“Let Them Get Hazed”: Conditional Coeducation at Wesleyan University, 1872-1912

by

Aviv Shafir Rau
Class of 2019

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors in Sociology and American Studies

Middletown, Connecticut April, 2019
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.................................................................2

Introduction.................................................................................3

Chapter One:
Queering “The Quails”.................................................................14

Chapter Two:
“New Women,” Old Habits.................................................................38

Chapter Three:
“Fatherly Restraint” and Control Through Curriculum.................................62

Conclusion....................................................................................90

Bibliography..................................................................................96
Acknowledgements

Thank you Professor Boggs for the countless hours of meetings, conversations, and edits. Your mentorship and encouragement have transformed my understanding of the university and my role in it. Most of all, thank you for teaching me how to engage critically with the archive and reminding me to ground my findings in theory. I so deeply appreciate the time and energy you have devoted to this thesis.

Thank you to Suzy Taraba, Amanda Nelson, and everyone else at Special Collections & Archives for indulging my curiosity, answering my questions, pointing out relevant materials, and patiently guiding me out of every archival rabbit hole.

Thank you to the Sociology and American Studies departments for allowing me to explore the history of Wesleyan and giving me the frameworks to contextualize our institutional past. This thesis would not exist without the knowledge, guidance, and critical scholarship of Professor Boggs, Professor Karamcheti, and Professor Nasta.

Thank you Melissa Campbell for your edits and mentorship. You sparked my interest in writing women’s lives and, five years later, you are still offering amazing advice and suggestions.

Thank you to my friends, housemates, and partner for letting me chatter about my archival findings for hours on end. You all have helped me find a community and a home in this university. Emma Rose, Selene, and Vanessa, thank you for being such supportive, kind, and patient housemates. Coming home to our fun little space and getting to spend time with you all has made this project so much more manageable. Grant, thank you for reading my work, listening to hours of rants about coeducation, and providing necessary distractions and constant support. Aili, thank you for being the friend I’ve needed these past few months (and always). Tomas, thank you for the carrel conversations (sorry 3A!) and feedback and edits and distractions. Your companionship throughout this process has made it so much better. Leah, thank you for reading, editing, and offering to bring me food in this trying time. Mika, thank you so much for your thoughtful edits.

Most of all, thank you to my family. Ima, thank you for encouraging me and always being there for me. Your wisdom, support, and love have guided me through this process and this university. Dad, I appreciate your support throughout these past four years. Amit and Ohad, thank you for being my best friends. I love you all.
Introduction

In the fall of 2016, I watched the facade of my dream university crumble at news of Dean of Students Scott Backer’s termination over sexual misconduct. The Dean who oversaw Title IX proceedings, to whom I was expected to report my experience of sexual assault, was himself a perpetrator of sexual violence. University administrators kept the story under wraps, then denied culpability when *The Boston Globe* intervened and outing Backer.¹ President Michael Roth even declared there was “nothing amiss” in Wesleyan’s Title IX process despite the looming scandal.² As a white woman, this was the first time my university had failed me. But for students of color and others harmed by the university time and again, Backer was not the exception but the rule. Historically and to this day, white male perpetrators are rarely apprehended or held accountable—sometimes they are implicitly or even explicitly applauded—while the women and people of color they victimize ultimately leave Wesleyan.³ As I began exploring Wesleyan’s institutional past and the history of American higher education, I found injustices like these to be a pattern.

In 1832, Wesleyan’s first black student, Charles B. Ray, was made to leave after enduring vicious harassment from his white peers. The Board of Trustees acted only to bar black students from admission.⁴ While claiming to be a campus for all Methodist

---

men, the university adhered to a raced and gendered ideal. In conferring the right to study exclusively to white men, Wesleyan mirrored the nation’s restrictive citizenship rights. With voting and other privileges extending only to white men, law and discourse worked together to portray black men as emasculated. The result was a raced notion of gender and a gendered notion of race; the two identities worked in concert to promote white, male supremacy nationally. This same white, male supremacy shaped nineteenth century Wesleyan and higher education writ large.

In 1872, Trustees enacted a policy allowing women to attend the university for the first time—then revoked the policy decades later in 1912 amidst increasing male hostility. For the forty years they attended Wesleyan, women were subjected to harassment and discrimination from their male peers. Administrators and professors doubled down on misogyny by introducing sexist curricula, belittling women, and instituting quotas on their presence and achievements. Unlike their black peers, however, white women were able to clutch onto their whiteness amidst growing racial anxieties to demand a place in the university. Nevertheless, women’s attempts to lay claim to a liberal arts education fell flat when Wesleyan reversed coeducation in 1912.

Inspired by Kyla Schuller’s work on nineteenth century white womanhood as well as feminist and queer archiving efforts from Lisa Duggan, Gail Bederman, Lynn D. Gordon, and Wendy Kline, my work reflects on what it has meant to be a white woman in an elite institution. It identifies an enduring legacy of gender discrimination in the

---

6 Ibid.
8 For more on this, see: Arjini, Nawal. “The Trouble With White Women: An Interview With Kyla Schuller.” The Nation, November 26, 2018; Duggan, Lisa. Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American
university—a legacy that by no means excuses white women from the settler-colonialist, sexist, racist, and classist knowledge production that has taken place within hallowed halls. While the contours of my work extend only to my university, the reverberations of this archival project extend far past. The events Wesleyan experienced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are patterns entrenched in American higher education to this day; the circumstances surrounding my school’s founding are far from exceptional. Hence, I look to critical historians of American universities to recognize how Wesleyan’s early years echo national trends and even lay the foundation for the institution’s current politics.

In “The Naming of Yale College,” postcolonial scholar Gauri Viswanathan highlights that seventeenth century Puritans seeking funding for their university turned to benefactor Elihu Yale for his imperial wealth resulting from “twenty-eight years in India as a clerk with the East India Company.”

Despite political and religious rifts between the Puritans and Anglican Yale, their appeal to paternalism enticed the childless merchant. According to Viswanathan, the unlikely union was made possible because Mather appealed to Yale’s “patriarchal ambition to perpetuate himself.” Viswanathan suggests the “procreative imagery” employed by Mather allowed Yale to envision himself as, quite literally, a founding father.

---

10 Ibid., 86.
11 Viswanathan, 87.
12 Ibid., 88.
This instance cements imperial patrimony as foundational to one of America’s most elite institutions. Moreover, it situates universities as stand-in parents, a relationship that has proven to be an enduring historical phenomenon. In this thesis, I draw on Viswanathan’s concept of the “discursive continuity” of American universities to understand the masculine paternalism present in Wesleyan’s founding years—and its lasting legacy throughout the nineteenth century. In discourse and in discipline, American higher education employs the logic of school as family, *in loco parentis*, or *alma mater*. As Viswanathan argues, this paternalism is inseparable from the settler-colonial foundations of the American university and the imperial wealth on which colleges were built.

In *Ebony and Ivy*, historian Craig Steven Wilder confirms Viswanathan’s findings of universities’ paternal, imperialistic ambitions as a national phenomenon. Moreover, he identifies early American universities’ material connections with the slave trade and settler-colonialism. As Wilder puts it,

In short, American colleges were not innocent or passive beneficiaries of conquest and colonial slavery. The European invasion of the Americas and the modern slave trade pulled peoples throughout the Atlantic world into each others’ lives, and colleges were among the colonial institutions that braided their histories and rendered their fates dependent and antagonistic. The academy never stood apart from American slavery—in fact, it stood beside church and state as the third pillar of a civilization built on bondage.

---


14 Ibid., 90.


Although Wilder’s work focuses on the colonial era, similar dynamics wedded the nineteenth century academy to human suffering. Indeed, relationships like these existed in the founding of Wesleyan University in 1831.

In the late 1820s, Methodists lured to Middletown by the prospect of erecting a college there were greeted by a sleepy town with crumbling brick facades atop its hill. These were buildings formerly occupied by a second campus of Captain Alden Partridge’s Vermont-based American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy.\(^\text{17}\)

Desperately seeking a source of revenue for the town, which prior to the War of 1812 and subsequent embargos was a bustling port with links to the triangle trade,\(^\text{18}\) merchants and other successful Middletown men met with Methodist leaders in 1829.\(^\text{19}\) University historian David B. Potts marks this period as “the beginning of ‘the Methodist Age’ in American religious life;” for this reason, clergymen “were poised to embark on a decade of local collegiate activity” to train a new generation of Methodist leaders.\(^\text{20}\) Potts terms the nascent university’s Joint Board a “Middletown-Methodist alliance.”\(^\text{21}\)

Put simply, the founding of Wesleyan brought together Methodists’ wishes to evangelize with West Indies merchants’ desires to attract a new institution to their waning town. Many of Middletown’s merchants—who amassed their wealth through the transatlantic slave trade\(^\text{22}\)—became trustees of the new University.\(^\text{23}\) These ties underscore Wilder and Viswanathan’s message and reinforce that Wesleyan is not

\(^{17}\) Potts, 3.
\(^{18}\) For more on this, see: Hesselberg, Erik. "Vanished Port: Middletown and the Great Era of West Indies Trade." \textit{Wesleyan Magazine}, 2011.
\(^{19}\) Potts, 8-10.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 7.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., 14.
\(^{22}\) Hesselberg, para. 19-20.
\(^{23}\) Trustees who were also merchants involved in the West Indies trade include Elijah Hubbard and Lemuel Storrs. "University Charter and by-Laws." Wesleyan University, https://www.wesleyan.edu/about/leadership/charter-and-bylaws.html: para. 1.
exceptional but rather a microcosm of American higher education. Like other American universities, the school’s founding was shaped by financial overlap with the slave trade.

Official institutional histories downplay or altogether erase this past. Only black feminists have explicitly identified ties between Wesleyan and the slave trade in “Black Perspectives on Middletown,” compiled by black Wesleyan students and the Black Women’s League of Middletown in 1976. Further, Wesleyan histories fail to explain why the school introduced then discontinued the coeducation project, becoming an all-male institution once more from 1912 until 1970. Here, I present historical and political context to explain the material and demographic changes that egalitarian education brought to Wesleyan.

In 1872, Wesleyan University was still experiencing the effects of the Civil War. As Aaron Stagoff-Belfort notes in his 2017 Argus article, nearly 300 Wesleyan men fought in the war—most for the Union but a few dozen for the Confederacy—and about 30 had lost their lives. Trustees recognized the financial consequences produced by enlisted students’ absence. Amidst calls “for the University to live up to its Methodist roots,” referring to the sect’s embrace of egalitarianism, coeducation began in 1872.

The move toward coeducation coincided with greater employment and educational opportunities for women. National and institutional historians alike posit that the 1870s ushered an era of changing gender roles for white American women.

---

26 Stagoff-Belfort, para. 17.
While scholars disagree on what signaled this transition, many recognize that the Civil War cemented demographic changes. Additionally, Wesleyan’s coeducation can be explained in part by the proliferation of Methodist universities in the Northeast (Boston University and Syracuse University just two among them) by the mid-nineteenth century. Competition pushed Wesleyan to expand its student body in a bid for the denomination’s attention.  

In her 1972 thesis about the history of coeducation, Louise Wilby Knight echoes the understanding that fiscal and demographic concerns birthed Wesleyan’s coeducation project. She contends that, “Wesleyan accepted women for the same reason that it had recently adopted a grant and concomitant official affiliation from the National Methodist Episcopal Church: because it needed the money.” For the purpose of my work, which adopts a historical-materialist lens to analyze the forty years of coeducation at Wesleyan from 1872 to 1912, this theory—especially in conversation with the sociopolitical context of Wesleyan and the nation—is particularly useful.

But I also wish to push against Knight and Stagoff-Belfort’s approaches and bring a new angle to understanding coeducation. While previous histories of the coeducation era at Wesleyan have focused on the local to understand the phenomenon, my work looks to the nation, the university, and the individual as actors shaping emerging understandings of racialized gender. These notions were not divorced from constructs like race and citizenship. On the contrary, gendered ideals constituting masculinity and femininity for the late 1800s and early 1900s were part and parcel of a racialized citizenship project meant to subjugate people of color, namely black

---

28 Potts, 57.
29 Knight, 4.
Americans.30 For this reason, I consider national demographics alongside Wesleyan’s fiscal concerns as catalysts for coeducation.

Previous work by institutional historian David B. Potts and alumna Louise Wilby Knight has positioned Wesleyan’s women as victims of administrative and student sexism.31 I destabilize the binary simplicity of this narrative by complicating notions of “victim” and “perpetrator.” Further, I resist the instinct to imagine the histories of Wesleyan’s early students of color—all of whom were male—and white women as unrelated by revealing the interlocking systems of power such as class, gender, and race that shaped their lives.32 This work is not a definitive history of coeducation; rather, it unpacks the histories that have already been told, placing them in conversations with histories and theorizations of racialized gender in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.33 This thesis analyzes, mediates, and expands upon the stories we tell about ourselves as students, as a university, as a community.

In “The Gibson Girl Goes to College: Popular Culture and Women’s Higher Education in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920,” historian Lynn D. Gordon identifies shifts in white, middle-class femininity on late 1800s and early 1900s college campuses.34 In this thesis, I adopt Gordon’s division of early college-going women into the


31 Although students’ sexism has been far more scrutinized than administrators’ in these accounts

32 Here, I follow an approach laid out by feminist and queer theorists like Siobhan Somerville, Kyla Schuller, Gail Bederman and Lisa Duggan, all of whom recognize the ties between nineteenth century (and, of course, contemporary) articulations of race and gender.

33 In itself, the fact that I acknowledge gender as racialized and race as gendered brings a new angle to Wesleyan coeducation histories (and Wesleyan institutional histories at large). On the whole, retellings of the coeducation narrative never specify that the women attending Wesleyan in this era were all white. (While men, too, were white by and large, a few men of color attended Wesleyan in these years as well. Retellings of their stories do not interrogate questions of gender either.)

34 Gordon, 211.
“unsexed” student of the postbellum years and the refined “New Woman” of the Progressive Era. Implicitly acknowledging the links between university and society, Gordon assesses the role of sexological medical discourses and the women’s suffrage movement in reshaping the college woman for the 1890s.

My methodology relies on historical-materialist approaches to discursive analysis. When applicable, I strive to center student voices in my work in hopes of moving past a top-down institutional history approach. However, I acknowledge the caveats in doing so: For one, student voices preserved in the archive from this era are primarily white and male. Additionally, because of the in loco parentis that shaped Wesleyan’s administrative logics in the nineteenth century, the lines between student and institutional accounts are blurred by administrative paternalism and notions of “kinship.” In this thesis, I analyze student publications, administrative records, satirical pamphlets, local newspapers, and course catalogs alongside secondary sources with feminist and queer historical and cultural studies methods. While the relative lack of female voices preserved from this period is undoubtedly an “archival silence,” as historian Halee Robinson terms these gaps in archival knowledge that reinforce power and silence marginalized narratives, it is one I use to interrogate male attitudes at nineteenth century Wesleyan. In essence, I use these archival gaps to my advantage by contextualizing them and destabilizing their narratives. My methodology thus relies on the limited knowledge the archive can yield but does not stop there. I recognize and grapple with these limitations throughout. By doing so, I follow a Foucauldian tradition of genealogy that maintains we cannot know

---

35 Prendergast and Abelmann, 39.
the “truth” of the past.37 Throughout this thesis, I employ essentialist terms like “male” and “female” to signal an understanding of biological sex-as-gender produced by nineteenth century thinkers.38 Yet I reckon with this decision, acknowledging that it entrenches the gender binary. Ultimately, I model my understanding of gender and race as intersecting social constructs the academy sought to biologize in the nineteenth century on Siobhan B. Somerville’s conception as laid out in *Queering the Color Line*.39

In my first chapter, I identify forms of masculinity that administrators encouraged and students internalized, rejected, and reshaped in Wesleyan’s first forty years. Recognizing the porousness of the campus, I consider Wesleyan masculinity in tandem with national manhood of the Jacksonian and Victorian eras. I then turn to the coeducation moment of the 1870s, arguing that men “queered” their female classmates by portraying them as simultaneously hypersexual and desexed.

My second chapter describes the second generation of female college graduates. Unlike their predecessors, these women were nationally characterized as refined and respectable. Gordon and Kline suggest that these “New Women” were able to make strides their predecessors had not because of their position as white and middle-class in an era of racial and class anxieties.40 But Louise Wilby Knight and David Potts’s scholarship on Wesleyan history tells a different story. Knight identifies the 1890s onward as arguably the most hostile years of coeducation resistance. This tension

---

38 Somerville, 2. I also acknowledge that race is a socially constructed, but often biologized, identity. In the nineteenth century specifically, scientists looked to legitimize and entrench racial difference through the field of biology. In pointing this out, I reveal an understanding of race and gender as related and point out the academy’s role in shaping these nineteenth century conceptions of race and gender as biological realities rather than social constructions.
39 Ibid., 3.
40 Gordon, 223-224; Kline, 11.
between university and nation can best be explained by the administrative arm of coeducation resistance at Wesleyan, which I explore in my third chapter.

My third chapter begins with a discussion of *in loco parentis*, the paternalistic administrative paradigm Wesleyan and other institutions followed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. I investigate how this familial structure fused sovereign and disciplinary power upon women’s matriculation. At the moment Wesleyan coeducated, the curriculum evolved to include theories of racial and sexual difference in the natural sciences. I question why these drastic changes arrived in the same moment. Lastly, I end the chapter with a case study of Professor Wilbur Olin Atwater, who integrated such curriculum into his classroom.

By exploring coeducation, I aim to contribute to a growing body of scholarship on the era institutionally and nationally. In this thesis, I argue that coeducation has historically come at a price. At Wesleyan and elsewhere, white middle-class women achieved conditional acceptance in the university only by weaponizing normative racial and class identities. In the nineteenth century, administrators and male students resisted the democratization of the campus through every avenue available to them from classrooms and fraternities to satirical pamphlets and student publications. This thesis exists to point out the contradiction between surface level democratization and the reality of limited access. It attempts to move beyond a paradigm that positions the university as unmarked by local, national, and global structures of power. Therefore, this thesis rejects the purity professed by universities and embraces a historical approach motivated by the conviction that the pursuit of knowledge should not come at the expense of marginalized people.
Chapter One: Queering “The Quails”

In a 1871 letter to the editor of the *College Argus*, a Wesleyan alum expresses dissatisfaction with the prospect of coeducation set to begin the following year. Ironically, the author begins by insisting that he is not sexist—he is “an advocate of woman [sic] suffrage,” after all. Therefore, nothing he says can “be charged with prejudice,” he warns. Turning satirical, he flippantly writes, “Let [women] board in a club, sing college songs, get ‘hazed’ (just a little), ‘haze,’ in turn, (equally little) and, in short, enjoy all the real life of college.” For this author, the “real life” of college, rather than what happens inside the classroom, is the homosocial rituals of fraternities and societies. The invocation to haze women, albeit facetious, strikes me as particularly chilling. Here, the author invokes a hypermasculine power ritual and suggests that the only way women can be included in the university is by participating in this degradation. Like many of the other primary sources written by Wesleyan men against coeducation, this one waxes nostalgic on the previously homosocial nature of the Wesleyan campus and worries that women will impede on men’s social lives.

In this chapter, I interrogate antebellum white masculinity at Wesleyan University alongside male students’ reactions to the late nineteenth century coeducation project. As such, I divide my chapter into two distinct sections: the first describes the pre-coeducation moment and the second assesses the first decade of the coeducation project. In essence, the first deals with men and the second deals with the ways men perceived women at Wesleyan. Throughout, I consult student publications, administrative records, 

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
and humor files to move past a top-down understanding of institutional history. While I strive to center student voices, I acknowledge the caveat that archival sources authored by students are overwhelmingly male in this era. Further, I recognize that administrative and institutional paradigms (along with cultural scripts) define the college student. In this chapter, I make the case that the coeducation project worked to redefine white womanhood and manhood for the postbellum era. Wesleyan’s white women faced harassment from their sexist peers. Yet their presence in the university reinforced and expanded the school’s racist ambitions at a moment of national anxieties.

Despite a wealthy Board of Trustees, Potts characterizes Wesleyan’s students in the Jacksonian era as largely “from the industrious classes” and “small towns” nearby. He fails to mention, however, that they were all white. In essence, the university democratized access for working-class white students while denying an education to black students of all socioeconomic backgrounds. Yearly catalogues from the school’s first decade support Potts’s findings. The 1836-1837 catalogue notes that, “There is a mechanic’s shop, connected with the University, where a few students meet a part of their expenses by manual labor.” In other words, the Board of Trustees brokered a deal with local businesses to outsource students’ labor to Middletown establishments to finance their tuition. Before this arrangement, students possessed few options to make ends meet. Those who could not afford the college’s boarding costs (or chose not to live

---

45 While students certainly attempted to resist their characterization by administrators (and this resistance becomes a key topic in this chapter), in a Foucauldian understanding the disciplinary power of the institution provides students with contoured and restrictive identities.
48 Ibid., 24.
on campus) lived with families in Middletown or commuted from their homes. In the school’s first year, administrators proudly declare that, “more than one half of the students...board...at the boarding houses, chiefly on a milk and vegetable diet, and find it very conducive to health and comfort.” This statement suggests that roughly half of the school was from a background so humble they had to subsist on meager food to afford Wesleyan.

In her masters thesis about the construction of masculinity on another antebellum campus—Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia—Erin Stock Schwartz engages in historical-materialist archeology. Using artifacts from a nineteenth-century dormitory, Schwartz begins “Streaking and Straight Pins” with students as her focus. Schwartz examines the extent to which students perceived their manhood as counter to institutional understandings of genteel masculinity. Following in Schwartz’s methodological footsteps, my work asks how Wesleyan men reproduced nineteenth century American masculinity and how they interrupted this characterization.

In Wesleyan’s first forty years, regimes of masculinity infiltrated the campus as they did the nation. Founded in 1831, Wesleyan grew during the “Age of the Common Man,” a “self-made” figure who “toiled the earth and reaped the benefits of [American] independence.” Inspired by President Andrew Jackson, these men modelled self-sufficiency and often rejected formal education. As a Jacksonian ethos spread around

50 Ibid., 12.
53 Ibid.
the United States, colleges and boarding schools in New England created distinct youth subcultures and a sense of camaraderie among middle-class white students. Manifest destiny raised a generation of men who felt entitled to the young nation. In the Northeast, the mythic figure of the rugged individualist rose to prominence. Brimming with “Yankee ingenuity,” this invariably white man was as entitled as he was entrepreneurial. In a political climate dominated by men of this sort, college boys turned to power struggles between upper- and underclassmen—playful but indicative of brewing tensions—to carve out a social niche on residential campuses.

By the mid-1800s, antebellum college campuses comprised fraternities, secret societies, and other membership organizations with messages of brotherhood. These notions of brotherhood were limited only to students who could afford steep boarding dues. Even for those who purchased “brotherhood,” the bonds were shallow; men ultimately identified as individuals. Nonetheless, a sense of flux characterized the liminal space between childhood and manhood that was the college years and sometimes created “an uncertain sense of self.” Caught between competing standards of masculinity, gentility, and proletarianism, white men were afforded the college years as a moment to address these identity crises.

Inspired by Erin Stock Schwartz’s thesis, I look to administrative records of dormitory repairs to determine how students carved out their own spaces and identities. Often, these characterizations opposed administrative ideals of masculinity. After all,

57 Rotundo, 60.
these material tokens of antebellum masculinity are identified by administrators only as violations. Scrawled in pencil in the margins of a note from 1840 are the words, “has a gun & dishes” beside one room’s entry. The juxtaposition of guns—a symbol of nascent American masculinity—with dishes—a feminized object suggesting this male student was eating, and perhaps cooking, in his room and not with classmates—carries gendered and classed meanings. For one, dishes imply a break with the standard Jacksonian characterization of the young, white man because of their association with domesticity. They also interrupt the narrative of an elite college student eating in an ostentatious dining hall, evoking instead the image of young men eating humble meals alone in their rooms.

The occupants of this room were not the only ones to bring guns to school either. An inspection the following year, in 1841, found roommates with the surnames Halsted and Mattocks to be storing a gun in their dorm. Cross-referencing the surnames of identified gun owners Halsted and Mattocks with the fourth edition Alumni Record begins to fill archival knowledge gaps produced by the sparse administrative record. Ezekiel Halsted did not graduate from Wesleyan. The native New Yorker left Wesleyan “during Junior year” and tragically died at the age of nineteen in Wellfleet, Massachusetts; his cause of death is unlisted. His roommate George Mattocks, class of 1842, came from rural farming town Peacham in Vermont. No fraternity affiliation is

59 Early course catalogs, which I reference in my third chapter, even indicate that administrators encouraged young men struggling to pay for college to skimp on meals. They suggest dining on a milk and vegetable diet.
60 Alumni Record of Wesleyan University Edited by Frank W. Nicolson. 4 ed. New Haven, CT: The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Company, 1911.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 52.
listed for Mattocks, suggesting Mattocks came from the “industrious classes” well represented in the school’s early years.\textsuperscript{63} Given that his roommate Halsted was from New York City, I suspect the gun belonged to Mattocks.

While the presence of a gun in a college dorm might raise eyebrows among modern readers, antebellum college students bringing their guns to school is not uncharacteristic given this era’s notions of rugged masculinity. In the Jacksonian era, a “fighting spirit” resulted in men “protecting themselves, often violently” from perceived threats.\textsuperscript{64} Hence, guns embodied a masculinity that conforms to the Jacksonian age’s standard of rugged individualism. At least some men on Wesleyan’s campus, due to their humble backgrounds and gun ownership, identified with hegemonic perceptions of manhood of the time. These glimpses into students’ personal spaces, though fleeting, reveal a characterization that strays from most institutional accounts. After all, institutional archiving exists within a paradigm of erasing scandal. Like the university itself, the archive exists to produce knowledge; more often than not, that knowledge serves the institution housing the archive.\textsuperscript{65}

Though most student infractions are left recorded but undescribed in the 1834-1848 administrative record of “Merits and Demerits,” one note reads that a student named Lewis Seymour was, “Dismissed July 6, 1843 for an indignity to an officer.”\textsuperscript{66} Still others were dismissed on unmentioned grounds. Scribbled in a school record are the

\textsuperscript{63} Potts, 44.
\textsuperscript{64} Pugh, David G. \textit{Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America.} Contributions in American Studies. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983: 5. The so-called threats of this era, according to Pugh, were abolitionists, non-Protestants, indigenous people, and black Americans. In Connecticut, we know that Colt’s Manufacturing Company, headed by the mythic Jacksonian figure Samuel Colt, was founded shortly after this time in 1855. In her history of Middletown, Grace Chaifée notes a gun factory in the town as early as 1810.
\textsuperscript{65} My third chapter expands on the question of knowledge production in the university.
\textsuperscript{66} “Nineteenth Century Administrative Records,” Box 12.
cryptic words, “Dismissed for gross immorality.”67 Another inscription placed next to student Henry R. Mather’s record reads, “Dismissed for improper conduct.”68 While these students’ acts go unarchived, their sudden dismissal from campus despite the university’s financial struggle suggests their acts conflicted with the school’s Methodist values. Perhaps these boys were guilty of particularly violent hazing or some other sort of physical altercation.

In Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America, David G. Pugh investigates the Age of Jackson for its reshaping of masculinity. As Andrew Jackson rose first to military and then to political power, “[t]he frontier experience thus lodged itself in the American imagination.”69 The antebellum United States saw the rise of men modelled on Jackson, “men of action rather than staid commentators.”70 Even on the elite college campus, the ethos of the age found its form in hazing.71

Despite some students’ financial hardships, the mere fact of their college education would likely have branded Wesleyan men as privileged. Drawing on Pugh’s findings, I suspect that hazing allowed Wesleyan boys to conform to the rugged manhood idealized in their era. At the same time, hazing provided a way to rebel against their fathers’ generation, which included campus administrators, and impress their youth, energy, and vigor.72 While Wesleyan instituted strict disciplinary power modeled on in loco parentis, or the idea of school as family, hazing normally took place in student spaces—

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Pugh, xviii.
70 Ibid., 5.
72 Rotundo, 41.
away from the watchful eyes of administrators.\textsuperscript{73} The proliferation of fraternity culture at Wesleyan (and in the nation writ large) in the founding years further solidified the reign of hazing as a practice associated with bonds of brotherhood.

In her thesis about the first wave of coeducation, Louise Wilby Knight interviews alumni who recall experiencing hazing. Knight impresses the rigidity of Wesleyan’s social order and the centrality of hazing to it.

If a freshman addressed an upperclassman disrespectfully, if he walked on the grass instead of the campus sidewalk, if he walked down the north side [of] College Street instead of the south side, or if he failed to wear his beanie, he was given a paddling or awakened from sleep with a bucketful of cold water...Although hazing was harsh on underclassmen, the system had its benefits. For one thing, it gave students power, and power transforms insecurity into confidence and makes a man out of a boy.\textsuperscript{74}

Knight thereby suggests that hazing was a way of cementing one’s masculinity. A means of achieving adult manhood, hazing required one’s strict adherence to the campus social hierarchy. In exchange for their loyalty to this unofficial code of conduct, students in turn developed strength from their experiences—and the power to inflict these same experiences onto the new class of freshmen. Here and elsewhere, scholars emphasize the role hazing played in cultivating a campus culture and a strict hierarchy on the nineteenth century college campus.\textsuperscript{75} That this act—humiliating one’s peers, often violently—became a premier way to flaunt one’s masculinity is no coincidence.

In his essay about nineteenth century boyhood, E. Anthony Rotundo reveals that young, white, middle-class boys took part in the same violent bonding rituals as their


\textsuperscript{74} Knight, Louise Wilby. "The “Quails”: The History of Wesleyan University’s First Period of Coeducation, 1872-1912." Wesleyan University, 1972: 119-120.

\textsuperscript{75} Mikell, 12.
adolescent brethren.\textsuperscript{76} One such activity was “soak-about,” a game where “a group of boys tried to hit another boy in a vulnerable spot with a hard ball.”\textsuperscript{77} Like the “sociable sadism” of hazing and paddling, soak-about was a test of one’s masculinity tinged with sexual undertones.\textsuperscript{78} “In their cultural world, where gestures of tenderness were forbidden, physical combat allowed them moments of touch and bouts of intense embrace,” writes Rotundo, noting the intimate tendencies embedded in boys’ physical contact.\textsuperscript{79} Like Dana D. Nelson in \textit{National Manhood}, Rotundo argues these activities indicate the competitive individualism that lay beneath the facade of fraternity.\textsuperscript{80} Rotundo even goes a step further, declaring that, “boy culture encouraged a [white, middle-class] male child to become the master, the conqueror, the owner of what was outside him.”\textsuperscript{81} This usually meant women, people of color, poor folks, and non-human animals.\textsuperscript{82} But ultimately, boys had to prove their mastery over their white, middle-class peers as well for their masculinity to be secured.

Aside from the culture of hazing tied to the strong presence of fraternities on campus, Wesleyan men joined a capella groups, sports teams, and clubs based on academic disciplines.\textsuperscript{83} Some also wrote for \textit{The College Argus} or compiled the \textit{Olla Podrida} yearbook. According to David Potts, the primary university historian for Wesleyan, approximately 90 percent of students boarded in fraternity houses, though for those who could not afford the steep dues required for participation in Greek life (or who were

\textsuperscript{76} Rotundo, 20.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{79} Rotundo, 24.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 22; Nelson, 21.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 22-23.
\textsuperscript{83} Potts, 41.
turned away from the various fraternal organizations on campus), there was the Commons Club. The Club existed as an alternative to the Greek organizations and was known to house students of modest means. Unlike the fraternities and secret societies, whose influence was consistently strong in Wesleyan’s first forty years, the Commons Club’s existence was uncertain throughout much of this period.

In times when it did exist, the presence of the Commons Club countered chapters of at least six Greek organizations: the Eclectic Society, Psi Upsilon, Chi Psi, Delta Upsilon, Alpha Delta Phi, and Delta Kappa Epsilon. While each of these fraternities attracted individuals with slightly different personalities, for the sake of my historical-materialist approach I am more interested in the rifts created between fraternity members and non-fraternity students. The fraternities and secret societies—chief among them the Mystical Seven and Skull & Serpent—began as literary groups with academic goals but transitioned over time into social spaces. By the late 1860s, Greek societies published the *Olla Podrida* yearbook. References to the Greek organizations in the *Olla Podrida* distinguish between them and the literary societies, suggesting they no longer served similar purposes on campus. Within a decade, the literary societies that shaped early Wesleyan’s social life became “extinct” and were replaced by the fraternities. As more Greek organizations established houses near the

---

84 Potts, 200. This quote reveals a contradiction in Potts’s account. On the one hand, he claims that 90% of students came from modest family backgrounds. On the other, he reports that 90% of students boarded in fraternities, where they were charged steep dues—and did not have the option of waiving those dues as they did with tuition scholarships.
85 Ibid., 208-209.
86 Ibid., 45.
87 Ibid., 42.
90 Potts, 108.
campus—transforming Middletown’s High Street, once home to the city’s wealthy merchants, to a fraternity row—their influence grew as well.

In the university’s first four decades, the school’s Methodist denomination influenced not only the academic terrain but also students’ social lives. Rotundo observes that, “the religious ferment of the early nineteenth century spurred young people to use the format of the young men’s organizations for specialized purposes.” At Wesleyan, the Missionary Lyceum was perhaps the best example of this national phenomenon. A college club of missionaries, these students busied themselves with “the promotion of practical religion and...the investigation of the conditions of the heathen world with reference to its final evangelization through the gospel of Christ,” as one member wrote in an 1834 correspondence. In addition to these tasks, the young men collected artifacts for a “Missionary Museum” which they hoped would be “illustrative of the degradation and want of those whom we commiserate.”

In this same letter, the author requests artifacts for such a purpose. “Having been informed by Rev. Dr. Fisk that you have in possession a collection of African curiosities,” the author writes, he asks that the letter’s recipient pass along specimens to the club. Artifacts already in their collection included Native American curiosities of all sorts, “toothbrushes, hair stick, razors & cases,” and other personal items. That a group of undergraduates would be entrusted with these objects reveals their lack of monetary or symbolic value in this era. At the same time, the author emphasizes these objects’

---
91 Rotundo, 63.
92 "Missionary Lyceum Records." edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT: Special Collections & Archives: Box 1, Folder 1.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
importance for the missionary project. After all, he and his fellow Methodists endeavor to highlight Christians’ superiority to the so-called “heathens” from whom these artifacts were taken—often stolen.96 Administrative reports of merits and demerits record a number of students leaving their studies suddenly to travel as missionaries.97 Perhaps students were even responsible for hauling the stolen loot from their travels to campus.

The defensive hypermasculinity men flaunted through physical conquest—some of which criminologist Toniqua Charee Mikell even attributes to the Civil War’s ethos of brotherhood among soldiers, which post-war students sought to recreate—helps explain why men “queered” female students in the 1870s.98 When these first four female students—Jennie Larned, Phebe Almeda Stone, Angie Villette Warren, and Hannah Ada Taylor—enrolled in 1872, the school had not made plans to board them. From the offset, women’s boarding fees were higher than men’s.99 Potts notes that renting from landlords off-campus proved difficult for the women, suggesting opposition to coeducation in Middletown beyond the campus.100 In her thesis, Knight argues that, “Except for housing accommodations, the Wesleyan administration made few distinctions in their treatment of the men and women students,” citing a lack of Home Economics requirements for women as her proof.101 However, Potts reveals the women

---

96 Ibid. Conversations about artifacts are common in the Missionary Lyceum archives and they are significant for a number of reasons. For one, they reveal students’ fascination with archiving and collecting specimens—a fascination that predated the University’s own Museum of Natural History, itself a repository of stolen artifacts like these. These conversations further establish a link between the Methodists’ “missionary zeal” and hoarding (questionably obtained) objects from black and indigenous people. Lastly, it establishes the practice as long standing in Wesleyan’s first century, indicating that students worked to build collections even in the University’s humble first years. When the school did not have the means to expand its collection, students gladly took on the project for themselves.
97 “Nineteenth Century Administrative Records,” Box 12.
98 Mikell, 12-13.
99 Knight, 13.
100 Potts, 103.
101 Knight, 13.
were not allowed in the school’s gymnasium.\textsuperscript{102} Further, alumna Diana Silbergeld identifies campus discourses advocating “that the sexes should be segregated in libraries and labs.”\textsuperscript{103}

Archival sources suggest that male students perceived women’s entrance to the university as an affront to the masculine campus.\textsuperscript{104} In response to women’s enrollment, men doubled down on their notions of homosocial space. Even during coeducation, they carved out niches from which to exclude women socially and academically. The men crafted derogatory terms in which to refer to the women as a collective, namely as “the quails.”\textsuperscript{105} Their resistance was not just rhetorical, either. Horror stories of men beaten by classmates for so much as speaking to women, of men systemically ignoring their female Wesleyan classmates and instead preying on vulnerable high school girls, of harassing their new classmates to the point of arrest, paint a picture of coeducation as a dangerous force men felt the need to fight. There are so many of these stories embedded in archives that they seem more like the rule than the exception. Even as the institution moved to admit female students symbolically, functionally students and administrators alike closed their doors—whether fraternities, residence halls, or gymnasiums—to anyone who was not a wealthy, white, man.\textsuperscript{106}

The coeducation era unearthed three distinct periods where sexism changed in tandem with national trends, politics, and flows of capital.\textsuperscript{107} Louise Wilby Knight marks these three periods as times when coeducation was debated on campus, by alumni, and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} Potts, 104.
\item \textsuperscript{104} As my next chapter will reveal, administrators saw women’s presence on campus as a threat as well.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Potts, 104.
\item \textsuperscript{107} We can similarly draw a parallel between forms of racism on campus and the greater national and regional socio-political events that inspired them.
\end{itemize}
in the press: The first years of coeducation in the 1870s, again in the late 1890s, and once more in 1907 until the last female students graduated in 1912.\textsuperscript{108} For the purpose of my work, I use Knight’s chronology but expand on it thematically. I look to these years not only because the coeducation discourse was central to them but also because of their significance nationally. The late historian of women’s higher education, Lynn D. Gordon, similarly categorizes pre-1890s college graduates as distinctive from their turn-of-the-century counterparts.\textsuperscript{109} Moreover, each of these eras floated distinct ideals of white womanhood and manhood—particularly in contrast to a racialized other. The 1870s is the focus of this section of the chapter. In this first era, male students reacted to the coeducation project with conditional inclusion that veered on voyeurism. Men curiously watched and openly judged women while oscillating between desexing and hypersexualizing their new classmates, keeping with national tendencies to “queer” women seeking an education.\textsuperscript{110}

The beginning of coeducation spurred the reaction that had, at this point, become natural at Wesleyan in response to demographic changes. Just as they had done to Wesleyan’s first black student, Charles B. Ray, in 1832, white male students teased and irritated their female classmates.\textsuperscript{111} Students used every platform accessible to them to broadcast their distaste for coeducation. One such platform was the \textit{College Argus}, Wesleyan’s main student publication. Started four years prior to coeducation in 1868, by

\textsuperscript{108} Knight, 10. Technically 1909 is the year that Trustees decided to end coeducation but women on campus were allowed to stay until their graduation with the class of 1912. For the purposes of this thesis, I consider the timeline of coeducation to be the full span of years that any female students attended Wesleyan, from 1872-1912.


\textsuperscript{110} Kline, Wendy. "Motherhood, Morality, and the “Moron”: The Emergence of Eugenics in America." Chap. 1 In \textit{Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom}, University of California Press: 11.

\textsuperscript{111} Potts, 53-54.
this point the Argus had gained a steady student and alumni readership. Further, the newspaper allowed students and alumni to contribute anonymously. Hence, the views portrayed in the Argus are often unfiltered and are as such useful for analyzing campus discourse.

In a 1871 College Argus article titled “Female Education,” the anonymous writer takes an unusual approach to the question of coeducation. While he ultimately warns against coeducation, he readily acknowledges sexism as the reason coeducation at Wesleyan will backfire. Writing the summer before the matriculation of the first class of women, the author acknowledges, and almost laments, the unreasonably high standard to which these women will be held by “the eyes of all America...turned towards them.” The invocation of women being watched and judged suggests a culture of Wesleyan men surveilling their new classmates.

The author then speculates the verbal harassment that will plague these women and the claim that they “might be so daring as to unsex themselves.” First, the statement is imbued with a victim-blaming tone that shifts culpability from harassers to harassed. Thus, women are understood to be responsible for their own oppression and ill-treatment. Historian Gail Bederman affirms this view among men who “reacted passionately by ridiculing [women], prophesying that they would make themselves ill and destroy national life, insisting that they were rebelling against nature.” Hence, the attitude underlying this author’s statements represents a late-nineteenth century cultural phenomenon.

112 Potts, 43.
113 “Female Education.” The College Argus, 1871: 290.
114 Ibid.
Secondly, that the author does not even anticipate men feeling any attraction toward the women is peculiar. Instead, he invokes the notion that they might be seen as “strong-minded, masculine, unfeminine,” which serves as a queering of the Wesleyan woman.\(^{116}\) The queering epithets certainly contribute to women’s subjugation. But these distinctly gendered terms and the suggestion they constitute de-sexualizing the woman raises questions about sexuality on the campus at the time of the coeducation project. This theme, of harnessing homosociality to de-sexualize the coeducated woman, is one that features in many of the archive’s primary sources on coeducation.

Despite the anonymity of *Argus* articles, editors rendered the publication white and male only. Women were banned from editing the *Argus* at the time and, as content from this era suggests, did not contribute articles or even letters to the editor.\(^{117}\) In fact, even the articles that applaud coeducation efforts are written by men. For its white male contributors, the *Argus* was more than just a newspaper. The *Argus* was a major link of the campus and a paper trail of serious discourse as well as local gossip and humor. In fact, I scrutinize jokes about women in the *Argus* as microcosms of campus life. These jokes, which simply regurgitated existent power structures on campus by positioning women as punchlines and men as comics, contributed to the systematic exclusion of women from campus life. Take, for instance, this comment on “the Freshwomen” and men’s excitement at their arrival excerpted from an October 1872 issue: “The Senior Class motto is: ‘Go in lemons, if you do get squeezed.’ It is very popular, especially with the ladies.”\(^{118}\)

\(^{116}\) “Female Education,” 290.
\(^{117}\) Knight, 36.
\(^{118}\) “Syracuse University.” *The College Argus*, October 9 1872, 22-23.
One can only assume the “squeeze” described is a euphemism for groping. The reporter portrays the Wesleyan men’s fascination—especially that of seniors—with female freshmen. He hints at the uneven power dynamic between older men and younger women. The women are, of course, objectified; underlying this quote is the familiar theme of men watching women. But the nonchalance with which this joke (an import from Syracuse University) makes its way into Wesleyan’s premier student publication speaks volumes. For one, it symbolizes exchanges between campus publications and other news sources. University historian David B. Potts points to Syracuse, which “opened under Methodist auspices in 1871,” specifically as a competitor campus for Wesleyan.119 Syracuse, like other Methodist universities founded in the late nineteenth century, was coeducated.120 Nevertheless, the presence of groping jokes at this coeducated college too suggests that men harassed their female classmates at this Methodist institution as well.

Additionally, the content of the joke is a bizarre addition for a campus newspaper. The image of men “squeezing” the women is a thoroughly peculiar and unsettling one. Perhaps more upsetting is the notion that this joke comes from the first year of coeducation. Within weeks of women’s arrival on campus, they were already subject to the harassment described, and that harassment was set in stone by its inclusion in this popular publication.121 In other words, these men have no qualms about making their mistreatment of women known. On the contrary, they proudly gloat of their

119 Potts, 57.
120 Potts, 103.
121 Even today, we see the legacy of gendered trauma of this kind following freshman students. Today, the “Red Zone” refers to the first few months of freshman year wherein students are most vulnerable to sexual violence. As this piece illuminates, women seeking an education at Wesleyan in 1872 were subjected to toxic gender dynamics still pervasive on college campuses today.
behavior by cementing it in the *Argus* not just for their peers to see but to archive their actions. Additionally, the supposedly genteel Wesleyan boys offer this comment with no context nor explanation. Their assertion that the motto “is very popular” with women suggests female students desire the explicit touch described. Thus, men normalize behavior that might not otherwise appease an uptight Victorian readership with the timeless defense that the woman was asking for it.

The presence of jokes about homosexuality (or at least homosociality) in the *Argus* suggest that students were familiar with some concept of same-sex attraction and problematized it. A reference to Rome contained in one such joke ties the figure of the homosocial college student to an ancient practice. \(^{122}\) In essence, this reference allows us to track the making of the homosexual figure at nineteenth century Wesleyan. Further, it points out the romanticism of Greece and Rome as aspirational ancient civilizations prevalent in liberal philosophy at large and at universities in particular. For instance, Potts notes the curriculum emphasized Greek and Latin study at this time. \(^{123}\) Using the metric of homosocial ancient Rome to queer college boys cements their behavior as abnormal. The same process is then used to paint coeducated women as either desexed or hypersexualized. Whether referring to playful freshman boys or girls more interested in their studies than in men, nineteenth century issues of the *Argus* contribute to the production of the homosexual as an identity category for the campus. Thus, even before the figure of the homosexual was consolidated into a cohesive identity nationally, the campus was teeming with talk of queer behavior.


\(^{123}\) Potts, 39.
*Argus* stories from this era make tongue-in-cheek references to the homosociality that defined Wesleyan prior to its decision to admit women—and continued to define the campus once women arrived. One particular joke of this nature, published in an 1874 issue of the student newspaper, impresses the homosocial nature of men’s relationships: “An early riser, the other morning, passing a Freshman’s window, saw three of them, in full dress, asleep on one bed, with ball clubs near them, and chairs piled up against the door. ‘What means this stir in Rome?’,” reads the joke.124

The camaraderie between men on campus is satirized as a peculiar practice among young students, perhaps as a defense mechanism to distance upperclassmen from the intimacy of freshmen. The aforementioned reference to Rome cements their distaste for the intimacy by linking it to the feminized European.125 The passerby’s voyeurism—an act the reporter does not seem to find noteworthy—touches on another theme in student publications from this era: that of watching. Queered freshman boys become the object of fascination and are viewed, first by the voyeur and later, through this reference in the *Argus*, by the student body at large.

Men’s homosociality was taken as given by both student and administrative voices represented in Wesleyan’s archives. As I revealed earlier, rarely was the self-segregation of men into single-sex spaces problematized by administrators or students. In fact, even behavior that we as twenty-first century readers would consider “queer” was not questioned at the time. Yet women’s confinement to female-only spaces was threatening to male students and alumni because it signaled the possibility of a life apart from the male sphere—even on the male-dominated campus. It is precisely for this

---

125 Pugh, xvi-xvii.
reason that men, whether students, administrators, alumni, or reporters in the popular press, questioned the practice. The same men who barred women from their spaces—on The Argus staff, in Greek organizations, or in other campus activities—projected that exclusion onto the women. In the archives, women are typically the ones being watched. Widespread reports of the men standing under women’s windows and calling to them at all hours of the day, sometimes even throwing objects at them, fill Argus pages and make Wesleyan men the talk of other local publications.

In addition to campus and local publications, humor archives from the coeducation period preserve campus discourse. Like publications, humorous pamphlets were compiled by and for white men. Hence, while they do not allow us to access the voices of men of color or white women, they do reveal white men’s anxieties and expectations in a moment of growing campus democratization.126 For instance, an entire pamphlet prepared by students in 1873—the first full year of coeducation—is devoted to spreading racist ideas. This pamphlet, prepared for a mock program occurring on March 19, 1873, is titled, “Cummin’s N****r Minstrels Coming! Ponyists & Hermaphrodites.”127 The flyer promises a show featuring, “Pure and Genuine Imported Gentlemen of African descent.”128 Encouraging the attendance of their female classmates, the students, in exaggerated African American Vernacular English, urge, “Come pretty quails, you will,

126 While beyond the scope of my thesis, I wish to note another archival finding related to the racism of student publications in this era. A postbellum yearbook from 1868 lists among its student organizations a chapter of the “Kue [sic] Klux Klan” without context. The reference is almost certainly facetious. Nevertheless, its presence raises questions. Underneath the club’s name is a list of student surnames; most of these students came to Wesleyan by way of Northern cities. As Reconstruction shaped the South, so too were Northern students interacting with discourses of white supremacy. For more on this, see: The Wesleyan Olla Podrida. Edited by Psi Upsilon Phi Nu Theta, Alpha Delta Phi, Delta Kappa Epsilon Vol. 9, Hartford, CT: Press of Case, Lockwood & Brainard 1868: 44.
127 “Cummin’s N****r Minstrels Coming! Ponyists & Hermaphrodites.” In Humor, 19th century edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University.
128 Ibid.
you must. An if you don’t loike our sho may we becust!!”\textsuperscript{129} The program is a perfect metaphor for coeducation as a whole: Here, white men literally extend an invitation to their white female classmates to witness and engage in virulent racism. In the process, the men reproduce linked sexist and racist tropes. This flyer reveals the thread that held Wesleyan students, male and female, together for the forty long years of coeducation was indeed their shared complicity in white supremacy.

The starkest example of this dynamic persists in the program’s cast descriptions. While a satirical tone underscores each of the portrayals, white men are awarded flattering depictions. They are classified as womanizers, as nice guys, or as men just trying to fit in. First is George Bordey Dorset, who “has betrayed the gushing affections of nine tender and susceptible young ladies.”\textsuperscript{130} Despite what we know about men aggressively courting—or just harassing—their classmates by groping them, here Dorset is the one who dodges the women’s advances. Compared to a “modern Adonis,” the “daring young buck” is showered with affection.\textsuperscript{131}

Then Terrifying Best Lindsay appears, the stereotypical nice guy with the conventionally attractive “fair Roman nose.” “Nice boy, don’t smoke, nor chew, nor horse, nor drink, nor cus, nor nothing,” the authors write.\textsuperscript{132} Like any upstanding man of his time, Lindsay declares that he will not marry a Wesleyan woman: “Damfi’ll marry a quale without rocks,” he says.\textsuperscript{133} A traditionalist, Lindsay is preparing to become a

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
minister; he probably wishes to marry a housewife. Here, the Wesleyan women are positioned in opposition to the marriageable woman.\(^{134}\)

Another character is John Corndodger Welwood, the student hopelessly trying to be someone. While his social standing is satirized, Welwood is ultimately upheld as a man of solid character. He may “try to make the audience think he is somebody” in the strict pecking order of the Wesleyan social landscape, but he “never hazed any poor freshes” and “never troubles quails.” The author implies that these might even be the reason for his unpopularity.\(^{135}\) Nevertheless, Welwood “runs a S. S. for Irish children and is a promising theolog.”\(^{136}\)

Of the white characters\(^{137}\), the only one whose satire carries a dark undertone is Bowery Jack Adams; his Irish heritage is racialized and stereotyped. “He just ‘emigrated’,” announces the pamphlet, implicitly contrasting him with his American-born Anglo-Saxon classmates.\(^{138}\) Adams is declared “the only n*****r in this sho which are an Irishman.”\(^{139}\) While the minstrel show already suggests Adams—like his other white classmates—is performing blackness, his supposed blackness is further exaggerated by the use of the racial slur, which does not appear in other white men’s descriptions. The pamphlet also refers to Adams as an “automatic beer barrel,” drawing from Irish stereotypes.\(^{140}\) The unpleasant characterization continues when Adams is called “a lovely dancer, such a graceful form,” which serves to queer the student.\(^{141}\)

---

\(^{134}\) Indeed, sources including Potts’s nineteenth century institutional history indicate that relatively few Wesleyan alumnae chose marriage and a domestic life. Faced with the binary of career versus family, many alumnae took the route of rich careers—many as educators or administrators in women’s colleges.

\(^{135}\) "Cummin’s N*****r Minstrels Coming! Ponyists & Hermaphrodites."

\(^{136}\) Ibid.

\(^{137}\) Or at least of characters that we today consider to be white

\(^{138}\) "Cummin’s N*****r Minstrels Coming! Ponyists & Hermaphrodites."

\(^{139}\) Ibid.

\(^{140}\) Ibid.

\(^{141}\) Ibid.
The black character, meanwhile, is altogether villainized. Named Cuffee Smiley, he is described as the most despicable man. “The meanest man, the lowest thing, the biggest tell-tale, the greatest skidder, the fastest rider,” is also, not coincidentally, a dark-skinned black man.\textsuperscript{142} Indeed, the pamphlet calls him, “the blackest n*****r,” tossing yet another epithet at the character.\textsuperscript{143} Despite the description referring to him as, “the most contemptable [sic] cuss in this...seminary,” it is unclear whether Cuffee’s traits are projected onto a black person or a white person appearing in blackface.\textsuperscript{144} His depiction ends with a pathologizing assertion that Cuffee “stinks so of toadyism, he cannot be brought out.”\textsuperscript{145} The transparent racism in Cuffee’s description suggests his blackness is the root of his issue. His blackness is indeed the immutable characteristic and, for the racist Wesleyan men, this identity is associated with assumptions of bad character.

Not only should we compare Cuffee’s depiction to those of the white men featured but also consider him in contrast with Jerkey Balbus Hamblen, the only woman in the cast. While she, too, is satirized and painted in a sexist light, her good character nonetheless shines through. She is described as graceful and delicate, with “gait like a rail fence on a bust.”\textsuperscript{146} The authors note her wisdom, too: Jerkey “is already elected to chief professor of Mathematics in a female seminary.”\textsuperscript{147} Her presence in the troupe is described as ornamental, as her role in the performance is to “feed the Monkey, as that is the only position on troupe she would consent to fill, or that was appropriate to her.”\textsuperscript{148}

\begin{flushright}
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid. Even if the pamphlet is referring to someone who is actually black, we do not know if this person is a student or Middletown resident.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
\end{flushright}
While Jerkey is undeniably held back by the authors’ sexism, the character is nevertheless made part of the troupe. Further, her depiction invokes her innocence, an age-old trope associated with white women. Jerkey, therefore, serves as a foil to Cuffee. While his blackness suggests he is irredeemable, Jerkey’s whiteness—coded in the description of her “gait,” “practical wisdom,” and her role as a “poetess”—suggests she could become part of the collective, even if her gender is a disadvantage.  

In this chapter, I combined seemingly contradictory analyses of white masculinity in the pre-coeducation era at Wesleyan and white femininity during coeducation. Jacksonian masculinity and a hypermasculine campus culture of hazing defined white manhood at antebellum Wesleyan, as did hostility toward white women and men of color alike. This was the climate Wesleyan women faced upon coeducation, wherein men “queered” their classmates by portraying them as both hypersexual and desexed. Ultimately, however, Wesleyan women’s race (and, relatedly, their class) allowed them some promise of belonging in the university in the 1870s. In my next chapter, I scrutinize post-1890s Wesleyan to understand why resistance to women’s education grew on campus (even as it declined nationwide), ultimately reversing coeducation in 1912.

149 Ibid.
Chapter Two: “New Women” and Old Habits

In the 1895 *Olla Podrida* yearbook, a section called “X=Tracks from the Diary of a Freshman Quail” satirizes a female student’s musing. Written by male editors of the yearbook, the entry mocks a young college woman and includes gushing about her “perfectly lovely” professor and various male classmates.\(^{150}\) While the passage tells us little about women’s day to day life at Wesleyan, it articulates male students’ fears and expands upon the simultaneous de- and hypersexing I identified in the last chapter. The passage also introduces another anxiety among male students: preferential treatment for their female classmates. In the aforementioned professor’s class, the student remarks that “he always helps us right through our recitations.”\(^{151}\) Secondary and archival sources alike reveal that women excelled academically throughout their tenure at Wesleyan.\(^{152}\) Louise Wilby Knight even notes administrative attempts in 1899 to establish “a separate quota for Phi Beta Kappa Keys” for women.\(^{153}\) By accusing a professor of assisting women with exams, the men not only suggest that women are cheating but also that professors are helping them do so. Accusations like these are common in archives from the 1890s onward, as men intensified resistance to coeducation in these years.

In this chapter I look to post-1890 coeducation at Wesleyan, assessing the extent to which Wesleyan’s second generation of female students identified themselves or were identified by outsiders with the “new woman” trope Wendy Kline and Lynn D. Gordon

---


\(^{151}\) Ibid., 193.


\(^{153}\) Ibid., 35.
describe. Amidst growing race and class anxieties of the 1890s, white middle-class women nationwide used their normative positionality to gain acceptance at the expense of people of color, immigrants, and the working class. \(^{154}\) While I note national trends—including the increased tolerance of women on most college campuses—I acknowledge their discontinuity on an institutional level. Despite hostility from male classmates falling nationwide, Wesleyan saw heightened resistance to coeducation in these years. For one, Knight claims the increased focus on athletics and especially football is to blame. \(^{155}\) Gordon suggests that coeducated schools nationwide embraced a segregationist logic socially and academically in these years. \(^{156}\) At least in part, I believe the complicity of Wesleyan administrators in creating a hostile atmosphere for women explains heightened tensions in these years. \(^{157}\)

Existent histories of coeducation at Wesleyan downplay the importance of the years between the late 1870s and early 1890s, suggesting these were calmer years on campus. \(^{158}\) The number of female students remained low and many of them “already had some tie with Wesleyan through a father or brother,” according to Knight. \(^{159}\) Despite my project’s focus on the periods directly before and after this one, I hesitate to call this time uneventful. I suspect this period was only relatively calm compared to the particularly tense times before and after, but its resistance to coeducation was not entirely absent.


\(^{155}\) Knight, 51-53.


\(^{157}\) This dynamic, of administrators working with male students to alienate Wesleyan women, is one I explore at length in my third chapter.

\(^{158}\) Knight, 30.

\(^{159}\) Ibid. Knight and Potts’s lack of attention to these years imply that they were much calmer.
In their February 28, 1883 feature on “Ladies at the University,” the publication *The Ladies’ Home Journal* reports on the state of women at Wesleyan. Quoting university President John W. Beach,\(^{160}\)

It is eight years since young ladies were first admitted to equal privileges with young men in this college. At present we have in college one hundred and eighty-four students; of these fourteen are ladies. A stranger visiting us would hardly observe or learn that we have anything but a young men’s college...The whole spirit of the college is very much the same as if no young ladies were here...They are welcomed to their privileges in the college as heartily as if they were young men [emphasis mine].\(^{161}\)

His final line reveals another way in Wesleyan women were both de- and hypersexed.

President Beach boasts about how the university nobly allows women to study there. But in the same breath he compares the female students to “young men” and claims that the school feels like a men’s college. “A few ladies in the chapel, here and there a few in recitations,” Beach adds, “could very easily be taken for persons accidentally present.”\(^{162}\)

The school’s few women stick out in the chapel and seem out of place even to the university president in the overwhelmingly male environment. Moreover, they do not resemble students due to their gender.\(^{163}\) But they also blend in with the men—at times even becoming like them, at least metaphorically as Beach suggests. President Beach’s sentiments unearth a glaring contradiction: Is the female students’ gender their foremost characteristic or altogether negligible? Although President Beach, students, and alumni alike insist the university maintains its “whole spirit”—its unapologetic manliness, in


\(^{161}\) "Ladies at the University." In *Coeducation Collection*, edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT: Special Collections & Archives, 1883.

\(^{162}\) Ibid.

\(^{163}\) Here, Beach invokes the student as a gendered figure always assumed male. Elsewhere, such as in the Charles B. Ray case, the student was rendered not only male but also white.
other words—despite coeducation, they are far too threatened by the presence of women for this to be the case. By calling Wesleyan a “young men’s college,” President Beach makes a rhetorical choice that brands the university as masculine despite the presence of women.164

The following year, the Junior class succinctly expresses their resistance to coeducation in the 1884 *Olla Podrida*: “Heaven forbid that any one of us should win the heart of a co-ed. Let such an one be consigned to everlasting disgrace. Our voice and vote are ever opposed to the co-ed. system.”165 These archival glimpses highlight that hostility toward Wesleyan women did not go away in the 1880s, even if it was comparatively less pronounced than in the decades preceding and following.

The relative archival silence of the 1880s also serves to emphasize the growing hostility of the 1890s, which brought changes to campus and to the nation. The number of female students at Wesleyan increased significantly beginning in 1891, mirroring national trends.166 Two years earlier, in 1889, the school purchased a dormitory for women called Webb Hall.167 The sudden existence of a centralized women’s space—recall that before this women boarded with Middletown families, commuted from home, or lived in a building the university flipped from president’s home to boarding house—meant that women could finally cultivate campus social lives.168 Women organized a baseball team, joined sororities, and would congregate “in the parlor during the winter and tell ghost stories.”169

---

164 “Ladies at the University.”
166 Ibid.; Gordon, 214.
167 Knight, 30.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid., 32.
Nationally, Wendy Kline identifies “the growth of corporate capitalism” in the 1890s, which “threatened to annihilate the nineteenth-century ‘cult of the self-made man.’” In other words, the Jacksonian self-sufficiency that characterized early and mid-nineteenth century men disappeared with the fiscal changes of the 1890s. The crisis in capital mirrored a perceived crisis of white masculinity: white men sought a scapegoat to explain their perceived lack of opportunities. Immigration waves, increasing civil rights for black Americans, and the uptick in women’s education produced anxieties for white men. Feminist theorist Lisa Duggan, in her work *Sapphic Slashers*, corroborates the importance of the 1890s for changing social and political narratives: “The 1890s were a crucial decade for such national meanings, as a newly continental United States joined its formerly warring parts to its recently closed frontier.” The closing of the frontier that Duggan mentions carried symbolic and political importance in these years by rendering the American expansion project complete and shifting attention toward a global frontier. Imperialistic foreign policy abroad produced nativist and racist sentiments domestically.

In *Manliness & Civilization*, cultural historian Gail Bederman claims that, “Americans were obsessed with the connection between manhood and racial dominance” in these years. She notes an American tendency “to explain white supremacy in terms of male power” by vilifying black men and portraying them as

170 Kline, 8.
171 Gordon, 225; Kline, 8-9.
173 I return to this idea in my third chapter while discussing Professor Wilbur Olin Atwater’s quantification of the calorie and the foreign policy implications of his knowledge production.
174 Kline, 8-9.
hypersexual. The era “encouraged white middle-class men to develop new explanations of why they, as men, ought to wield power and authority,” in other words. Duggan describes a “national whiteness of the 1890s,” an adaptable and contested “racial sameness asserted by the legal and social identity ‘white’” undercut by increasing “class and ethnic distinctions among waves of European immigrants.”

When the recession of the era accentuated class, middle-class white women began asserting academic and career ambitions. In a society still seeped in Victorian ideals, namely that of the sexes’ “separate spheres,” women with the financial standing to pursue an education were often branded “unsexed” or “mannish.” As I revealed last chapter, these women were queered by the white middle-class men seeking dominance over them. To resist their queering, the “new women,” as they were called, employed a discourse of civilization and paradigm of gentility to brand them equal with white men and fight the sexism of Victorian gender ideals. Bederman explains that Darwinian ideas about evolution informed this view in a “strange mélange of racism and egalitarianism.” While promoting gender equality, white women believed that “civilized and savage races occupied different positions on the evolutionary ladder.”

Kline claims fear of these “new women” manifested in white, middle-class anxieties about fertility. The era saw “falling marriage and birth rates, and a rising number of divorces.” Popular narratives blamed these changes on college women,

---

176 Ibid.
177 Ibid.
178 Duggan, 14.
179 Kline, 10-11.
180 Ibid.
181 Bederman, 167.
182 Bederman, 123.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
185 Gordon, 215.
especially the independent “pioneers” of coeducation in the Victorian era. Coupled with wider concerns about “the growing presence and perceived virility of African Americans, immigrants, and the working class,” white men argued that white women seeking careers and education were abandoning their duty as mothers and branded them “race criminals.” Concerns about white women’s (in)fertility had always existed. After all, positioning middle-class Anglo-American women as mothers of the Republic—caretakers for the white young men assumed to shape the young country—had been the bedrock of racialized gender relations in the United States since the eighteenth century.

As late as 1871, an Argus article refers to Wesleyan’s female students as “the mother of coming generations.” But the changing times of the 1890s required an update to the feminine ideal by portraying middle-class white women as abandoning their race and gender duties.

Wesleyan women were characterized by others and described themselves in the exclusionary paradigms of their era. They were not the only ones to do so; feminist thinkers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman framed calls for white women’s equality in the same way. “White women’s inclusion in civilization, under [Gilman’s] scheme, was predicated on the exclusion of nonwhite men and women,” Bederman claims. Whether implicitly or explicitly, Wesleyan’s women reproduced the “new woman” trope at the expense of people of color in their attempts to carve out a space in the male-dominated university.

---

186 Ibid, 217.
187 Kline, 10-11.
188 Cruea, Susan M. "Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement." General Studies Writing Faculty Publications 1 (2005): 188.
189 Knight, 10.
190 Bederman, 168.
Take, for example, the communities they joined in the 1890s. Sororities proliferated as an alternative to all-male fraternities that controlled the campus social scene.\(^{191}\) Knight explains sororities became a way “to emulate the men in their traditions and thereby confirm in the men’s eyes, as well as in their own, their legitimacy as members of the college community.”\(^{192}\) Sororities in this age were “almost exclusively white and Protestant,” of course, and their whiteness was maintained through restrictive clauses.\(^{193}\) Scholars Jessica Harris, Ryan Barone, and Hunter Finch explore historic and enduring whiteness in fraternity and sorority culture. As membership organizations, sororities and fraternities embody “how whiteness functions as property interests.”\(^{194}\)

Drawing from scholar Cheryl Harris, the writers outline four functions of whiteness as property they identify in Greek societies: the absolute right to exclude, the right to use and enjoyment, the rights of disposition, and reputation and status property.\(^{195}\) Like whiteness itself, Greek society membership “incurs privileges and benefits reserved for those who are white,” among them amenities in sorority and fraternity houses and well-connected alumni networks.\(^{196}\)

Beyond their homogeneous demography, sororities historically and presently produce gender ideals. As scholar Lisa Handler writes in “In the Fraternal Sisterhood: Sororities as Gender Strategy,”

Sororities contribute to a gender strategy in two ways. First, by joining a sorority, women engage, individually and collectively, in constructing themselves as women. Notions of womanhood are very much shaped and bound by the

---

\(^{191}\) Knight, 33; Gordon, 218.
\(^{192}\) Ibid.
\(^{194}\) Ibid., 17.
\(^{195}\) Ibid.
\(^{196}\) Ibid., 22.
sorority’s needs and purpose and the sorority’s relationship to Greek life and campus culture. Second, sororities are a strategy for dealing with the complexities of gender(ed) relations—both among women and between women and men.\footnote{Handler, Lisa. “In the Fraternal Sisterhood: Sororities as Gender Strategy.” \textit{Gender and Society}, April 1995, 9 edition: 237.}

On Wesleyan’s campus, sororities served to unite women. Hence, they proliferated from the 1890s onward to counter the exclusion women faced.\footnote{Knight, 64.} Further, I suspect that women latched onto sororities and other elements of a rich social life to demand inclusion at Wesleyan by positioning themselves as students making the most of the residential campus. Gordon adds that this occurred at many coeducated schools, where women modeled their communities after extracurriculars at women’s colleges.\footnote{Gordon, 218.} When the school failed to provide activities and social organizations for them, women took matters into their own hands and created independent communities. In other words, women reacted to exclusion in campus social life with racially exclusive spaces of their own.

In a rare \textit{Olla Podrida} section women wrote in 1887, we glimpse students’ understanding of their own place in the university. Women students remind readers that their “fathers founded” the college in one line of their poem as they critique their unequal treatment.\footnote{Knight, 37; Randall, W. T., ed. \textit{The Wesleyan Olla Podrida}. Vol. 28, 1886: 35.} Here, their call for better treatment rests on their social capital. The line also reminds us that many of the women were related to prominent faculty members, administrators, and other men associated with the campus.\footnote{Knight, 30.} Even if Wesleyan seemed like a birthright, their arrival was met with hostility from classmates. In her thesis, Louise Wilby Knight reproduces excerpts from the poem:

\begin{quote}
Here girls, behold yourselves, “admitted,” then,
\end{quote}
“To equal privilege with the gentlemen,”
And pour out sobbing thanks on bended knees,
To festive Faculty and grave Trustees,
Tho’, true, this college where we are allow’d,
Our fathers founded and our friends endowed [author’s emphasis].202

Once they have established ties to the university’s founders, they begin a critique. The authors refer to Wesleyan as the college where they are “allow’d.” Here, their word choice mirrors conditions on campus: women are able to enroll but feel unsupported in doing so. Indeed, the following lines confirm that women cannot “deceive” themselves by claiming “our lot is one of perfect bliss.”203 At Wesleyan, they experience “exclusions, warnings” and other such hindrances on their learning.204 Perhaps most significant is the women’s oscillation between genuine appreciation for Wesleyan and reserved critique. Even their criticisms follow a genteel paradigm by flaunting connections to university benefactors. The poem—especially as one of the few instances of women’s voices represented in the Olla Podrida—perfectly encapsulates the contradictions women saw in their mistreatment. Mirroring the “new women” of the 1890s, the women argue that their mistreatment is at odds with their familial connections (which are, of course, implicitly related to their class and race).205 By emphasizing their privileges to complain of their mistreatment, white middle-class Wesleyan women play up their respectability in a coded way reminiscent of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s civilization discourse.206

Despite women adopting discourses that emphasized their race and class, however, archival and secondary sources suggest men’s hostility only grew between 1890

---

202 Ibid., 37; Randall, 35.
203 Randall, 35.
204 Ibid.
205 Kline, 10.
206 Bederman, 168.
and 1912.\textsuperscript{207} Just as women were becoming more accepted at colleges nationwide, Wesleyan men escalated in their efforts to reverse coeducation.\textsuperscript{208} While we cannot know definitively why men strengthened their resistance when they did, institutional and national histories provide compelling theories. For instance, Knight argues a culture of athletics, and particularly football, correlated with growing male antagonism.\textsuperscript{209} She calls the 1890s “the height of Wesleyan’s zeal for football,” explaining that the sport determined a school’s prestige as the number of colleges increased. “Football was an agreeably masculine means of proving prestige by performance and association,” writes Knight. Moreover, Wesleyan’s athletic status among the “Little Three” schools modeled on the Ivy League was complicated by its coeducation. After all, “Williams and Amherst admitted no women.”\textsuperscript{210} Knight therefore speculates that students overcompensated their masculinity and ostracized women while administrators bolstered the reputation of athletics to impress the manliness of campus in these years.

Although the particular anecdote I highlight does not address athletics directly, it reveals the hypermasculine atmosphere on campus in these years. The story, which comes from Knight’s thesis, occurs in 1902, after male students created an informal policy of ignoring the coeds:

One evening as Arthur [a male student] was walking with Edith [a coed], a wagon pulled up beside them, and four seniors jumped out. They seized Arthur, threw him in the wagon, jumped in themselves and drove away, leaving Edith standing alone and confused on the sidewalk. In the back of the rumbling wagon, the seniors bound and gaged [sic] their captive. When the wagon stopped, they unloaded him, and, in his words, “gave me a good paddling.” Some seventy years

\textsuperscript{207} Knight, 39.
\textsuperscript{208} Gordon, 217.
\textsuperscript{209} Knight, 54. Elsewhere in her thesis, Knight mentions a student group that formed to fight coeducation called the P. D. Q. Society. The P. D. Q., which stands for “press the damsel[s] quietly,” comprised football players as well as an \textit{Argus} editor. From this, we glean that the captain of the football team in these years was at the forefront of the fight against coeducation. For more on this, see Knight, 39.
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 54-57.
later, [Edith] gave her version of the incident: “he was taken to a remote spot in the country and severely beaten.” The seniors warned Arthur never to walk with a “quail” again, but he ignored the warning. As he saw it, seventy years later, “I wasn’t going to let them tell me who I could walk with and who I couldn’t.”

By retaliating against men who did not follow their rules, students demarcated a clear line between the sexes. Their rituals sent the message that women were not welcome at Wesleyan and were not to be tolerated. This anecdote and others like it also reveal another intention. Male students used homosocial rituals to build solidarity against their female classmates. While the nature of these retaliatory acts might seem “queer” to a modern reader, they were a way to maintain white masculinity—and, by extension, heterosexuality—at the turn of the century. Even if the men’s paddling and gagging raised eyebrows at the time, it was preferable to tolerating the women. The fraternity culture I discussed in my last chapter was certainly influential in bringing this aggressive masculinity to Wesleyan, as was the growing focus on athletics that Knight highlights in these years.

But athletics was not the only reason backlash against coeducation rose in these years. Gordon acknowledges key differences between coeducated campuses and women’s colleges at the time. She further identifies growing numbers of women at coeducated schools, cementing the idea that men felt threatened demographically as a national phenomenon. Gordon highlights a key curricular difference between coeducated and single-sex schools: “Although periodicals repeatedly argued for a ‘woman’s curriculum’ to be associated with women’s colleges, coeducational universities proved far more receptive to the idea.” While Knight and Potts see Wesleyan’s refusal

---

211 Knight, 121.
212 Ibid., 54.
213 Gordon, 217.
214 Ibid., 219.
to enact a separate curriculum as exceptional (and, they imply, even noble), archival sources confirm efforts to feminize the curriculum in these years.\footnote{Knight, 14; Potts, 104.} At the very least, students, alumni, and professors alike extensively discussed the benefits such a curriculum would bring.\footnote{I return to this discussion at length in my third chapter, where I introduce Professor Wilbur Olin Atwater’s personal manifesto about women’s curriculum and the domestic science movement.} Like Gordon, I scrutinize Wesleyan’s curriculum and suggest that changes in the classroom led to growing student hostility in these years. In fact, I spend my next chapter unpacking this very idea as well.

An issue of *The Wesleyan Argus* from 1900 implies that access to education might desex women, emphasizing the masculine underpinnings of the university. Moreover, it confirms the discourse of a separate curriculum for women reached Wesleyan. Wesleyan men latched onto claims of desexing even as men nationwide abandoned this tactic.\footnote{Gordon, 211.} In response to “conflicting newspaper statements,” the author quotes from the New York Young Alumni Report on Coeducation.\footnote{"Digest of the New York Young Alumni Report on Co-Education." *The Wesleyan Argus*, 1900: 171.} Known for staunchly rejecting coeducation, the young alumni wish to end egalitarian education on the grounds that,

> For economic as well as for social reasons, we may contend against the duplication of libraries and laboratories and museums and faculties in order to bring about an unnecessary separation of the sexes in education...In New England, to introduce women into what has been for a century (or half a century as in the case of Wesleyan) a men’s college, with no change in customs and atmosphere, to allow them to think that the adoption of masculine tradition is essential to feminine emancipation—this is to inflict a cruel wrong on young womanhood.\footnote{Ibid. Here, the men introduce the idea of gender segregated classrooms. I return to this proposal in my third chapter.}

Seemingly altruistic, the New York Young Alumni weave an argument that positions them as champions of women’s rights. They begin by stating their desire for “the
broadest and highest and freest instruction for women." But just a sentence later, they accept that libraries, laboratories, and museums must be gender segregated. They cite material concerns and “social reasons,” recognizing the costliness of duplicating resources. That these men cannot conceive of gender integrated classrooms or reallocating resources confirms the marginalization of women at Wesleyan. They stubbornly insist the issue is regional, too; New England cannot handle a threat to the masculine university which has come to define it. In their eyes, the elite New England university exists as a site of male camaraderie and fraternity.

The Young Alumni conclude with a suggestion for “the permanent good of the college and the young women themselves”: “The establishment, as soon as possible, of a system of co-ordinate education, a women’s college organized within the university, where the young women may be afforded equal standards, opportunities and degrees, but a distinct collegiate and social life.” The economic concerns alumni cite lines earlier disappear with their suggestion to operate a separate women’s college. The crux of their reasoning lies in the phrase, “a distinct collegiate and social life.” Indeed, what happens outside the classroom—that idealized brotherhood between the men on campus—is what must not be tarnished by women’s presence. They even confirm this by recommending the university “be petitioned to limit the matriculation of young women to the number now actually in college.” Unsatisfied with more than a dozen or

---

220 Ibid.
221 Ibid.
222 Yet countless coordinate colleges and coeducated universities flourished in New England at this time.
224 Ibid.
225 Recall the homosocial atmosphere and male camaraderie on campus that I discuss in the beginning of my first chapter
two women students—although rarely more than a dozen women attended Wesleyan in any year of the coeducation project—the Alumni seek to institute a quota. Furthermore, they believe if seven years do not produce funding for a coordinate college, “coeducation at Wesleyan should cease.”\(^\text{227}\) Their reasoning is simply that the university “be maintained...as...a thorough-going men’s college.”\(^\text{228}\)

In a letter of protest to the Board of Trustees after they proposed ending coeducation and founding a separate women’s college, a group of Wesleyan alumnæ strategically play up their class privilege to establish themselves on equal footing with male students.\(^\text{229}\) “For no more loyal children of Wesleyan live than are numbered among her hundred and sixteen women graduates,” argue the women, using a respectable tone to flaunt their gentility.\(^\text{230}\) They add that, “we do not believe we have ever given her occasion to be ashamed of us,” yet another reference to their class and manners.\(^\text{231}\) Showing off their financial literacy, the women make a pragmatic point about the financial infeasibility of founding a separate college for women: “To found a woman’s college...would require, we judge, from half a million to a million dollars.”\(^\text{232}\) This line serves two purposes in their argument, firstly positioning themselves as aware of the financial strain this proposal would involve. Secondly, the alumnæ more subtly remind the Board of Trustees that they, too, are consumers of the college. As former students at a private university, these women are aware of the costs their families incurred to give

\(^{227}\) Ibid.
\(^{228}\) Ibid.
\(^{229}\) “To the Board of Trustees of Wesleyan University.” In Coeducation Collection, edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT: Special Collections & Archives: 3.
\(^{230}\) Ibid.
\(^{231}\) Ibid.
\(^{232}\) Ibid., 1.
them the opportunity “we ourselves have been privileged to enjoy.” In other words, they insert this implied reference to their status as consumers of the university—ones who might or might not choose to donate to their beloved Alma Mater as alumnæ—to remind the Board of Trustees what is at stake financially in their decision.

Further harnessing their power as consumers, the women take this opportunity to make their own demands of the Board, requesting “a separate administration for women” as well as “separate class organizations, separate college periodicals, separate class day exercises,—separation, in short, in all the college life which students make for themselves.” That these demands are couched in a rhetoric of gentility and politeness reveals the ways women negotiated their subjugation on the basis of gender by capitalizing on their privileged class and race backgrounds. After all, the demands they had in mind speak directly to these women’s whiteness and socioeconomic standing. These women did not want material support or an overhaul of sexism; they just wanted Greek organizations, literary societies, and a cappella groups of their own.

Emerging fields in the sciences played an active role in articulating late nineteenth and early twentieth century ideas about gender and race. The natural and social sciences acted as arbiter for these identities, dividing and classifying people. In the process, fields of study like the natural sciences, especially biology and chemistry, acted “in support of popular ideology.” Gordon even implies that coeducated colleges adopted a curriculum with sciences deemed appropriate for women, namely the field of

\[\text{\textsuperscript{233}}\text{Ibid., 3.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{234}}\text{Ibid., 2.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{235}}\text{Gordon, 217; 223.}\]
domestic science. Historian David G. Pugh assesses the role of one such late nineteenth century science, phrenology, in demarcating gender and race in *Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America*. Phrenology was a science that held sway in the academy and the popular press for a few decades, precisely during the moment of coeducation at Wesleyan. Just a few years after women were admitted to the university, in 1885, a scholar considered reputable at the time published findings that positioned whites as “racially superior” to non-whites and women “inferior” to men. This scholar, a French anthropologist named Paul Topinard, cemented his findings in the “skull capacities” of the groups studied. With this material evidence, he claimed, the validity of his findings could not be questioned. It was in this academic climate that a phrenologist visited the Psi Upsilon fraternity house at Wesleyan University in the spring of 1908.

In this anecdote, recalled by Clinton F. Wilding of the Class of 1909, the alum reflects on a visiting phrenologist looking to book the Psi Upsilon house for an upcoming event. Recalling the incident, Wilding emphasizes fraternity members’ playful demonstrations of the phrenologist’s pseudoscience. Skillfully satirical, the brothers humorously undermine his claims. They cement the fraternity house as an unlikely site of knowledge (re)production, going against theories of difference created in the university itself. Here, the boys’ antics actually carry the potential to undo the

---

237 Gordon, 213; 220. Wesleyan did not adopt a separate curriculum for women and this is a point institutional historians including Potts and Knight use to argue that Wesleyan was relatively less hostile to women than peer institutions.

238 Pugh, 71.

239 Ibid.

240 Ibid.

knowledge production of the university from within it. Their vantage point as students in fact uniquely qualifies them to problematize the phrenologist. This incident is relevant for its demonstration of camaraderie in an all-male space, its attempts to unravel a theory of difference, and its positioning of students as knowledge producers.

Wilding and his brother Harold Gale “Monk” Rogers ’08 play the prank. When they realize the phrenologist attempting to book Psi U’s space for an event is “an itinerant faker” spewing so-called science for a fee, they parody his craft.242 Their method of intervention reads as uniquely male—a playful antic that could only exist in a gender-segregated space. Central to Wilding and Rogers’ strategy of derailing the phrenologist, after all, is teasing their classmates. Wilding and Rogers point out their brothers’ characteristics to the visitor, many of them related to class and family situation. These are pathologized onto the brothers as the phrenologist claims the conditions reflect in their head shapes. Throughout, boyish teasing underscores the brothers’ bond. By working together, the boys position themselves as insiders and the phrenologist as an outsider.

In Fugitive Science, literary scholar Britt Rusert discusses nineteenth century satire about phrenology. As she puts it, “Popular parodies of phrenology in the early nineteenth century reflect not so much the illegitimacy of phrenology, but rather the forms of popular contestation and anxiety that plague all emergent scientific fields.”243 Yet here were the Psi Upsilon brothers, joking about phrenology almost a century later in 1908. By this point, phrenology had been around since “the early 1800s.”244 Tracking

242 Wilding, 1.
244 Ibid.
its genealogy, Russert declares phrenology essentially irrelevant by the twentieth century. At this point, scholars and laymen alike accepted the field as pseudoscientific. So why did the end of the coeducation era coincide with the re-emergence of phrenology on campus, even if only in jokes? What suddenly made these stale jokes relevant again?

Additionally, the all-white, all-male space of the turn-of-the-century fraternity house is an unsurprising event space for the phrenologist. After all, his selection of the space speaks to its reputation as exclusive—the sort of place where theories of difference might already be proliferating. Even the pranksters employ class identity throughout their joke by fabricating socioeconomic backstories for their brothers and pointing these out to the phrenologist. Not only do these indicate phrenology’s tendency to pathologize categories like class and race, but they also highlight the brothers’ familiarity with socioeconomic status. These are students uniquely aware of theories of difference. The comfort with which they debunk “the scientific aspects of Phrenology” indicate the presence of such theories within their curriculum.245 Hence, they have the language and knowledge base to discuss these theories even outside the classroom. By anchoring their prank in this knowledge, they aim to undo it. Toward the end of the phrenologist’s visit, fraternity member Harold C. “Inky” Grant holds a mirror to the absurdity of this and other such theories by disputing the phrenologist’s every claim. As Wilding recalls,

When the noise had somewhat died down, Monk asked “Professor Grant” (none other than our Harold C. “Inky” Grant ‘08) if he would say a few words to the boys on the scientific aspects of Phrenology...Ink did a good job (with diagrams yet!) of explaining that the superficial thickening of cranium was a protective—indeed, cantilever—nature, at critical structural points, and not only did its “lumps” not coincide with brain protrusion but had no relation to brain confirmation. He also dipped into physiology long enough to notice that (1) within reasonable limits size of brain has no relation to intelligence or teachability that being controlled rather by the depth and fine-ness of convolutions; and that

245 Wilding, 2.
(2) there is no parallelism as between development of any particular portion of the brain and the personality on mental or emotional capacity, that being controlled rather by the ductless glands. 246

Given the theories circulating in Wesleyan classrooms in 1908, however, phrenology was not a stretch. After all, just a few years earlier Professor Wilbur Olin Atwater had quantified the calorie simply to justify his paternalistic studies of non-white peoples’ diets. 247 He even wrote extensively about the parallel science of anthropometry, a way of classifying people based on body measurements (often by ethnicity and nationality). 248 The irony lost on these brothers is that the phrenologist’s views—however ridiculous they are to us as modern readers—were not all that different from views the brothers likely held. At the least, these were views their professors wove into their natural and social science curriculum. Indeed, Wilding confirms that, “Professor Dodge had recently devoted a portion of a lecture” to the popular science. 249 Whether professors were for or against the theory by the early 1900s, phrenology was undoubtedly a hot topic both inside and outside the Wesleyan classroom.

An Argus article published on November 24, 1869 makes another early reference to the study of phrenology on campus. 250 The timing of this lecture suggests that even before the advent of the coeducation project, professors, guest speakers, and student orators presented theories of difference to the almost entirely white, all male student body. The report also notes that the lecture was open “to the people of Middletown,”

246 Wilding, 2.
247 I will discuss this at length in the third chapter.
249 Wilding, 1.
indicating a relationship between campus and community.\textsuperscript{251} Further, the public nature of the lecture suggests that both townspeople and students attended; both groups were eager to hear more about the theory.\textsuperscript{252} While the \textit{Argus} writer remarks the phrenologist made “some sense” but spewed “much nonsense,” he nonetheless suggests that his interest was piqued enough to attend the “series of lectures.”\textsuperscript{253} Ending with a quip, the author concludes that, “As a rule, traveling lectures do not advance the character of phrenology as a science.”\textsuperscript{254} Despite this author’s dubiousness in 1869, we know from Wilding’s recollection that the theory was still circulating on campus—via traveling lecturer, no less—thirty-nine years later.

The significance of the traveling phrenologist’s visit to the Psi Upsilon house coinciding with the tail end of the coeducation era cannot be overstated. Louise Wilby Knight notes that the last twelve years of coeducation, from 1900 to 1912, saw intensified resistance from male students.\textsuperscript{255} Seeing administrators as soft on coeducation, students took matters into their own hands by instituting “a policy of social ostracism against the women.”\textsuperscript{256} Knight even finds that, “Within a few years, ignoring the women had become a college tradition.”\textsuperscript{257} In other words, just as male students found camaraderie in banding together to prank a phrenologist, so too did they bond through shunning Wesleyan women. Some of the alumni interviewed in Knight’s thesis suggest that wealthier students were behind the anti-coeducation sentiment and that

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{251} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{253} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{254} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{255} Knight, 112.
\textsuperscript{256} Knight, 112.
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid., 117.
\end{footnotes}
some lower-income students opposed their peers’ staunch stance. Knight’s explanation is that wealthier students “come to college more often out of social necessity than out of a desire to learn” and therefore are “less likely to appreciate the women’s desire to receive an education.” Additionally, she notices that “members of Commons Club,” which was a more affordable housing plan for non-fraternity men, “consistently distinguished themselves as friends of coeducation.” Even while their peers isolated the women, Commons Club members sent a “petition to the trustees indicating their disapproval of the student anti-coeducation petition” and even “gave parties to which the Wesleyan women were always invited.”

While I mostly agree with Knight, I am dubious of her individualizing approach. Her theory suggests that the harassment and ostracism women faced was the result of a few privileged students when, in fact, it was the result of a campus climate. Whether or not men (students and administrators alike) saw themselves as complicit, they undoubtedly contributed to the atmosphere that made women unwelcome on campus. Nonetheless, Knight’s finding suggests that men like the Psi Upsilon brothers, who paid steep fraternity dues to board in the plush residence, were perhaps more forthcoming in their disapproval of coeducation than their modest peers. We know from Wilding’s anecdote, after all, that the brothers had no problem paying the phrenologist in silver despite recognizing his craft as pseudoscience. Their ability to shell out money for a prank indicates these men’s social standing, as does their comfortable discussion of

258 Ibid., 118-119.
259 Ibid.
260 Ibid., 119.
261 Ibid.
262 In fact, the administrative actions that contributed to the hostile atmosphere women faced at Wesleyan is the topic of my next chapter and will be explored at length therein.
263 Wilding, 2.
socioeconomic class in the prank. Categorizing their brothers by wealth—even if facetiously—so the phrenologist can pathologize them indicates these men feel comfortable discussing money matters. Lastly, their penchant for seeking out homosocial spaces, indicated by their fraternity membership, implies the brothers’ desire to see an entirely male-dominated university. Perhaps these men were even the same ones at the forefront of the policy that socially segregated Wesleyan women.

Knight interviews one Claude Hardy, who was a freshman the year that the phrenologist visited Psi Upsilon. At this time, Hardy recalls being “required to use a wooden gun in front of [the women’s] dormitory and aim it at any girl who came out.”

His use of the passive voice indicates Hardy felt a social pressure to conform to this system. Knight suspects that the system of subjugating women was maintained by older students subjugating younger male students, too. Seemingly contradictory, Hardy then remembers that he “treated [the women] with the utmost respect. I met them at churches and athletic events. If out of doors, I always tipped my hat...after my freshman year.” When it came Hardy’s time to reproduce the hazing system that saw freshman ostracize and harass their female classmates, he apparently took a stand. Nonetheless, Hardy recognized—and acted on—a social order that vehemently opposed the presence of women at Wesleyan in his freshman year.

In this chapter and the last, I examined the ways that the university and the nation together shaped ideals of white masculinity and femininity in the nineteenth

---

264 Knight, 126. The presence of a gun on campus, albeit a wooden one, harkens to my discussion of guns on campus in the first chapter. Guns at Wesleyan symbolized a Jacksonian masculinity. The use of a gun aimed at women is hence an assertion of violent manliness at a time when rugged and aggressive masculinity was on the rise once more nationwide. Recall Pugh’s argument that Jacksonian masculinity reappeared in the Progressive era in response to the crisis of capital.

265 Knight, 126.
century. I assessed the impacts of these waves of often contradictory gender messaging on college students at Wesleyan University by centering archival materials—especially those from student publications *The College Argus* and the *Olla Podrida*—and engaging in discursive analysis. As I have reiterated throughout, the notions of gender impressed upon these middle- and upper-middle class students were intrinsically tied to race. This chapter looked specifically at the second generation of coeducated women, the “new women” Kline and Gordon identify. Gordon suggests that women achieved some mobility in universities nationwide in these years. Both Kline and Gordon note the crisis in capital of the 1890s as a catalyst for white, middle-class women’s conditional inclusion (usually at the expense of non-white people, immigrants, and the working class). Couched in a rhetoric of gentility and civilization, these white women joined sororities and flaunted their connections to administrators and professors. Despite these efforts to assert their race and class identities, however, women at Wesleyan faced increased hostility from students and administrators alike throughout the coeducation era.

My aims for the following chapter are twofold: First, I examine the impact of administrative and curricular decisions on the rigid gender binaries that proliferated at Wesleyan before and during the coeducation era. Then, I link student rhetoric about coeducation to the theories of difference that circulated in Wesleyan classrooms during the era. From Wilbur Olin Atwater’s racist exploration of the calorie to the Biology department’s course on personal hygiene, I highlight the work within classrooms to cement hierarchies of race and gender.
Chapter Three: “Fatherly Restraint” and Control Through Curriculum

When Wesleyan University opened for its first semester in the fall of 1831, administrators quickly reassured parents of their authoritarian governance: they promised to control students, positioning themselves—and by extension the campus—as a stand-in for “a father’s house”.266 Administrators pledged to use “fatherly restraint and control” on their students.267 From holding students’ spending money to moving their offices to dormitories, administrators went above and beyond their job descriptions to ensure the safety, productivity, and piety of students on the residential campus. Their parent-child mode of governance also had unintended consequences, almost inevitably forming a coercive power relationship.

In previous chapters, I examined the processes through which Wesleyan students reconstructed white womanhood and manhood in the nineteenth century. I assessed how homosociality, hazing, and pranks against visiting speakers cemented a fleeting notion of fraternity among white male students. I tracked their responses to the coeducation project, discursively analyzing how men saw their new classmates. Hostility

266 “Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the Wesleyan University Fall Term 1831.” Middletown, CT: W. D. Starr, 1831.
267 Ibid.
toward women grew at post-1890s Wesleyan due to an athletics-focused culture and a segregationist social and academic scene.

In this chapter, I assess curriculum changes in the coeducation era to impress the culpability of administrators and professors in excluding women from the campus at a moment of surface-level inclusion. Using Melinda Cooper’s and Catherine Prendergast and Nancy Abelmann’s work on in loco parentis in American universities, I examine the familial ties in administrators’ relationship to students. Drawing on Foucault’s conception of the family as a sovereign institution and the university as a disciplinary institution, I theorize that women’s matriculation required rethinking the administrative apparatus. Coeducation occurred alongside curriculum changes, which came as social norms and power structures shifted nationwide. Anxieties about democratizing the campus mirrored anxieties about democratizing the nation. Specifically, I use the theories of difference which took hold in the natural and social sciences in the late 1800s and early 1900s to suggest these movements solidified biases—both racial and gendered—in professors and students alike. As a case study, I look to Chemistry Professor Wilbur Olin Atwater’s work on nutrition and food studies. Theories of difference like sexology and eugenics—legitimated by their (mis)use in the academy—were then applied to the campus. Therefore, the coeducation moment and the

268 Taylor, Chloe. “Foucault and Familial Power.” Hypatia, Winter 2012, 27 edition: 203. The presence of women required an update to administrative logics for two reasons: one, because some were related to professors and other faculty members; and two, because the theories of difference that took hold in the nineteenth century distinguished between the sexes. As the archival evidence in this chapter indicates, administrators, alumni, and male students believed that women’s needs were entirely different from men’s.

269 Just some of these changes include new raced and gendered ideals: new womanhood for white, middle-class women and a revitalized Jacksonian manhood for white, middle-class men. Further, the immigration waves, increasing civil rights, and labor unrest I describe at length last chapter absolutely affected administrative decisions on campus as well. Coupled with a curriculum that emphasized and pathologized differences of race, class, and gender, these changes can all be seen as catalysts not only for coeducation but also for the male hostility (from students and administrators alike) that accompanied its ultimately short-lived tenure at Wesleyan.
democratization of the campus that it symbolized only entrenched and modulated the already pervasive racism and sexism that defined the late-nineteenth century American university.

To understand familial administrative logics at Wesleyan and in American higher education at large, I return to Gauri Viswanathan’s description of paternalism in Yale’s founding. Recall that Puritan solicitors encouraged the childless Elihu Yale to think of the college as heir to his imperial fortune. From this moment onwards, the student body has come to be seen as a child. Metaphorically, administrators are positioned as stand-in parents. This dynamic, termed *in loco parentis*, is one scholars Prendergast and Abelmann explore in their article “Alma Mater: College, Kinship, and the Pursuit of Diversity.” In the postbellum moment, they identify an intensification of the logic of family within the university. As they argue, “The relationship between the student and the school was...explicitly familial,” whereby “the school assumed...parental responsibility for its temporary charges.” Social theorist Melinda Cooper echoes this conception of *in loco parentis* in her chapter on human capital theory and the neoliberal university in *Family Values*. Despite her focus on contemporary colleges, Cooper’s theorizing maps onto nineteenth century education as well. She encapsulates *in loco parentis* as,

The idea that college administrators were somehow endowed with the custodial powers of parents...[which] had been reinvigorated in the early twentieth century, when a court ruling gave colleges wide powers to expel students without due process...In loco parentis allowed administrators and dorm officials to restrict the political activities of students, to regulate behavior, dress, and alcohol

---

272 Ibid., 40.
consumption, and to police sexuality...In an effort to “protect” women, contact between male and female students in college dorms was tightly regulated...274

While Cooper identifies administrative exercises of custodial power in the twentieth century, my last two chapters have revealed the same dynamic at nineteenth century Wesleyan (and in higher education at large). Particularly, Cooper’s focus on the implications of in loco parentis for gender dynamics on campus suggests that coeducation at Wesleyan shifted and exposed the disciplinary power of the administration.275

Archival sources hint at different administrative treatment for men and women. Specifically, administrative demerit records list men more frequently than women.276 Surely we can attribute this to women’s caution in part; the women at Wesleyan were well aware of the example they were setting.277 Nevertheless, the demerit imbalance indicates administrators’ perceptions of gendered norms and their hesitance to discipline women as they had disciplined men throughout the school’s history, likely due to the reproduction of nuclear family structures within the university. Sometimes university disciplinarians were also women’s biological fathers.278 Feminist Foucauldian theorist Chloe Taylor differentiates between the disciplinary power of the school and the sovereign power of the family in “Foucault and Familial Power.”279 Applying this

274 Ibid., 230.
275 Taylor, 203. In a Foucauldian sense, coeducation interrupted the ways in loco parentis functioned on the formerly single-sex campus. On an all-male campus, every student was a metaphorical son. But bringing women to the institution required revamping administrative norms to fit these new “daughters”—some of whom were even administrators’ biological daughters. After all, the theories of difference I discuss at length later in this chapter informed understandings of gender. With a strict gender binary set in place, administrators understood men and women to have innately different disciplinary needs.
277 Ibid.
278 Knight, 30. Just one example is the three Van Vleck sisters, whose father, Professor John M. Van Vleck, was a professor of mathematics and astronomy at Wesleyan and one of the few staunch coeducation supporters in the faculty. Potts also notes that nearly half of Wesleyan’s female students “came from homes within a twenty-mile radius of Wesleyan.”
279 Taylor, 203.
conception to the coeducated university, in which many women students were related to
administrators, I theorize that, among other things, women’s matriculation fused
sovereign and disciplinary forms of power in the university.

In her 2017 *Argus* article on the subject of coeducation, “Women at Wes: The
History of Coeducation,” alumna Natasha Nurjadin discusses the academic components
of coeducation, which she claims barred Wesleyan’s female matriculants from entering
laboratories and libraries.  She contradicts Potts’s assertion that women “made full use
of the unrestricted academic opportunities open to them.” As it turns out, Nurjadin’s
source is a 1998 *Argus* article by Diana Silbergeld reading into yet another *Argus* article
from 1900. Recall the New York Young Alumni Report on Coeducation, which I
mentioned last chapter. Silbergeld asserts that, “it was thought that the sexes should be
segregated in libraries and labs.” However, the Young Alumni invoke classroom
segregation to argue against establishing a coordinate women’s college because they wish
to end coeducation altogether. Clearly the multilayered archival approach is fallible and
this misread provides just one example of the incomplete, and sometimes incorrect,
histories with which archives provide us.

Despite this inaccurate information, I do not dismiss Nurjadin’s article
altogether. She mentions that residences and “extracurricular activities” were
segregated—a claim every other historian of coeducation at Wesleyan corroborates.
Paraphrasing a letter from a group of students to the Board of Trustees, Nurjadin

---

281 Potts, 104.
283 Ibid.
285 Nurjadin, para. 5.
reports that men thought, “women in the classroom were inconvenient, unpleasant, a hindrance to efficient work.”

Outside the classroom, men claimed women were “diminishing upper-class social life” on campus. The double entendre—class in the sense of class year, but also “upper-class” as a socioeconomic standing—reiterates a point Wesleyan men made consistently when opposing coeducation: that the policy affected Wesleyan’s financial standing and its prestige. While these statements tell us little about Wesleyan women—as they are written from men’s perspectives—they do interrogate men’s views. Specifically, the statements reveal men’s hesitation about women being privy to their campus culture. The “upper-class social life” to which men allude is undoubtedly the hazing—such as the game of “soak-about,” where men “tried to hit another boy in a vulnerable spot with a hard ball”—and fraternity culture I interrogate in my first chapter. These practices were based on Jacksonian norms of masculinity, in which women were not able to participate. Despite Wesleyan’s coeducation, men reproduced exclusionary campus cultures that alienated female students. Well into the Victorian age—and again in the Progressive era—young men continued to reiterate these Jacksonian masculinities.

In their discourse about female students, Wesleyan men transition between objectification and desexualization. As I mentioned earlier, Wesleyan men feared the temptation of their female classmates but insisted they felt nothing at all. One explanation for this paradoxical relationship comes from Lisa Duggan’s *Sapphic Slashers*, which addresses the queering of nineteenth century women through “rigidly binary”

---

286 Ibid., para. 9.
287 Ibid.
288 Potts, 217.
understandings of gender and sexuality.\textsuperscript{290} Duggan attributes these representations to knowledge production in nineteenth century universities. She writes:

By the late nineteenth century, these textualizations of gender and sexuality increasingly worked to figure all such differences as simple and obvious deviance from conventional elite norms. Multiple variations and meanings were condensed into...either excess sexuality or inverted gender, “primitive” or overcivilized masculinity and femininity. The production of binaries, and the collapse of sexuality into gender, of difference into deviance, was especially marked in the texts of the late-nineteenth-century “scientific” sexology.\textsuperscript{291}

Acknowledging how science scholarship produced ideas of gender and sexuality, Duggan invokes the role of “the classroom” in “limiting the scope of democracy through the containment of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{292} Duggan touches on a dynamic that occurred at Wesleyan and elsewhere.

In a sweeping gesture of curriculum change amidst coeducation, the early 1870s marked the first time that Wesleyan students could obtain Bachelors of Science. Fearing a decline in admissions after the Morrill Land Grant Act founded public and technical institutions across the nation, President Cummings urged the Board of Trustees to use new scientific facilities on campus by extending the contours of study.\textsuperscript{293} As Potts notes, “A four-year B.S. course of study” began in 1873 to lend “practical appearance” and application to liberal arts coursework.\textsuperscript{294} The move toward innovation and empirical science on the campus was made possible by hundreds of new acquisitions to the Wesleyan Museum of Natural History as well as new classes, new professors, and new

\textsuperscript{291} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{292} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{293} Nolen, Jeannette L. "Land-Grant College Act of 1862." Encyclopaedia Britannica: para. 1.
\textsuperscript{294} Potts, 127-128.
buildings for the study of the sciences.\textsuperscript{295} It is crucial to note that sciences introduced at Wesleyan were rooted in specious, though at the time widely accepted, race and sexological science ideas about skull shapes and other body parts.\textsuperscript{296}

A site of transparently questionable wealth-hoarding on Wesleyan’s campus, the Museum of Natural History housed in Judd Hall was opened the year before coeducation began.\textsuperscript{297} Curator Walter Bradford Barrows, also a member of the Biology department faculty, acquired human remains and other such artifacts in large numbers. As coeducation continued, the museum collection grew exponentially as donors offered new gifts. A blurb in the course catalog from the 1885-1886 school year lists the museum’s assets, among them over 100 skeletons.\textsuperscript{298} These and other remains—many of them taken from indigenous American burial sites throughout the East Coast—became classroom tools for Biology students. In Biology laboratories, students handled these artifacts “for comparison and direct study.”\textsuperscript{299} By “the late 1880s, the museum added a focus on ethnological collections, related to humans.”\textsuperscript{300} In fact, an archive of the museum’s artifacts in the “Fifth and Sixth Annual Reports of the Museum” contains many such items: “Ethnologica from Africa,” a “human skull,” a “collection of ethnological specimens, Constantinople,” an “Indian arrow,” and “fossil shells and Indian relics from Florida.”\textsuperscript{301} When biology students stepped foot in the Museum of

\textsuperscript{295} Ibid., 126; 132. It is worth noting that, even today, neoliberal universities (including Wesleyan and its peer liberal arts institutions) are re-entrenching the natural sciences.

\textsuperscript{296} Of course, Wesleyan was not exceptional in this moment. The specious race and sexological sciences introduced into the Wesleyan curriculum were equally embraced by other institutions and the popular press.

\textsuperscript{297} “Course Catalog”. edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT, 1884-1900: 50.

\textsuperscript{298} Ibid., 56.

\textsuperscript{299} Ibid., 52.


\textsuperscript{301} “Fifth and Sixth Annual Reports of the Museum.” In \textit{Wesleyan Museum Records}, edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT: Special Collections & Archives, 1877: Box 1, Folder 1: 22-25.
Natural History, therefore, they interacted with the stolen objects—and sometimes even the bodies—of non-white people in a space that kept out people of color. If race sciences like eugenics and craniology provided the theoretical lens, these artifacts provided a material application.\textsuperscript{302}

While Wesleyan boasted about its particularly large collection of artifacts in the late nineteenth century, it was not the only school to engage in this practice.\textsuperscript{303} Craig Steven Wilder calls the practice an eighteenth century “Atlantic industry,” noting that, “planters, slave traders, soldiers, explorers, merchants, and missionaries were producing, by accident and by design, the material for an emerging science” by hoarding human remains and other such objects.\textsuperscript{304} Indeed, a university’s prestige, as well as its endowment, “could be reasonably measured by its collection of human remains.”\textsuperscript{305} A century later and long after the abolition of slavery in the North, Wesleyan and other New England universities still proudly displayed human remains among their collections.\textsuperscript{306}

In addition to the Biology department’s relationship to the Wesleyan museum, course catalogs from the years preceding and following the advent of coeducation reference a newfound focus on anatomy and physiology courses in the discipline.\textsuperscript{307} Professors at the time, namely Biology Professor Dr. Conn, lectured and wrote on

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{302} Carlisle, Kate. “Wesleyan Apologizes to Native Nations, Launches Repatriation Effort.” Wesleyan University, November 8, 2013. http://newsletter.blogs.wesleyan.edu/2013/11/08/repatriationeffort/. Besides archival evidence in Special Collections, this is the only acknowledgement I have seen of Wesleyan’s role in stealing and hoarding indigenous remains and other questionably obtained artifacts.\textsuperscript{303} Potts, 132.\textsuperscript{304} Wilder, 190-191.\textsuperscript{305} Wilder, 193.\textsuperscript{306} Carlisle, Kate. “Wesleyan Apologizes to Native Nations, Launches Repatriation Effort.” Wesleyan University, November 8, 2013. http://newsletter.blogs.wesleyan.edu/2013/11/08/repatriationeffort/.\textsuperscript{307} “Course Catalog,” 43; Knight, 3.
evolution.\textsuperscript{308} One biology class taught “the adult anatomy” to students, while a physiology class used \textit{Martin’s Human Body} as their textbook.\textsuperscript{309} Knight reminds us that Wesleyan did not adopt separate curricula for women.\textsuperscript{310} Yet the sciences brought to campus in these years emphasized theories of gender and race difference.\textsuperscript{311} Hence, white women (and black men) became the objects of a white, male academic gaze in the very moment they were acclimating to an exclusionary campus social scene.

Furthermore, students noticed and pointed out the financially unprecedented curriculum changes. An 1873 \textit{Argus} article entitled “Co-Education at Wesleyan” notes their strange timing. Wesleyan students “argued that the financial condition of the college was \textit{not such as to warrant that change in our curriculum which seemed to be highly necessary ere women were admitted to our classes. [emphasis mine]}\textsuperscript{312} First, the author implies a causal relationship between women matriculating and changing the curriculum. Why did Wesleyan men see updating the curriculum for women as “highly necessary?” The article also positions curriculum changes as a site of conflict between students and administrators. “The great mass of the people were...opposed to it...especially college students,” reads the article.\textsuperscript{313} Despite sexism and ambivalence toward coeducation, even male students understood the curriculum would not need revamping for women. Whether this stance stemmed from a rejection of the theory of separate spheres and other Victorian notions of gender difference or from the men’s own distaste for coeducation is unclear. But the reason they took this stance is less significant than the

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{308} Ibid., 43-44.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{310} Knight, 14.
\textsuperscript{311} Duggan, 26.
\textsuperscript{312} “Co-Education at Wesleyan,” The College Argus, June 11, 1873: 242.
\textsuperscript{313} “Coeducation at Wesleyan,” 242.
\end{footnotes}
fact that they did, and that this caused a rift between administrators and students at an already-contentious moment at Wesleyan.

Rifts like these position students as consumers and historicize this dynamic. The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 and its revival in 1890 signaled increased academic choices for students.\textsuperscript{314} Many of them being state-sponsored schools of “agriculture and the mechanic arts” suggested that an education would be more attainable (and often more affordable) than before.\textsuperscript{315} I suggest that this moment of higher education expansion cemented the student as a consumer. Now, students had the choice between a greater variety of campuses. Their recognition of this shift echoed in students’ public opposition to administrative decisions from coeducation itself to the curriculum changes that accompanied it.

Feminist historian Gail Bederman notes economic changes reshaping the United States beginning in the 1870s in \textit{Manliness \& Civilization}. Starting in 1873, as coeducation and curriculum changes transformed the campus, “a recurring round of severe economic depressions resulted in tens of thousands of bankruptcies.”\textsuperscript{316} While Bederman uses economic context to identify shifts in white male masculinity, I believe the moment signifies economic anxieties among administrators and students alike. Administrators responded to recessions with updated curricula, and students considered what their scholarship meant in this moment of strife. For them, the era signified increased power as consumers.\textsuperscript{317}

\textsuperscript{314} Nolen, para 1.
\textsuperscript{315} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{317} Hence, I theorize that this economic moment produced the discourse of students-as-consumers. The notion of students publicly questioning and resisting administrative and trustee decisions, after all, itself reminds us that students in private institutions are consumers first and foremost. Their concern with “the financial condition of the college,” as such, is a concern about their familial assets. After all, what was the
Despite student protestations and lack of precedent, the Wesleyan administration saw curriculum changes as a means of competing with peer institutions. The Wesleyan website even references the curriculum changes that accompanied coeducation in an institutional history:

> At a time when classical studies dominated the American college curriculum, emulating the European model, President Fisk sought to put modern languages, literature, and natural sciences on an equal footing with the classics. When Judd Hall, now home to the Psychology Department, was built in 1870, it was one of the first American college buildings designed to be dedicated wholly to scientific study. Since the 1860s, Wesleyan’s faculty has focused on original research and publication in addition to teaching.  

To further understand the mystery of curriculum changes in this era, we can turn past the institution to the historical moment writ large. After all, the move toward empirical sciences did not happen only at Wesleyan but was in fact driven by larger movements within the sciences. Recall, for one, Craig Steven Wilder’s discussion of hoarding stolen artifacts as a full-scale “industry” to serve science professionals.\(^\text{319}\) In particular, the rise of comparative anatomy in the natural sciences shed light on bodily differences.\(^\text{320}\) Recall that even Wesleyan undergraduates undertook this sort of comparison and tactile learning.\(^\text{321}\) This hands-on approach contributed to the growing field of racial science.\(^\text{322}\)

In “Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body,” queer theorist Siobhan Somerville outlines how theories of race and gender difference were intertwined in the nineteenth century. In the postbellum Northeast, these theories made

---


\(^{319}\) Wilder, 190.


\(^{321}\) “Course Catalog,” 52.

\(^{322}\) Somerville, 250.
a particular mark. While slavery itself had been abolished decades ago, the
Reconstruction era in the South coupled with economic depressions shifted national
attention to non-white people once more. As Northern and Southern legislators alike tried to exclude black Americans from the social, political, and economic realms of American life, classrooms augmented the effort in their own right through theories of difference. Wilder and Somerville identify these ideas of race difference as foundational to the American academy; nevertheless, natural science provided a new domain in which to encounter and classify the racialized other through its rise in the late 1800s.323

For instance, scientific communities readily accepted Darwin’s theory of evolution by the 1870s—including at Wesleyan, where Geology Professor William North Rice was asked “to prepare a book on evolution” mere decades later.324 As Somerville notes, Darwinism—often applied to humans in its counterpart Social Darwinism, which created a hierarchy of valuation among people of various ethnic groups—focused not just on race but on gender. This, too, was mapped onto human bodies.325 Somerville writes,

Gender, in fact, was crucial to Darwinist ideas. One of the basic assumptions within the Darwinian model was the belief that, as organisms evolved through a process of natural selection, they also showed greater signs of differentiation between the (two) sexes. Following this logic, various writers used sexual characteristics as indicators of evolutionary progress toward civilization.326

Here, she addresses scientists’ focus on racialized female anatomy. Specifically, sexologists identified the clitoris and other sites of “genitalia and reproductive anatomy” as enlarged “appendages” in both lesbians and black women.327 These theorists often

---

323 Wilder, 3; Somerville, 250.
324 Potts, 158.
325 Somerville, 255.
326 Ibid.
327 Ibid., 252-253.
evoked the figure of the chaste but heterosexual white woman to counter the hypersexualized black woman. \footnote{Ibid., 253-254.}

Natural science classes at Wesleyan were influenced not only by theories of difference but also by the nation’s various reform movements. One such wave was the social hygiene movement. Led largely by middle- and upper-middle class white women, Dana Berthold argues that late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century hygiene reformers—many of whom had ties to the eugenics movement—engaged in “overt discrimination against poor and non-white groups whom they deemed objectively tainted. Thus power over these other groups was practiced as a sort of cleanliness of body, and it was practiced with a cleanliness of conscience.”\footnote{Dana Berthold, “Tidy Whiteness: A Genealogy of Race, Purity, and Hygiene,” \textit{Ethics and the Environment} 15, no. 1 (2010): 21-22.} Additionally, these reformers engaged in a “purity crusade” that targeted sex workers and other sexually liberated women by warning of sexually-transmitted infections.\footnote{Luker, Kristin. “Sex, Social Hygiene, and the State: The Double-Edged Sword of Social Reform.” \textit{Theory and Society}, October 1998, 27 edition: 606.} Social hygienists associated these diseases with women who rejected nineteenth century ideals of restrained womanhood, working-class people, and non-white Americans.\footnote{Blakemore, Erin. "What Reformers Learned When They Visited 1830s Brothels." JStor Daily: para 2; para 3.} The group encapsulated popular opinions that the white middle-class held about those they deemed beneath them in terms of race, gender, or class.\footnote{Schuller, Kyla. \textit{The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century}. Anima. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018: 8.} It is not surprising, then, that the social hygiene movement wove its way into Wesleyan’s curriculum by the late-nineteenth century.
The Biology department at Wesleyan even dedicated a course to “Personal and Social Hygiene.” In this required freshman class (there is no indication whether female students were included), instructor Professor Conn referenced the “growing demand” of the social hygiene movement. Appealing to students’ privileged background, Professor Conn’s class description emphasized the importance of “educated persons” understanding “the laws of health.” Professor Conn’s course also addressed “sex hygiene.” Alluding to theories of difference, the course promised to cover “all general topics of sanitation which concern the individual’s relations to the community.”

Before sending students off into the world where they might interact with people unlike them, the school ensured that Biology majors were inundated with the rhetoric of the social hygiene reformers. In this sense, the university reproduced the exclusionary discourse of the movement by dedicating a required course to it. While many of the so-called advances happened in the natural sciences at Wesleyan and elsewhere, the social sciences embraced their own theories of difference.

For instance, Professor Fisher, head of the Economics and Social Science department, taught a course on “The General Labor Problem” and another general “Social Science” survey course that studied “concrete social problems of the present:—pauperism and charity; the defective and criminal classes.” The course combined theory with praxis through “visits to several of the charitable, penal, and reformatory institutions in and about Middletown.” Indeed, a main danger of this curriculum was
its blurring of the lines between the classroom and the outside world. People of marginalized backgrounds were presented to the elite university’s students as objects to be studied, merely an extension of their curriculum.

Institutions like Long Lane’s Industrial School for Girls—a juvenile detention facility located just steps away from the campus—became sites of study. Criminalized girls, or those unable to conform to nineteenth centuries ideals of gentility, went to the Industrial School, which contained a plantation-like farm.\(^{340}\) The women labored while incarcerated, working the fields “day in and day out” while a superintendent watched from a “big, fancy house.”\(^{341}\) Meanwhile, rich men went to Wesleyan—and as part of their education studied these women and others like them as a “concrete social problem.”\(^{342}\)

Blurring the lines between Wesleyan’s insular campus and the outside world, chemistry professor Wilbur Olin Atwater embarked on nutrition research that shaped American foreign and domestic policy in the early twentieth century. In “The Foreign Policy of the Calorie,” historian Nick Cullather tracks the quantification of the calorie to Professor Wilbur Olin Atwater in March 1896 in Judd Hall. Then, Cullather links this innovation to United States government projects.\(^{343}\)

Atwater conducted his on-campus research questionably. The professor overworked male Wesleyan students in experiments on nutrition, often giving them only

\(^{340}\) Davies, Beth. “How to Get to Long Lane School: An Ethnography of a Place” (Wesleyan University, 2009): 34, 49.
\(^{341}\) Ibid., 49.
\(^{342}\) “Course Catalog,” 69-70. While I have not been able to locate further archival record of these interactions between Wesleyan men and Long Lane girls and what they entailed, the sociopolitical contexts surrounding them give us an idea of how power shaped these meetings.
meager food and subjecting them to “intervals of weightlifting and mental exertion.”\footnote{Ibid. Perhaps the meager food reflected Atwater’s concerns with caloric intake.} It was under these unfortunate conditions that Atwater quantified the calorie in 1896, contributing to a growing movement of the domestic and nutritional sciences.\footnote{Ibid.; Moran, Rachel Louise. \textit{Governing Bodies: American Politics and the Shaping of the Modern Physique} (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018): 11. While Moran notes that the movement was led by middle-class white women, scientists like Atwater sought to bolster the nutrition and domestic science movement with experiments and quantitative data. The irony we recognize today is that the “hard data” supporting this and other reformers’ movements was often designed to reproduce the scientists’ own ideologies and biases.} For that experiment, he sequestered a graduate student named A. W. Smith in “an airtight chamber in the basement of Judd” inside a “calorimeter, a device previously used to measure the combustive efficiency of explosives and engines.”\footnote{Cullather, 340.} According to one anecdote, “Atwater had to turn away a young New York woman who appeared at the lab asking to be allowed to take Smith’s place in the chamber.”\footnote{Ibid.} By doing so, Atwater sent a message that the natural sciences were no place for women.

Atwater’s discovery was immediately applied to the “‘Asiatic races,’ whose improvement could begin once their diet was brought up to an American standard,” according to journalists.\footnote{Ibid., 341-342.} By using the term “Asiatic races,” journalists covering Atwater’s achievement contributed to a late nineteenth and early twentieth century discursive production.\footnote{These journalists likely mirrored the language that Atwater himself used.} After all, Atwater’s experiment came two years before the Supreme Court case \textit{United States v. Wong Kim Ark}, which created the category of the Chinese American in itself by signing birthright citizenship into law.\footnote{“United States v. Wong Kim Ark.” Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute, n.d. https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/169/649.} About a decade earlier, the Chinese Exclusion Act “aimed to limit future immigration of Chinese
workers to the United States.” By passing this act, Congress identified Chinese immigrants and Asians writ large as distinctly non-American. Hence, the national context of anti-Asian sentiment contextualizes the production of Asian-American identity and the assumption Asians were “foreigners”—serving American foreign policy interests abroad at the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, Cullather writes that quantifying the calorie represented a way in which “Americans could begin to imagine the influence to be gained by manipulating the diets of distant peoples.” Furthermore, Atwater’s finding helped suppress labor unrest among the working-class. As Cullather puts it, Atwater led an effort by manufacturers, municipalities, and the federal government to set scientific “standards of living” that could be used to contain wage levels while maintaining a healthy, contented workforce. Between 1885, when he designed the first survey of factory workers in Massachusetts, and 1910, nutritionists conducted more than five hundred investigations of the eating habits of inhabitants of slums, boarding schools, Indian reservations, Chinese railroad camps, and Georgia plantations…Biases against women also pervaded Atwater’s personal outlook and influenced his professional findings. Indeed, the backdrop for Atwater’s scientific knowledge production was the recently coeducated Wesleyan campus. While the story of the calorie is perhaps the best example of the raced, classed, and gendered implications of nineteenth-century knowledge production in the natural sciences, it is not the only one. In Governing Bodies, author Rachel Louise Moran finds “paternalistic concern over women’s food-shopping habits” in Atwater’s writings. Many of his studies even positioned women as ignorant, unsophisticated consumers. By writing that, “The good

352 Ibid., 342.
353 Ibid., 343. Here, Atwater helped determine the lowest amount possible that the state and private corporations should spend sustaining workers, especially marginalized ones. His studies therefore had a direct policy application as well as an ideological effect in a time of labor unrest.
354 Moran, 10.
wife and mother does not understand about protein and potential energy,” Atwater
embraced theories that gender difference indicated intelligence (in men) or lack thereof
(in women). Women, he claimed, cannot grasp “the connection between the nutritive
value of food and the price [they pay] for it.” Not only were women less intelligent
than men according to Atwater, but they were also “the reason American laborers had
tight food budgets.” That Atwater willingly published these sentiments about women
at a time when women were already ostracized on campus indicates his distaste for
coeducation. Further, it reveals an inability to conceive of women as students and
specific anxieties about women entering the natural science fields like the one in which
he taught, chemistry.

While Moran unearthed Atwater’s paternalistic frustration with women’s food
habits, her findings pale in comparison to Atwater’s manifesto, “Science and Home-
Life.” In the paper, Atwater expresses his distaste for coeducation in the natural
sciences, advising that women concern themselves with “household science” instead.
Decades of alumnae at Wesleyan pursued ambitious careers, sometimes instead of
marriage. Potts notes that over fifty percent of Wesleyan alumnae “remained single and
pursued careers,” many of them in the field of education. Yet Atwater maintained that
“the majority of women are not seeking careers.”

355 Ibid.
356 Ibid.
357 Ibid., 14.
University. Middletown, CT: Special Collections & Archives: Box 58, Folder 6.
359 Ibid., 5. Here, Atwater reiterates the discourse young alumni articulate in their Argus article. That
Atwater openly published these statements as a professor at a coeducated campus reveals his distaste for a
whole faction of women Wesleyan students at the time. This cements the claim that professors and
administrators did not just allow male students to treat women with hostility; they sometimes even created
the paradigms of exclusion and birthed the very discourses that male students reiterated.
360 Potts, 105.
361 Atwater, 7.
Besides, he argued, universities “divert women from home life rather than to attract them to it.”³⁶² This was something Atwater wanted to change: He envisioned a curriculum that addressed “the principles that underlie the arts and the work of the household,” one that would be not just theoretical but applicable to the domestic sphere.³⁶³ Domestic science and home economics, Atwater posited, were not only the future of the coeducated academy; they were the ultimate fate of women. To bolster his plan, Atwater offered a quote from his “stenographer, a lady,” who believed that “the training is easy to obtain” to pivot a young woman away from a career and toward the home.³⁶⁴

Atwater’s focus on home economics “offered solutions to social problems”—namely coeducation—“without disrupting existing power structures,” according to Moran.³⁶⁵ Yet Atwater wrote his reactionary manifesto long after women began attending Wesleyan. Atwater saw Wesleyan women excel in the very fields from which he tried to turn them away. Hence, his intentions were more active than Moran suggests. He attempted a reversion of gender norms, a disruption of the status quo of coeducation. That the solution he envisioned was through knowledge production—by universities engaging in “more practical” teaching suited to women’s needs—indicates the effectiveness of the practice. Through the spread of information, Atwater realized he could influence the ambitions of an entire generation. While some of his coworkers

---

³⁶² Ibid., 8.
³⁶³ Ibid., 19.
³⁶⁴ Ibid., 13. It is important to note here that home economics was seen as the feminized version of nutritional science in this time. Despite his own focus on food and caloric intake in his scholarship, Atwater and other male scholars in the field differentiated between their work and women’s.
³⁶⁵ Moran, 16.
defended coeducation, Atwater’s views on women in higher education highlight his reservations about the project.\textsuperscript{366}

Atwater was not just opinionated when it came to coeducation. He was deeply concerned with issues of race and class, yet his concern often took a pathologizing edge. In his writing, Atwater adopts a paternalistic outlook when discussing black Americans. Introducing his study on “The Condition of the Negro with Especial Reference to His Food,” Atwater declares that, “the negro problem, like many other sociological problems, represents a disorder in the body politic.”\textsuperscript{367} Before the “issues” with black Americans could be solved by Reformers, Atwater suggests first producing knowledge on the subject. America needs “a correct diagnosis of the case,” Atwater insists.\textsuperscript{368} He pathologizes these “issues,” blaming black Americans themselves for their subjugated position. Atwater insists that an unnamed subject—perhaps white Reformers and academics like himself—ought to “show him [the black American] his need and his opportunity for improvement” and “help him to help himself.”\textsuperscript{369} Like Methodists before him, Atwater evokes the ethos of the missionary to promote paternalistic approaches to civil rights issues. Perhaps because of his condescending position, Atwater views black Americans’ food choices as wholly unhealthy.\textsuperscript{370} Yet he does not consider that the social, political, and economic inequality rampant in postbellum America might be to blame for these nutritional choices. Instead, Atwater posits that,

\textsuperscript{366} Recall, as Gordon mentions, that the move to integrate home economics and domestic science curricula for women actually gained more traction at coeduced schools than at women’s colleges.
\textsuperscript{368} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{369} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid., 2.
Indeed, when we compare the food of the classes of men who produce the most as compared with those who produce the least labor we find it to be generally the case that those who are most active have liberal amounts of the flesh forming material of protein compounds in their food. The same is true in a general way of different races of people.\(^{371}\)

Although careful language qualifies Atwater’s statements, they are nevertheless pernicious. Atwater uses the emergent science of nutrition studies to make broad generalizations with consequences for working-class people, many of them non-white. By correlating working-class status with “those who produce the least labor,” Atwater latches onto the characterization of poor people as lazy. Then, he extends his theorizing to non-white people. Earlier, he mentions that wealthier people “eat a great deal of wheat flour, beans and peas, meat, fish and milk,” which have “larger quantities of...flesh forming substances” beneficial for nutrition.\(^{372}\) “The same is true in Europe,” he adds, cementing an idea that wealthy Europeans and Americans of European descent have superior nutrition to poor people and non-whites. His refusal to assess social, political, or economic realities as affecting diet suggests Atwater’s loyalty to a vision of wealthy white superiority.

In his report “Food & Diet Material: A Paper on Anthropometry,” Atwater points to a legacy of anthropometry, or “the systematic collection and correlation of measurements of the human body,” across Western civilization.\(^{373}\) By historicizing the practice in antiquity, Atwater is able to build a case for its reintroduction in his era. This time, Atwater sees the practice as suited for “direct observations of the dimensions of the bodies of persons of different age sex occupation and nationality.”\(^{374}\) Indeed,

\(^{371}\) Ibid.
\(^{372}\) Ibid.
\(^{374}\) Ibid., 1.
Atwater’s results reveal handwritten tables offering the measurements of a diverse study group. Here, he compares the average height of white Americans to that of “colored” Americans. Curiously, he distinguishes between “United States, white” and “British American” subjects. Perhaps recognizing the anthropological reputation of anthropometry, Atwater remarks that, “So well has anthropometry been reduced to a science that the binomial theorem has been found applicable to man measurement.”

His defensive tone hints at the struggle to legitimate his use of anthropometry, admittedly tied to his own political agenda. Writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Atwater was part of a wave of “social scientists attempting to support theories associating biological race with levels of cultural and intellectual development.” Perhaps this is why Atwater carefully notes the binomial theorem, a mathematical concept, in his discussion: he recognizes the academic trend and wishes to couch his political agenda in the more neutral-sounding terrain of mathematics.

The case of Professor Wilbur Olin Atwater is noteworthy for another reason: Atwater often collaborated with state actors, linking the spread of knowledge from university to nation and beyond. During his tenure at Wesleyan, Atwater directed a program for the United States Department of Agriculture. He was also the curator of the Section of Foods at the United States National Museum. The Wilbur Olin Atwater

375 Ibid., 5.
376 Ibid. While I am not entirely sure what to make of this distinction, Atwater collapses race, ethnicity, and nationality selectively throughout his study. In doing so, he mirrors a common approach taken by scholars in his time. Siobhan Somerville notes the same move of classifying British and American white people as two different “races” in Havelock Ellis’s 1900 sexological study, *Sexual Inversion*, in which the British sexologist examined and compared the bodies of so-called “inverts.” For more on this, see: Somerville, Siobhan B. *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Q Series. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000: 25.
377 Ibid., 2.
378 Ibid.
Papers housed at Wesleyan’s Special Collections and Archives even contain ribbons, programs, and correspondence from national and international conferences at which Atwater presented. The case of Wilbur Olin Atwater and his knowledge production at Wesleyan designates the university as porous to the outside world. Particularly, the applications of Atwater’s calorie quantification reveal how the university and the outside world work in concert to shape power relations. As Wilder reminds us, the American university has since its inception contributed private and the public sector efforts to suppress marginalized people. Whether barring women in his laboratories, using college custodians in his experiments, or contributing to a United States government campaign to influence the diets of incarcerated people and foreign subjects, Atwater and his ideas helped shape the racialized, gendered, and classed “other” for the campus and the world beyond.

While my focus remains on Atwater and his contributions as an example of Wesleyan’s engagement with theories of difference, we must recognize the “real world” impacts of curriculum in college classrooms at large. Especially with regard to theories of difference, we have to recognize—and contend with—the fact that these were, in their day, legitimized sciences. We must continue to explore the thread from university classrooms to political and social movements as well. Much of Atwater’s ideology was inspired by the social and moral Reformers of his era. The eugenics and sexology movements to which Atwater contributed—whether explicitly or implicitly—relied on the work of scientists like him in colleges across the nation. Combined with Progressive

---

380 Ibid.
381 Wilder, 11.
382 I choose to put “real world” in quotes here because, as I argue, the clear binary between the university and the world outside of it is in many ways an imagined one.
era moral Reformers on the ground, scientists helped to inculcate the younger
generations with popular ideologies—all while retaining a seemingly detached and
“scientific” approach.\footnote{Schuller, 8.}

While the line between colleges and the world outside of them has always been
blurred, the curriculum changes at Wesleyan (and in the nation at large) in the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provide an example of how ideas formulated
within the academy can quickly become implemented socially, politically, and
economically. Atwater’s own ties to the social reformers of his age reveal that the
opposite can be true as well: social movements and political ideologies can—and do—
also influence university curricula.

As I have revealed through the case study of Professor Atwater, administrators
and professors are culpable in the racist and sexist knowledge production that emerged
from coeducation-era Wesleyan. But these theories were often eagerly embraced by
students. A May 20, 1879 issue of the Argus, published within a couple decades of
Atwater’s experiment, lists among that year’s Senior Oratoricals D. A. Markham’s “The
Antipathy of Races” and L. F. Bower’s “The Negro Exodus.”\footnote{“Local,” The College Argus, May 20, 1879: 130.} Here, white students
adopted the lessons they received in classrooms by appropriating theories of race
difference to disseminate knowledge of their own.\footnote{In this case, white students engaged with racist discourses long before the quantification of the calorie.
While I position the calorie quantification as just one case study, it is a particularly strong example of the
racism embedded in Wesleyan’s curriculum at the time. The quantification of the calorie was clearly not
the exact racist discourse that encouraged these students’ exploration of such topics, but I suspect that
students were in conversation with (and learning from) professors who taught racist lessons in 1879 as
well.} A year later, reports the April 16,
1880 Argus, a student named F. B. Lynch gave a similar speech on “The Negro in
Many senior speeches given in the first few decades of coeducation deal with questions of race and especially scrutinize black Americans as a subject of study. Students’ fascination with this subject underscores the emphasis their instructors placed on it in classrooms. They remind us that racism in Wesleyan’s curriculum did not start and end with Wilbur Olin Atwater at the turn of the twentieth century. Through Atwater, Wesleyan’s first president Wilbur Fisk, and the phrenologist who visited Psi Upsilon’s fraternity house in 1908, we are reminded that these curricula, ideologies, and discourses are the bedrock of American knowledge production in higher education. Furthermore, we see their current iterations in the academy to this day, such as when President Michael Roth called the field of ethnic studies a “dying field” in a 2015 meeting with Asian American students.\footnote{Randall. “Wesleyan University President Reportedly Says Ethnic Studies Is Dying.” AsAm News (blog), February 7, 2015. https://asamnews.com/2015/02/07/wesleyan-university-president-reportedly-says-ethnic-studies-is-dying/. For more on this, see my conclusion.}

When spoon-fed to impressionable students, these ideas can quickly reproduce. Psi Upsilon brothers’ confidence satirizing the sciences was, as I revealed, directly related to the introduction of these theories within their classrooms. Whether articulated in senior speeches or joked about in a bid to prank a scamming phrenologist, students certainly applied the ideas their professors spread. Students reproduced their professors’ ideas for a number of reasons. For one, notions of the institution as a nuclear family entrenched by the \textit{in loco parentis} model of administration bolstered the faculty’s credibility by positioning them as authoritarian parent-like figures. Additionally, theories of race and sex difference were not just their professors’ and did not just proliferate at Wesleyan. After all, fields of knowledge like eugenics and sexology grew out of concerns

\footnote{“Clippings,” \textit{The College Argus}, April 16, 1880: 134.}
in the public realm; they were responses to social, political, and economic anxieties legitimized by the academy. Lastly, white male students saw and reproduced the unequal treatment of white women and people of color because their administrators did, too. Whether in unfairly allocating campus resources or engaging with exclusionary, sexist, racist curricula, the institution as a whole positioned white men as dominant.

In this chapter, I linked student rhetoric on coeducation—discussed in my previous chapter—to the theories of difference circulating in Wesleyan classrooms during the era. From Wilbur Olin Atwater’s racist exploration of the calorie to the Biology department’s course on personal hygiene, I highlighted the work within classrooms to cement hierarchies of race and gender. Previous work on coeducation has portrayed female students solely as victims and male students solely as perpetrators. Additionally, previous scholars of coeducation have not considered the role of curriculum in influencing university demography or campus life. As I have revealed throughout this chapter, that narrative is incomplete. In downplaying the involvement of Wesleyan’s faculty and staff in producing the conditions that abruptly ended coeducation, we redeem the university and absolve it of complicity.

While I, too, assess the coeducation project by centering student voices and acknowledging students’ role in negotiating identity within the university structure, I situate the university within its proper nineteenth century administrative logic and scrutinize its curriculum.

Scholars Gauri Viswanathan, Catherine Prendergast, and Nancy Abelmann all suggest that the custodial power and kinship ties in American higher education directly correlate with imperial ambitions and questions of race. Abelmann and Prendergast point out that the reproduction of familial kinship is only ever extended to white college
students. Hence, seemingly unrelated elements of *in loco parentis* and theories of difference at coeducated Wesleyan reveal the nineteenth century university as an apparatus of disciplinary and (after the matriculation of women whose fathers taught there) sovereign power that entrenched whiteness and masculinity. While administrative arms policed students morally, knowledge produced and disseminated in classrooms bolstered hateful ideologies festering in the outside world. Through the disciplinarian approach, administrators and faculty members—who were sometimes also related to their students—passed ideas about race and gender onto the student body. Therefore, the Progressive era university became a site for creating the upstanding (and invariably white), gender conforming moral citizen.

---

388 Prendergast and Abelmann, 39. They trace this dynamic to Reconstructionist tendencies to systematically exclude black Americans in the post-Civil War South.
Conclusion

The coeducation experiment at Wesleyan, which lasted from 1872 to 1912, coincided with a political and academic moment at which whiteness, femininity, and masculinity were all being redefined by institutional, local, and national forces alike. In the era between Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, genteel Victorian ambitions collided with remnants of Jacksonian chauvinism to reposition white, college-educated men. Simultaneously, white women who sought the expansion of rights in the pre-Suffrage era were characterized by campus publications, the popular press, and even so-called objective sciences as both desexed and hypersexualized. Male students regarded their female classmates with hostility and harassment, sometimes even with violence. Despite the figure of the “new woman” gaining increasing acceptance on many campuses nationwide, Wesleyan men doubled down on their resistance to coeducation as the experiment progressed. Further, white middle-class women’s incorporation into the university at a moment of racist knowledge production underscores the way white womanhood was weaponized—and often weaponized itself—to demarcate racial
divides. Administrators and professors were not just complicit in excluding women either. On the contrary, white male faculty shaped the contours of the coeducation experiment by instituting it alongside curriculum changes meant to bolster theories of gender and racial difference. All of this took place against the backdrop of the Gilded Age. As America’s demography was changing, Wesleyan’s internal transformations were a microcosm of the wide scale efforts by white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants to maintain a hold on New England and the nation.389

My intention in taking on this work extends beyond a simple desire to expose the dark legacies of the space we inhabit at Wesleyan and in the nation at large. I am interested in holding a mirror to our current moment, in reflecting on the state of the contemporary university as such, and in asking ourselves to what extent we have changed. I am not interested in indicting the university, the fraternity, or any of the other institutions studied. Nor am I interested in redeeming them for their faults.

An article published this year in online magazine Topic confirms my project’s relevance to our current moment. In an exploration of coeducated fraternities on the rise at Wesleyan and elsewhere, reporter and Wesleyan alumna Reyhan Harmanci claims that “The Future of Frats Is Female.”390 Her work centers women recently inducted into the Xi chapter of the Psi Upsilon fraternity at Wesleyan. Harmanci’s interviewees inhabit the same rooms in which the traveling phrenologist lectured the all-white, all-male members in 1908. The message Harmanci and these women send is that today’s coeducated,

racially diverse fraternity both is and is not the same place that the traveling phrenologist visited more than a century ago:

“One of our biggest selling points coming into the space of Psi U is being able to change it,” says Jacob Snyder, 22, who served as Psi U chapter president in 2018. Given that Wesleyan is a progressive place “attuned to social policies,” he says, “there is not a place anymore for white male organizations—any solely white male organizations.”

Yet Harmanci acknowledges the “old-boys” networks that still define the organization. Members, whether consciously or not, reiterate her argument. The fraternity’s house manager, for instance, “describes her work as house manager as ‘mother-slash-maid of the house,’” but “strongly disputes the suggestion that her duties are related to her gender.” Even aesthetically, “high ceilings, a dusty common room, a ping-pong table, a lone plastic cup” alongside “yellowed photographs of fraternity brothers past” paint a picture of the fraternity’s storied past. So does the practice of referring to members of all genders as “brothers.”

Four years into Psi Upsilon’s coeducation project, (re)negotiations of gender are ever present. Harmanci’s journalism and the responses of her interviewees suggest that this ongoing process is redefining what it means to be a member of the organization regardless of one’s gender. Women are grappling with their presence in this site of historical violence. Men, too, are learning what it means to have an inclusionary social space. The question of race—only implicitly addressed in Harmanci’s article—is another negotiation in these spaces. Despite Harmanci’s reflections on womanhood reaching new, previously uncharted terrains, she does not explore what this means for the

---

391 Ibid., para. 10.
392 Ibid., para. 33.
393 Ibid., para. 26.
394 Ibid., para. 1.
395 Ibid., para. 10.
students of color (and especially women of color) increasingly joining these organizations. Rather than assume changing demographics in fraternities—both due to coeducation and increasing measures to admit students of color into Greek societies—result in fundamental changes to organizations as Harmanci does, I ask what fraternities on this campus and elsewhere are doing to grapple with their dark legacies. As Jessica Harris, Ryan Barone, and Hunter Finch argue, “Because HWFS [historically white fraternities and sororities] were constructed and are currently maintained through and by exclusion and white supremacy, these legacies cannot be undone just by increasing representational diversity.”

In our era of fraternity coeducation—a project Wesleyan’s President Michael S. Roth sees as undoing fraternities’ historical “proclivity to discrimination and violence”—the questions raised by the initial coeducation experiment remain as relevant as ever. While I applaud President Roth for addressing the racist and sexist history of fraternities, administrators often turn a selective eye toward Greek societies to avoid confronting their own role in reproducing systems of oppression. As I revealed in my third chapter, nineteenth century students’ sexism and racism often stemmed from the very curriculum their professors taught. Quotas administrators placed on women’s achievements shaped the discourse of male students’ frustration with women’s Phi Beta Kappa induction rates and other academic accomplishments.

Ours is a moment in which the University President and Board of Trustees see fraternity coeducation as a viable solution to centuries of gender and racial violence in

---

396 Harris, Jessica, Ryan Barone, and Hunter Finch. “The Property Functions of Whiteness Within Fraternity and Sorority Culture and Its Impact on Campus.” New Directions for Student Services, March 1, 2019: 24.
397 Ibid., para. 22.
398 Knight, 35.
the university. But fraternity coeducation is not enough. Administrative injustices like the aforementioned Scott Backer scandal reiterate that sexism is a force endemic to this university.\textsuperscript{399} Similarly, President Michael Roth referring to ethnic studies as a “dying field” in a 2015 meeting with Asian American students reveals an administrative disregard for epistemologies that seek to undo a historically racist and Eurocentric Wesleyan curriculum.\textsuperscript{400} Needless to say, fraternities are not the only force on this campus reproducing sexist and racist ideologies.

In the time of its founding, Wesleyan University’s Board of Trustees included merchants who profited off of the slave trade.\textsuperscript{401} Many of our university’s buildings\textsuperscript{402} are still named after them.\textsuperscript{403} Today, the college profits off of fossil fuels, the prison-industrial complex, and the Israeli military occupation of Palestine.\textsuperscript{404} In every age, the material arm of our private university lends support to nefarious causes while the school flaunts a progressive student body and faculty.\textsuperscript{405} While some critical university scholars

\textsuperscript{399} Of course, the irony of President Roth invoking fraternities’ proclivity to sexual violence while the Title IX process was overseen by a perpetrator of sexual misconduct cannot be overlooked.
\textsuperscript{402} Although he was a professor and not a benefactor, it is worth noting and problematizing that the building Hall-Atwater continues to bear the name of a man whose white supremacist views are well-documented.
\textsuperscript{403} Of course, these are not the only nefarious nineteenth century investments Wesleyan made and connections the university sustained. For instance, the Russell family, who donated Russell House to Wesleyan, was heavily involved in the Chinese Opium trade. Their company, the Russell Manufacturing Company, was founded in the same year Wesleyan opened, 1831. Before they trafficked opium, the Russells had amassed wealth from the transatlantic slave trade. For more on this, see: https://www.loc.gov/item/mm80038562/.
\textsuperscript{405} While we see knowledge production like Atwater’s as neither benevolent nor progressive today, it is worth noting that in their age these scholars were contributing to liberal social movements. Likewise,
attribute this dynamic to neoliberalism, I hope to reveal through my own work and through the scholars with whom I am in conversation that this has always been the case.\textsuperscript{406} I turn once more to critical historian Craig Steven Wilder, who maintains that American universities “stood beside church and state as the third pillar of a civilization built on bondage.”\textsuperscript{407} In \textit{The Reorder of Things}, critical university scholar Roderick Ferguson considers the contemporary university as such. He argues that, “power enlisted the academy and things academic as conduits for conveying unprecedented forms of political economy to state and capital” toward a “valorization of minority difference and culture.”\textsuperscript{408} From the conditional acceptance of women at Wesleyan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to the contemporary tokenization of women (especially women of color) in fraternity spaces or the commodification of students of color, universities have used marginalized people to flaunt diverse demographics while contouring the campus ideologically and through knowledge production. In our moment, where the neoliberal academy is once more relying on scientific knowledge production to gain prestige and measure excellence, we must recognize the bonds between the university and the world beyond. Further, as critical scholars we must remain wary of the university as a whole, acknowledging the settler-colonial, racist, sexist, and classist logics on which it has been built.

\footnote{female students who echoed racist rhetoric about white women's inclusion also saw themselves as forward-thinking progressives.}


Bibliography

Archival Sources

*Alumni Record of Wesleyan University*. Edited by Frank W. Nicolson. 4 ed. New Haven, CT: The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Company, 1911.
“Catalogue of the Corporation, Faculty, and Students.” Middletown, CT: W. D. Starr, 1836.
“Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the Wesleyan University Fall Term 1831.” Middletown, CT: W. D. Starr, 1831.
"Course Catalog." edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT, 1884-1900
“Fifth and Sixth Annual Reports of the Museum.” In Wesleyan Museum Records, edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT: Special Collections & Archives, 1877: Box 1, Folder 1.

"Ladies at the University." In Coeducation Collection, edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT: Special Collections & Archives, 1883.


"Missionary Lyceum Records." edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT: Special Collections & Archives: Box 1, Folder 1.


"Syracuse University." The College Argus, October 9 1872, 22-23.


“To the Board of Trustees of Wesleyan University.” In Coeducation Collection, edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT: Special Collections & Archives.


Wilding, Clinton F. In Alumni Council Collection of Recollections, edited by Wesleyan University. Middletown, CT: Special Collections and Archives 2009.

Published Sources


Cruca, Susan M. "Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement." General Studies Writing Faculty Publications 1 (2005).


Davies, Beth. “How to Get to Long Lane School: An Ethnography of a Place” (Wesleyan University, 2009).


"Frederick Jackson Turner." PBS Interactive.


Harris, Jessica, Ryan Barone, and Hunter Finch. “The Property Functions of Whiteness Within Fraternity and Sorority Culture and Its Impact on Campus.” New Directions for Student Services, March 1, 2019.


