The First Ten Classes, 1879–1888,” History of Education Quarterly 15, no. 2 (Summer 1975): 147–67. Tiziana Rota, who has studied the social origins and employment patterns of Mount Holyoke students later in the century, demonstrates that the social composition of the early seminary had shifted by the 1880s and that the majority of students were no longer the daughters of hill-town farmers. See Tiziana Rota, “Between ‘True Women’ and ‘New Women’: Mount Holyoke Students, 1837 to 1908” (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1983).

appears to have reinforced women's sense of psychological power, and for some teaching may even have served as the secular equivalent of the conversion experience. Maria Welch, for instance, a young graduate of Cortland Academy in New York whom Kaufman quotes, wrote in her application to the board that she wished to teach in the West "to try myself alone, and find out who I am." 

As with the Holyoke women, it was not spiritual motives alone that attracted these women teachers to the frontier. Kaufman's study of the papers of about half of the six hundred women whom the Board of National Popular Education sponsored during the decade following its establishment in 1846 shows that economic need was at least as prominent a factor in the decision of teachers to go west as was a sense of mission. More than two-thirds of the teachers Kaufman studied already were on their own when they applied to teach in the West; the majority of these had suffered the death of one or both parents. Many of the rest, according to Kaufman, appear to have been older professional teachers who were seeking higher salaries or a change in situation; all were self-supporting out of necessity. Kaufman notes, too, that the median age of those for whom information is available was slightly over twenty-five at the time of their preliminary training with the board; and therefore the option of financial support through marriage may have been less available (or less attractive) to this group of teachers than to a group of younger and less experienced women.

The pioneer teachers provide an interesting case that seems to confirm the broader applicability of Allmendinger's findings concerning changes in the female life cycle and the concomitant attractiveness of teaching to women from rural New England during the antebellum period. Like the women who attended Mount Holyoke, most of the teachers who went west came from northern New England and New York state. The majority already had taught, and most had struggled to obtain their educations, attending an academy or seminary for a few sessions at a time in alternation with teaching or other jobs. Unlike the Holyoke women, however, fewer than one-third of the women Kaufman studied came from families in which both parents were still living. This points to another important aspect of women's lives that may have altered the course of their educational careers: dislocations resulting from the early death of parents or a spouse, sudden financial reversals, or other unexpected changes in family status had a different impact on nineteenth-century women than they did on men to whom a variety of options for self-support were available. For women,


42 Allmendinger claims that the Holyoke students came from intact families, though his data may have reflected the presence of stepparents and thus disguised the orphaned status of some women (see Allmendinger, "Mount Holyoke Students," 36–37).
teaching offered an alternative to the traditional solution of living as a dependent in the homes of willing relatives.

Jacqueline Jones identifies this phenomenon among the northern women who went south to teach freedmen after the Civil War with the American Missionary Association (AMA).43 Of the nearly three hundred women who taught in Georgia between 1865 and 1874 under the auspices of the AMA, only one-third had two parents living when they left for Georgia—the same proportion found by Kaufman among the teachers who went west through the offices of the Board of National Popular Education. The remaining women in Jones's group were about equally divided between those who had no parent living and those who had only one, most often only a mother.

Jones argues, however, that abolitionist sentiment probably outweighed the need to be self-supporting as the motive for going south among most of the women in her study. AMA teachers could hope to earn only fifteen dollars a month in addition to their lodging and meals in an AMA boarding home, and as a consequence teachers from modest backgrounds, Jones explains, were beset with financial problems and sometimes even had to leave freedmen's work, relinquishing it to those women who could tolerate both the economic and physical hardships of teaching in the South.

Still, the similarities of this group of teachers to those described by Allmendinger and Kaufman are striking (and their low salaries are not far different). The typical AMA teacher was the daughter of a clergyman, farmer, or skilled tradesman in small-town or rural New England. She was white, single, in her late twenties, a member of an evangelical church, and experienced as a common-school teacher. Jones discovered in her detailed biographical research, based on manuscript census data, family genealogies, obituaries, and teachers' applications to the AMA, that most of the northern teachers had received some type of higher education in a normal school or female seminary; a number of them had attended Oberlin; several had attended Mount Holyoke.

The fact that the AMA selected only experienced teachers meant that these women already had chosen teaching as their livelihood, had prepared for teaching during their early twenties, and had worked as teachers before deciding to go south. In this respect, then, they exhibited the same life-cycle pattern as the Mount Holyoke women, and their middle-class background and gentility, therefore, should not be confused with freedom

from economic responsibility. The fact that such a disproportionately large number of the AMA teachers came from families that had experienced some kind of crisis should be analyzed further. While the death of a parent may not indicate financial distress, it may tell us something about the attitudes of surviving daughters and about the new forms of independence that by choice or out of necessity they exhibited.

In combination with Clifford’s, Allmendinger’s, and Kaufman’s studies, Jones’s biographical data on the teachers who went to Georgia confirm, in fact, an attribute of the teaching profession in general that has been largely ignored by historians. Teaching, unlike factory work, farm labor, or domestic service, was considered throughout the nineteenth century to be a respectable occupation for women, and thus the profession could accommodate women from a wide range of backgrounds, embracing at the same time both well-educated daughters of northern (and southern) families who might be “genteel but impoverished” and New England farm girls who had the benefits of only a common-school education. Furthermore, unlike most nineteenth-century women, whose social status was in large part a function of their father’s or husband’s status, women teachers occupied a position in their communities that was, to some degree at least, a function of their own occupational role.

The women teachers in both Jones’s and Kaufman’s studies very clearly conform, in fact, to Anne Firor Scott’s definition of the “New American Woman.” In Kaufman’s words, they “demonstrated a will to direct their own lives to an extent that was unusual for the majority of women of their time [and] were able to attain a higher level of self-sufficiency than practically any other group . . . virtually unnoticed.”44 In the case of the pioneer teachers who went west, this self-sufficiency was manifested in their determination to negotiate favorable living conditions and salaries with sometimes hostile community leaders. Several teachers were charged with the task of opening the first school in a district: primitive schoolhouses, harsh living conditions, and sectarian conflicts were only a few of the problems that these young women confronted. They managed, however, to establish authority in the classroom and to pioneer new teaching techniques and leadership in the community and in regional teachers’ institutes; many, moreover, carved out new personal as well as professional lives for themselves on the frontier.

Of the women who went west, nearly two-thirds stayed in their new homes. Kaufman portrays these women as community builders in the larger sense: in addition to starting or continuing as teachers in district or subscription schools, many founded or taught in seminaries where they trained the next generation of teachers. In building new lives for themselves they often achieved positions of considerable influence, and a pat-

tern of pioneer teachers marrying prominent men is suggested by Kaufman’s sample of former Mount Holyoke and Albany Normal School students who went west. Marriage, furthermore, did not necessarily preclude teaching as a career: husbands sometimes joined in their wives’ efforts. Jones tells us that those who went south with the AMA, on the other hand, appear to have returned to their homes in New England or the Midwest, where they resumed teaching or married, and where they continued to support the work of freedmen’s aid societies.

Like Scott, who argues that feminist values influenced a broad range of nineteenth-century women, Jones emphasizes that the teachers who went south were ordinary women whose wish for a more active life, whose sense of adventure and sense of mission, and whose desire to escape from family tasks probably were shared by many. Their accomplishments, therefore, are all the more significant as a commentary on nineteenth-century school-teaching and early Victorian womanhood in general.

**Black women teachers**

While much of the new research on nineteenth-century women teachers seems to confirm this thesis, we still must qualify the positive findings with a critical acknowledgment that women’s advances in education and in the teaching profession took place within the context of a sex-segregated labor market and under the specter of profound discrimination in terms of race, religion, social class, and ethnicity, as well as gender. Bettye Collier-Thomas reminds us in her introduction to a recent collection of biographical scholarship on black women educators that the history of black women teachers differed significantly from the experience of white women in education.45 Because black women were excluded from opportunities for advanced education for an even longer period of time than were white women, blacks moved into the profession at a different pace.

By 1910, however, U.S. census reports indicated that black women accounted for over two-thirds (22,547) of the nation’s 29,772 black teachers (a proportion nearly identical to women’s share of teaching jobs nationally). Little is known about these teachers, and it still is unclear what implications can be drawn from the national statistics. Most scholars agree, however, that for black women race augmented sex as a determinant of low pay, low status, and gender segregation within the educational hierarchy.

Linda Perkins argues that in spite of their increasing numbers as teachers, black women suffered a decline in educational and professional opportunities vis-à-vis black men in the years following the Civil War.

While coeducational schools for southern blacks had proliferated after the War, and black families placed extremely high value on the education of both sons and daughters, black men began to outnumber black women in higher education. By 1890, Perkins writes, only 30 black women held baccalaureate degrees, compared to over 300 black men and 2,500 white women. Educated black men also increasingly gained greater options in employment; black women were confined almost exclusively to elementary and secondary school teaching.  

Perkins attributes this growing inequality in part to the differential power black men achieved in gaining the vote in 1870. The Fourteenth Amendment, Perkins observes, was the first major distinction acknowledged by society toward black men. As they moved into increasingly prominent political positions during Reconstruction, many black men adopted the prevailing posture of white society toward woman's proper place.

This contrasts sharply with the status of black women prior to emancipation, Perkins argues. Black women were among the earliest educators of the race. Katy Ferguson's School for the Poor opened to both black and white pupils in New York City in 1793. That same year, Perkins notes, the Committee for Improving the Condition of Free Blacks in Pennsylvania established a school and recommended a black female teacher. Black women continued to teach, to lecture and write, to run clandestine schools in the South, and to work for abolition throughout the antebellum period.

The experience of the many anonymous black women teachers who carried on the campaign of racial "uplift" after the Civil War has been difficult to retrieve. Oral histories have provided some data. Courtney Ann Vaughn-Roberson's portrait of Oklahoma schoolteachers includes information on twenty-five black women teachers along with data from correspondence and oral interviews of another three hundred white or mixed-blood Indian women. Most of the early black women teachers in Oklahoma, Vaughn-Roberson writes, had been educated elsewhere and had migrated to Oklahoma; they received their training at such institutions as Oberlin, Wilberforce, the University of Chicago, and Fisk University. Later generations of black women born in Oklahoma, mostly the daughters of poor


women in Oklahoma sensed that segregation had created professional opportunities for them. Winnie Franks, one of the black women interviewed by Vaughn-Roberson for this study, recalled the problem for black women teachers when the schools finally were integrated in the 1950s. Previously, black women had assumed almost complete responsibility for the education of black youth, and now they were out of jobs.49

The conditions of their employment throughout the period, however, were harsh. Vaughn-Roberson’s study (much of which is based on information and memoirs solicited in 1976 by the Oklahoma Retired Teachers Association) does not provide precise data on salaries, years of employment, marital status, or career patterns. But it does give us a unique personal view of teaching conditions and of racism in a state typified by poor, rural, and small-town schools. The personal recollections of these Oklahoma teachers confirm the hardships described by David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot in their larger and more comprehensive analysis of public schools during the thirties.50 For many Oklahoma women, the Depression never ended. Jennie Higgins, a white teacher, reported that she had conducted a one-room school of more than a hundred students, only two-thirds of whom had pencils, pens, and other supplies. Ethel McPhaul, a black teacher, wrote that she and other black teachers used their own salaries to provide the same.

Urbanization and feminization

Myra H. Strober and David Tyack allude to the question of race as a variable in the feminization of southern black schools in their study of

49 Geraldine Clifford compares black women’s employment as teachers to that of other minority groups in her study, “‘Marry, Stitch, Die, or Do Worse’” (n. 31 above), and concludes that because blacks were barred from the commercial jobs that employed the daughters of many immigrant families, teaching provided an opportunity more rare for educated black women than for women in other groups.

economic and organizational factors that led to women’s employment as teachers. Strober and Tyack suggest that one factor in the growth of employment of black women teachers may have been a preference among white (male) officials to employ black women rather than to supervise black men. As they point out, “on the grounds of salary and social prestige one would expect black males to have flocked to get jobs as urban teachers in the South, but they did not.”51

The domination of southern black rural schools by black women, however, may have been distinctive. Strober and Tyack (in writing without reference to race) conclude that women teachers made their earliest gains, in terms of numerical participation, in the nation’s large urban school systems rather than in rural schools, and they present a variety of explanations for this development. The ideological and economic preconditions that made possible the entry of women into the teaching force did not proceed evenly across rural and urban labor markets, in part because daughters’ domestic services were more valued by rural families and because men in the countryside had fewer lucrative alternative job opportunities than men in urban areas.

Supply factors alone, however, did not determine the pattern or rate of change toward the employment of women in the schools. Strober and Tyack identify the well-known arguments of educators such as Catharine Beecher, who claimed that teaching was compatible with the presumed future roles of young women as wives and mothers, as the necessary ideological underpinnings of the feminization of schoolteaching. To some degree, sex-role considerations had different consequences in urban schools, where the problem was mitigated by the assignment of men to positions of authority as principals, superintendents, and as teachers in the upper grades. A growing disaffection among male teachers in rural areas led finally to more opportunities for women outside of cities, a pattern that is well documented by Tyack and Strober in a follow-up study. As rural schools became bureaucratized, Strober and Tyack suggest, teaching grew less attractive to men who did not wish to become what one Oregon male teacher called “serfs to be moved about at the will of a state superintendent.”52

According to Margaret Nelson's study of women in Vermont who had taught in both rural and urban or district graded schools, many women teachers also preferred the autonomy that rural school teaching afforded. In case after case, women lamented the loss of authority that the transition from the one-room schoolhouse to the graded school involved. Explained one teacher, "For so many years I had been the one who settled everything. . . That was one of the hardest things for teachers who had always been in a country school to come into a graded school—because you had to follow rules and regulations." Nelson found, however, that women with more advanced educations tended to prefer the climate of the graded schools. Salary considerations, resources within the classroom, and the sociability of colleagues weighed more heavily in their assessments of optimal employment conditions.

According to Strober and Tyack, then, economic preconditions and the structure of economic and status incentives, gender-role ideologies, and the organizational requirements of large urban systems all combined to encourage the feminization of school teaching across the country. Marta Danylewycz and Alison Prentice, however, in their discussion of the evolution of school systems in Montreal and Toronto, note that "Nineteenth century city school administrators also had very specific agendas for the men under their jurisdiction." It was often the professional interests of male school heads and other administrators, and not educational considerations, that determined social policy. How such considerations affected school systems in the American context, and especially in the racially segregated South, remains to be studied.

**Immigrant women**

Similarly, almost nothing is known about the experience of first- and second-generation immigrant women teachers. Clifford cites a 1911 survey that indicated that in 1900, 27 percent of the nation's teachers were native-born daughters of immigrant parentage—a disproportionately large share. Norwegian immigrant women were teaching in Iowa at least as early as 1860; Irish girls trained in Boston's Catholic high school classes later in the century found teaching jobs in the city's public schools; teaching provided some young Jewish women with a ticket out of the ghetto (though there were always costs involved in such departures). Clifford argues that

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54 Marta Danylewycz and Alison Prentice, "Teachers, Gender, and Bureaucratizing School Systems in Nineteenth Century Montreal and Toronto," *History of Education Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 75-100, esp. 91.
teaching provided significant upward social mobility for many immigrant girls at a time when relatively few of their brothers could advance from the working class to the middle class through schooling. By 1920, Clifford reports, teaching ranked fifth among occupations of women with foreign or mixed parentage, employing 7.5 percent (over 153,000) of all such women.55

Yet another path to teaching for some groups of immigrant women were the Catholic sisterhoods. Mary J. Oates, in her study of teaching sisters in Boston, documents the dramatic increase in the need for parochial school teachers after the 1884 edict of the Council of Baltimore requiring each parish to maintain a school.56 According to Oates, efforts to encourage young women to join teaching communities were intense. Sisters were asked to invite high school and normal school pupils to visit them at the convent in hopes of attracting them to the community. Sermons and the Catholic press decried the need for teachers, and women responded in unprecedented numbers—never enough, however, to meet the demand.

The Boston case was unusual in that the church hierarchy for most of the nineteenth century had given little support to parochial schools; however, even in this context of minimal support for the education of teaching sisters, some working-class women received opportunities for higher education that might otherwise have eluded them. Oates's discussion is particularly useful in evaluating the impact of state certification regulations that came to govern the preparation of parochial as well as public school teachers by the 1920s. Novices who previously received little training before entering the classroom suddenly were required to study for college degrees. The demand for qualified Catholic teachers for the Boston parochial schools led eventually to the founding of two women's colleges and the admission of sisters to education courses in Boston College (though only during the summer months). It was not unusual, Oates notes, for sisters to spend some ten years in part-time study toward the baccalaureate.

Maxine Seller's work on the education of immigrant women during the early twentieth century suggests that much of the support for American-born daughters to advance in school came from immigrant mothers whose own struggles to obtain new skills and intellectual opportunities informed their ambitions for their daughters.57 Seller documents the sexism that

55 Clifford, "'Marry, Stitch, Die, or Do Worse'" (n. 31 above), 253.
accompanied nativist thinking in the Progressive Era and shows that, except for the narrowly defined Americanization programs taught in night schools, American public education largely neglected the wives of the new immigration. Immigrant women, however, sought opportunities to educate themselves, and the story of their determination and ingenuity lies, therefore, outside the public system in community programs such as the bilingual Hungarian Free Lyceum in New York City, the Bohemian settlement house women’s group in Chicago, and the Finnish Lutheran churches.  

Though some organizations concentrated, like the Americanization programs, on teaching English and traditional homemaking skills, others acknowledged immigrant women’s intellectual ambition. In many cases this ambition was displaced onto the academic careers of daughters who might become teachers in America’s public schools.

Women’s higher education

Gender discrimination in teaching and the development of other “women’s occupations” has served as a backdrop for much of the recent historical scholarship on women’s higher education. Whether such new career opportunities led to greater equality for women or whether they served merely to reinforce the traditional assignment of women to secondary roles in society has been the subject of much debate. Similarly, the condition of women as students and as faculty in colleges and universities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been reevaluated by several historians whose interpretations have influenced contemporary thinking about the differences between coeducational and single-sex institutions, the experience of women in different academic disciplines, and the rela-

that influenced the goals of nineteenth-century educational institutions. In this work and in an earlier article, “Domestication as Reform: A Study of the Socialization of Wayward Girls, 1856–1905,” Harvard Educational Review 50, no. 2 (May 1980): 196–213, Brenzel shows how assumptions about women’s “inherently domestic nature” informed both the criteria used by nineteenth-century reformers to define deviancy in young women and the programs that they designed to rehabilitate “wayward” girls. Brenzel’s work provides dramatic evidence that social class and ethnicity cannot be divorced from the context of gender, and her work should serve to point the way to further investigations of the educational history of America’s female underclass. With the notable exception of Geraldine Clifford, no other scholar has studied girls’ vocational education, either within or outside the public schools. These topics have been so central to recent revisions of American educational history that their absence from the scholarship on women’s education is all the more glaring.

58 Seller also identifies ethnic parishes and women’s organizations, Jewish mothers’ clubs, the ethnic press, women’s literary and singing societies, ethnic labor organizations, the socialist-sponsored Polish University of Chicago, and the Work People’s College in Duluth as important educational agencies for immigrant women.
tionship of collegiate and professional training to women's subsequent employment.

The broad outlines for this debate, as I discussed in the introduction to this essay, were set by Jill Conway in her pioneering work on the first generation of American college women. Conway argued that neither the early coeducational colleges (beginning with Oberlin in the 1830s, the first college to admit women) nor the midwestern state universities that began to admit women during the mid-nineteenth century encouraged women to transcend their expected secondary roles in society. The early colleges aimed to train women only as the “help-mates of the men who were to evangelise the frontier”; and the arguments in favor of coeducation that won women admission to state-supported universities and high schools, Conway claims, were “strictly economic”—male and female intellectual equality was not seriously discussed.

It was not until the founding of women's colleges on the model of the elite eastern men's colleges after the Civil War, Conway argues, that women were able to obtain intellectual training that did not assume a compensatory role for women scholars. These institutions produced an exceptional generation of women during the 1890s who, nurtured by the collective female life of the women's college, emerged with aspirations to use their educations outside the confines of women's domestic sphere as it was narrowly defined in marriage. But while this pioneering generation rejected conventional marriage (some 60–70 percent remained single), the professional roles they developed for themselves perpetuated and, in fact, institutionalized the ideology of gender difference. Conway interprets the development of the women's service professions as a conservative trend in which the potential for change in status remained unrealized.

Students at coeducational colleges and universities

Out of Conway's analysis several themes emerged which have been central to recent historical discussions. Her argument that women's access to higher education did not result in equal intellectual or social opportunity has, perhaps, received the most abundant confirmation. Ronald Hogeland's study of coeducation at Oberlin reinforces Conway's own observations about the social attitudes that informed practices at Oberlin to confine women to a subordinate, domestic role within the college.

Similar attitudes underlay the program at Grinnell, another midwestern liberal arts college that admitted women from its founding. Joan Zimmerman's study traces a pattern at Grinnell that was typical of many institutions: women students initially enjoyed access to all academic courses available to men, but progressively as their numbers increased and the feminization of the college came to be feared by the male leadership and outside observers, women were segregated into separate academic programs, separate housing units, separate social organizations, and were directed toward the women's professions.62

Amy Hague's research on student life at Wisconsin shows that discriminatory attitudes and practices were actually exacerbated by successive moves toward increased integration of men and women after 1875. The segregation at Wisconsin, Hague argues, "encouraged women to have traditional goals, just as it discouraged them from believing in their own capabilities."63 Florence Howe's comparative study of Wellesley and Stanford provides dramatic evidence that Stanford, in spite of its much heralded mandate to give equal advantages to both sexes, maintained as its real mission the production of educated wives and mothers. Howe argues that women as a group were "invisible" and "ignored" throughout Stanford's history; her portrayal of the efforts of women students to be regarded as intelligent, independent human beings is poignant. One anonymous woman, whose appeal Howe describes, wrote an article in 1909 in which she vigorously opposed a university proposal to introduce courses for women in home economics and child-care, arguing that "the first prerequisite for successful wifehood is freedom. The second is liberty, and the third is independence."64

Like Stanford, Cornell, which admitted women in 1872, promised to serve as a new model of educational equality between men and women but failed to meet this challenge. Patricia Foster Haines documents the decline of women's status and the differentiation of women and men students at Cornell in her discussion of the controversy surrounding women's confinement to Sage College.65 Charlotte Williams Conable's history of women at

63 Amy Hague, "What If the Power Does Lie within Me?" Women Students at the University of Wisconsin, 1875–1900," History of Higher Education Annual (1984), 78–100, esp. 91. For a more comprehensive study of discrimination at one of the first midwestern universities to admit women, see Dorothy Gies McGuigan, A Dangerous Experiment: 100 Years of Women at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Center for Continuing Education of Women, 1970).
65 Patricia Foster Haines, "For Honor and Alma Mater: Perspectives on Coeducation at Cornell University, 1868–1885," Journal of Education 159, no. 3 (August 1977): 25–37, and
Cornell depicts militant students who asserted their right to equal treatment and actively protested against successive new limitations imposed on them by the university. Still, the Cornell women alone could not alter centuries of tradition that secured the university as a preserve of male privilege, and social equality remained as elusive a goal at Cornell as elsewhere.66

Lynn D. Gordon's comparative study of Berkeley and Chicago suggests that women's ability to organize around issues central to their advancement was affected by a variety of external conditions.67 At Berkeley a tremendous student hostility against women resulted in the wholesale exclusion of women from campus life. Efforts after 1890 to provide separate, compensatory facilities and organizations for women did little to change women's limited expectations about their future social and professional roles, and both women students and faculty remained marginal figures at Berkeley throughout the Progressive Era.

The University of Chicago, on the other hand, was relatively hospitable to women scholars during the first decade after its founding in 1892. Gordon attributes this difference to several distinctive features of the University of Chicago: the university's mission to promote advanced research; the strong and experienced leadership of Deans Alice Freeman Palmer and Marion Talbot, who were both graduates of coeducational universities and former Wellesley colleagues; the presence of a large number of women instructors and graduate scholars (354 in 1900); the support of a group of men faculty; and linkages among academic women, students, and the Hull House reformers in Chicago. Women at Chicago were able to develop a strong and coherent community that reflected patterns already established by the eastern women's colleges and the social settlement movement and that supported both their intellectual accomplishments and distinctive social goals.

Gordon concludes, however, that the social separatism promoted by Talbot at Chicago failed to increase women's influence and to secure a legitimate place for women in the intellectual life of the university. Like Conway and other scholars who observe a decline in feminist activity generally by 1920, Gordon argues that the notions of woman's natural distinctiveness and moral superiority that underlay the separatist strategy at Chicago ultimately undermined women's progress. Chicago women,
though more respected than their counterparts at Berkeley, still were vulnerable to the attacks of turn-of-the-century male critics who adopted women's own assertions of their innate differences as the rationale for further discrimination. In spite of the efforts of Talbot and her faculty and alumnae allies to counter the growing antagonism toward coeducation at Chicago as female enrollment increased, women were segregated into a separate junior college in 1902. This program gradually was abandoned, but women lost ground in all fields except education and continued to be excluded from the center of academic life. Gordon concludes that the outcome at Chicago was not in the end significantly different from that at Berkeley: separatism, regardless of its type, reinforced inequality.

Women's research gains

The traditional argument that access to higher education led directly to the intellectual liberation of American women seems, then, to have been put to rest. Nevertheless, the substance and consequences of the gains women did win through their access to higher education have not been thoroughly documented. Rosalind Rosenberg's work represents a turning point in this regard.\(^{68}\) Rosenberg looks beyond the famous "special generation" of college-trained social reformers and identifies a group of women academics working primarily in the emerging social sciences who in both their professional research and personal lives challenged prevailing notions about sex differences and gender roles.

The University of Chicago around 1900 provided the necessary conditions for this revolution in thinking about woman's nature: a creative research environment, coeducation, and the leadership of women who were committed to the advancement of women's scholarship. Marion Talbot, according to Rosenberg, "represented the cutting edge of a new kind of feminism."\(^{69}\) Her own field of sanitary science as Talbot conceived it was not, Rosenberg insists, intended to teach girls how to run a home; it was designed to equip social science experts with training in chemistry, physics, physiology, political economy, and modern languages in order that they might successfully address the problems of urbanization. Talbot made it clear in her political activities against the "segregationists" at Chicago that she did not believe that women had different interests or capacities from men. And while she lost a battle when the university established a separate program for women in 1902, the fight over coeduca-

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\(^{68}\) Rosalind Rosenberg, Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982).

tion "fueled a movement at Chicago that would, within the next decade, challenge the most basic assumptions about personality formation and sex roles."\textsuperscript{70}

According to Rosenberg, the work on gender roles and sex differences of researchers such as Helen Thompson and Jesse Taft at Chicago, and Leta Hollingworth and Elsie Clews Parsons at Columbia and Barnard, signaled a triumph for women in higher education and had a major impact on feminism. However, Rosenberg is quick to point out the losses that women suffered as the disciplines matured. The achievements of the first generation were difficult to build on. Male-centered values of science and professionalism undercut the values of the female culture and political climate that had united nineteenth-century women, leaving twentieth-century women scholars isolated in an alien and often hostile world.

Furthermore, as Margaret Rossiter argues, the laboratory findings of this group of women social scientists may have influenced the research of some of their colleagues, but their research on sex differences did not have a significant impact on the behavior of male academics generally or on the policies and practices of institutions.\textsuperscript{71} Even those universities that trained large numbers of women doctoral students usually refused to hire them as faculty. As old barriers against women's participation in academe were lowered, Rossiter points out, new hurdles such as antinepotism rules and the tenure track appeared that excluded women or confined them to certain fields, to the lower ranks, and to adjunct positions. By every measure, academic women were paid much less than academic men; their exclusion from professional and social organizations as well as their disproportionate share of teaching duties limited women's opportunities to pursue advanced research; and, not surprisingly, despite their greatly increased numbers and percentages in the 1920s and 1930s, women did not advance "normally" within their disciplines or institutions. Some saw this as evidence of women's lesser ability.

Partially in response to this growing hostility in the male research world, many women retreated to all-female enclaves where they could exercise some authority and strive as individuals for excellence in their chosen work. Rossiter documents a major shift in the tactics of women scientists after 1910 from confrontational politics and overt efforts to achieve full equality with men on university faculties to the more conservative strategy of accepting prevailing inequities and working for limited personal gains. Women scientists, as a result of both institutional discrimination and this new strategy, Rossiter explains, became even more invisible—confined to marginal positions in laboratories, or outside the major

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 328.

\textsuperscript{71} Margaret W. Rossiter, Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).
research centers in women’s colleges, schools of home economics, and in separate women’s scientific organizations. Not unlike their nineteenth-century predecessors—the amateur scientists whom Sally Gregory Kohlstedt introduces to us in her study of women working outside the academy—twentieth-century women scientists worked on the periphery.\textsuperscript{72}

**Women’s institutions**

The advantages and disadvantages to women of working in such enclaves still are unclear. Joyce Antler’s portrait of the life and work of Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Radcliffe alumna, Berkeley Dean of Women, and founder of the Bank Street School, illuminates the positive, feminist goals of self-determination and autonomy that Mitchell was able to achieve within the “woman’s world” of early childhood education—a field she helped to pioneer. Antler shows that within this realm, Mitchell and others were able to advance their work as scientific professionals and at the same time perpetuate the humanistic values of the female world in their professional lives. Antler argues that Bank Street as an institution exemplified “a mediation of public and private spheres,” and as such it reflected Mitchell’s personal effort to merge her own marriage, motherhood, and scientific training into a profession that could support her multiple ambitions.\textsuperscript{73}

For others, the women’s colleges provided a superior professional environment where similar community supports and the attributes of the female culture that had been so critical to women’s initial successes in academe were still intact. Patricia Palmieri’s work on the Wellesley faculty reveals a community of senior women professors whose careers flourished in the supportive setting of Wellesley College.\textsuperscript{74} Wellesley, unlike Harvard or Johns Hopkins where the isolated, specialized researcher increasingly was becoming the faculty norm, provided a home as well as an intellectual haven. Palmieri’s portrait reveals a world in which family, friendship, and professional activity overlapped. Collaboration was standard, and scholars such as Katharine Lee Bates, Vida Scudder, Emily Greene Balch, and Katharine Coman wrote books together, traveled and built homes together, and jointly sponsored political and social reform efforts such as


the founding of Denison House, a social settlement in Boston. A virtual colony of devoted mothers and sisters settled at Wellesley and provided the further domestic and psychological support that served as a critical precondition for these women’s extraordinary achievements.75

Palmieri acknowledges, however, that many of these women academics were not at Wellesley by choice alone—they were locked out of the research universities. Though most Wellesley professors were highly productive scholars, they might have accomplished even more had heavy teaching loads and administrative duties not forced them often to set aside important research projects. A commitment to Wellesley and a desire to remain within its close community, moreover, discouraged some professors from accepting offers for advancement elsewhere. To others, however, it was clear that Wellesley offered the best professional environment available. Palmieri tells us, for instance, that senior philosopher Mary Calkins rejected an offer from Columbia not only because she wanted to remain close to her family and friends at Wellesley, but also because she feared being “trapped” teaching elementary courses at the male-dominated university. Whether women’s colleges other than Wellesley served faculty in the same way will remain difficult to evaluate until comparable research on other educational institutions is accomplished.76


76 Very little research, for instance, has been done on male faculties other than those at prominent research universities or on the differences between men’s and women’s liberal arts colleges. For a further examination of this problem, see Patricia A. Palmieri, “Paths and Pitfalls: Illuminating Woman’s Educational History,” Harvard Educational Review 49, no. 4 (November 1979): 447–541; and Geraldine Joneich Clifford, “‘Shaking Dangerous Questions from the Crease’: Gender and American Higher Education,” Feminist Issues 3, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 3–61. Two studies that would figure importantly into new research are Helen Leffkowitz Horowitz’s recent work, Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women’s Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), and Sally Gregory Kohlstedt’s study of Simmons College, “Single-Sex Education and Leadership: The Early Years of Simmons College,” in Biklen and Brannigan, eds., 93–112, esp. 98. Horowitz argues that the differing architectural styles and campus plans of the women’s colleges (domestic cottages at Smith, Gothic halls at Bryn Mawr) reflect opposing concepts of women’s education and link women’s colleges to the larger universe of nineteenth-century institution building and utopian thought. This relationship of material culture to collegiate life is a provocative subject, heretofore little studied. Kohlstedt’s study of Simmons reveals a community in which women students were expected to pursue careers and graduated to become leaders in the new public service fields of library science, social work, institutional management, and public health nursing. Kohlstedt’s data on the high percentage of graduates who combined marriage and careers in the early part of the twentieth century is particularly striking and points to the importance of studying institutions and programs for women outside the liberal arts.
According to several recent studies, the so-called Seven Sister Colleges (Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley) all seem to have been more successful historically at producing career-oriented graduates than have coeducational colleges and universities (though debate continues over the reasons for this apparent success). Mary J. Oates and Susan Williamson argue that the relatively high socioeconomic levels of the families who sent their daughters to these colleges may have been an important factor in their subsequent success.77 Elizabeth Tidball, whose pioneering study of the baccalaureate origins of women cited in Who's Who of American Women started this debate, argues that her conclusions regarding the higher achievement of women's college graduates hold true for both elite women's colleges and less selective institutions when they are measured against comparable coeducational schools.78 Tidball's statistics show that women who attended women's colleges between 1910 and 1959 were approximately twice as likely as those who attended coeducational colleges or universities to be cited in any of several registries, including Who's Who in America, the source analyzed by Oates and Williamson. Tidball further correlates women's success after graduation with the presence of large numbers of women faculty and with small numbers of men students on campus.

The successful women who appear in the Who's Who series upon which these studies are based, however, represent only a limited range of careers: scientists, for instance, typically do not show up in the standard compendia. This leads Rossiter and others to challenge some of the conclusions that have been drawn about the women's colleges. It may be that obstacles inherent in the various disciplines and professions have conditioned women's ability to achieve recognition more significantly than the variables associated with the women's colleges.79

79 Margaret W. Rossiter, "Women Scientists in America before 1920," American Scientist 62, no. 3 (May/June 1974): 312–23, and "Women's Work in Science, 1880–1910," Isis 71, no. 258 (September 1980): 381–98. Rossiter argues further in "Sexual Segregation in the Sciences: Some Data and a Model," Signs 4, no. 1 (Autumn 1978): 146–51, that the growth rate of a science, which has a strong effect on the careers of scientists in that field, historically has had a different impact on women scientists than on men. Contrary to expectations, women did not necessarily do well in the fastest growing fields between 1921 and 1938; women had a comparative advantage in stagnant or shrinking fields because they were more willing than men to endure the bleak employment prospects. Rossiter concludes that many of the new exclusionary practices associated with the professionalization of science and technology in America developed in direct relation to the growing numbers of women who were available and qualified to enter the new and growing fields.
Women academics and the research university

Patricia Albjerg Graham has shown that such obstacles increased throughout academe as the new value system of the research university, with its emphasis on scholarship, became the standard for assessing prestige in American higher education generally. The coeducational liberal arts colleges, state universities, normal schools, and single-sex colleges which had provided new opportunities for the first generations of college and university-trained women after 1875, Graham argues, by 1925 were faced with the choice of either transforming their programs and standards to come into closer alignment with the model of the research university, or of retaining their traditional standards and thus losing relative acclaim and public support. Women suffered as a result of this growing influence of research: historically women were excluded as participants from the universities now setting the standard; the behaviors required of the professional scholar grew increasingly more at odds with society's prescriptions of the feminine ideal; and the academic roles and institutions to which women had gained access declined in number and prestige.\(^{80}\)

In fact, according to Graham, women's participation in academic life relative to men was actually higher in 1930 than in 1970. Women undergraduates, for instance, represented 47 percent of the national total in 1920 but then declined to an average of 38 percent over the next five decades and had not wholly recouped by 1976 when women accounted for 45 percent of the undergraduate population. Women college presidents, professors, and instructors represented a record 32.5 percent of the total in 1930, but thereafter women's share of such academic positions declined steadily until 1960.\(^{81}\) Susan Boslego Carter offers persuasive evidence that this last decline did not begin until World War II—an important refinement that is consistent with Frank Stricker's findings on women in the professions.\(^{82}\) Graham's analysis, nevertheless, makes it clear that whatever their numerical gains or personal successes in higher education, women as a class suffered during the middle decades of this century relative to men.

Rossiter agrees. She concludes that the period from 1920 to 1940 was one of social and psychological containment for academic women despite their overall numerical expansion. Furthermore, in Rossiter's analysis the "sociopolitical concept of prestige" was even more at the heart of discrim-


\(^{81}\) Graham, "Expansion and Exclusion," 764 and table 1, 766.

of one's work that scholarship produced by women was by definition a factor that put women at a disadvantage over time, Rossiter argues. Women's history have seriously reconsidered the impact of women's culture on American education. With the exception of an occasional section on leaders such as Catharine Beecher and Mary Lyon, even the most ambitious recent histories have neglected gender as a category of analysis. The potential for reformulating the history of American education, however, is great. Recent and ongoing studies by Brickley, Scott, Solomon, and others on the female academy and women's seminaries suggest that we no longer can think of the beginnings of secondary education in America exclusively as a utilitarian response to new economic roles for men. The very definition of adolescence in discussions of nineteenth-century youth is challenged by the work of Allmendinger and Clifford on the relationship of the female life cycle to work and education. Antler and Rosenberg have shown that the Progressive movement was not only the effort to tame private enterprise, as it long has been characterized, but was also an effort to redefine women's relationship to the public sphere. The research of Kohlstedt, Rossiter, and others confirms that gender was a more salient feature than any of the other social factors associated with the "culture of professionalism." It is now clear that the standard account of the rise of the American university and professional training is a partial truth at best.

This list is not meant to be exhaustive, nor are the studies cited more than a representation of a larger and impressive body of work now being pursued, much of which is yet unpublished. Critical gaps still exist; the

New directions

Over the past decade since Conway, Graham, and others first outlined a new research agenda for the study of women's educational history, significant efforts have been made to redeem that recognition. It remains to be seen, however, at what pace and to what degree this scholarship will change standard thinking about youth and education in America. To date, there has been little evidence that scholars working outside the field of women's history have seriously reconsidered the impact of women's culture on American education. With the exception of an occasional section on leaders such as Catharine Beecher and Mary Lyon, even the most ambitious recent histories have neglected gender as a category of analysis.

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83 Rossiter, Women Scientists in America, 216.
84 Ibid.
research on normal schools, vocational programs, and nonelite institutions outlined a decade ago is not much advanced, and only a few subgroups of women and geographic regions have been investigated with any thoroughness. Moreover, topics such as curricular and pedagogical reform, which have been a traditional concern in the history of American education, have not yet been addressed from a feminist perspective. Nevertheless, a vigorous assessment of the contributions of women scholars, educational reformers, and the profession of teaching to American feminism clearly is underway, and the story that Thomas Woody began to tell in the 1920s has found its voice in a new generation of women's studies scholars.

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