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## Midterm Paper

Throughout the history of post-secondary education, students is a theme that constantly recurs. Focusing on the time period pre-revolutionary war to 1890, major social and political forces have influenced students. Tracing the theme of students through the material we have covered in the units up until 1890, the essay starts with the influence of the “Oxbridge Model” on future colonial students, the founding of major universities under the guise of inclusively educating native people only to begin the process of excluding students from higher education, and the political forces that influenced students in eighteenth century Harvard. The essay wraps up with the political forces that influenced African American students and the social and political forces that kept women students out of higher education for too long.

The beginning of higher education in America was heavily influenced by the English and their “Oxbridge Model” (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). The “Oxbridge Model” focused on the example of Oxford and Cambridge universities. These universities arranged residential colleges within a university structure while uniquely holding the responsibility of guiding the social and academic lives of students at the center of their mission (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). Early colonists sought to create their own, perfected version of the English model. In hopes of creating a “civilizing experience that ensured a progression of responsible leaders for church and state” (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). Unfortunately, they failed at creating the perfect version as quickly as they started. The colonists continued the Oxford tradition of pointing out students’ socioeconomic status through academic robes and social rank on class rosters. The student body was also limited to white Christian young men. There were attempts to diversify the student body by offering scholarships to Native Americans. The College of William and Mary hosted a group

of young Native American men. When they returned home their fathers said they became, “unhealthy, lazy, and unable to make good decisions” (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). The tribal elders asked colonial leaders if they wanted to send their “Anglo boys” to them for an education to turn them into “strong and wise men” (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). The Native Americans declined the scholarship program and diversity stalled. It is disheartening that colonists did not consider what they would have gained from the Native Americans and how different our educational system would be if it started with a heavy Native American influence. It surely would not have taken until 2021 to realize acknowledging the Native Americans for the land the colleges were built on would be a respectful idea. This seems to be the beginning of limited access, power for white men, and an elitist attitude for higher education. The English had a heavy social influence with their class system. This was passed on to the early colonial colleges and unfortunately continued on evolving into different forms and is present still today.

In the early 1600’s the colonists, funded by the “stay-at-home English”, colonized America under the guise of converting the native “heathens” to Christianity (Wright, 1988). The colonists used the idea of Indian colleges as a means to educate natives. An advocate said, “it is not the nature of men, but the education of men, which makes them barbarous and uncivill, and therefore chaunge the education of men, and you shall see that their nature will be greatly rectified and corrected” (Wright, 1988). As you can see from the man’s quote, he was not the most educated person himself. It turns out colonists reached out to the English, told them they were converting “Infidels” and money would be sent in support for, “the erecting of some Churches and Schooles, for the education of the children of those Barbarians” (Wright, 1988). In 1620, much of the money raised from England had been awarded but, “not a penny went toward the conversion and education of would-be native scholars” (Wright, 1988). It was not until 1622

when native riot ended plans for a college and it was realized money was not going where the donors thought it was (Wright, 1988). This guise continued for years and was how Harvard College was able to gain funding to create their institution (Wright, 1988). Cambridge, the College of William and Mary, and Dartmouth were all founded under the same guise, to educate the natives and convert them to Christianity (Wright, 1988). Native “students” were used in a political scheme to steal money and fund the special interests of the people in power. Once colonists in power realized they could use social forces to fund their interests, the focus was taken off of the education of the native people. Very rarely did any funds go for the education or care of the native people (Wright, 1988). The creation of Harvard, Cambridge, the College of William and Mary, and Dartmouth started as an “inclusive” endeavor to create education and include the natives. Although, it turned into the beginning of educating their own people exclusively.

Major political and social forces influenced the students of eighteenth century Harvard. Harvard felt responsible for the behavior of its young students and spent time disciplining them (Moore, 1976). In 1708, after a flux of students enrolled they began to push back against the authority of the college (Moore, 1976). The increase in student enrollment brought an increase in drunkenness, stealing and lying (Moore, 1976). Harvard could have decided to clean house and dismiss any students with poor behavior. They chose not to, they needed the tuition money but also wanted their students to challenge them and succeed (Moore, 1976). There was more of a balance between institution and student. Now, the institutions have gotten so big there is no way to challenge their authority. We have lost that along the way. Colonists challenged the leaders and demanded changes. Now things are swept under the rug and it feels that you would be too if you are not careful. The first force that influenced students was the social force. The crowded

campus and large enrollment numbers brought in new groups of students who challenged the social norm for behavior on campus (Moore, 1976). The second force that influenced students on campus was the political force. Students started to challenge the laws the college made to govern the students' behavior (Moore, 1976). Normally students would not bother with the laws, they would just break the law, follow the punishment and move on. This new group of students formed a student committee and negotiated the terms of a students' sentence (Moore, 1976). By tolerating this student behavior, Harvard set themselves apart, "the presence of their "subculture" did much to set the tone of college life for the students who participated in it and much to set the limits and constraint in which the college and all its members shared" (Moore, 1976).

Political forces influenced African Americans in their pursuit of higher education between 1865 and 1910 (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). A few black colleges were founded in the North just before the end of the Civil War (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). To allow African American students to pursue higher education, "additional provisions" were made (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). Without political forces African American students would not have had enough support to participate in higher education. The funding for black colleges came from philanthropic groups, black churches, and the Freedmen's Bureau (state and federal government) (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). The Land Grant Act also provided funding as well as curriculum in agriculture and mechanics (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). Even with the funding, it was not enough and it was not reliable (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). Certain policies were enacted to continue to keep African American students from flourishing within higher education. Such as not allowing some black colleges to offer graduate programs or professional degrees (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). Some of the philanthropy that was offered to black institutions had a tendency to track African American

students into skilled trades and crafts thus keeping them systematically segregated (Thelin, 2011).

Major social and political forces have influenced women as students in the pre-revolutionary war to 1890. Due to the social norms of the era, women were not considered for admission to higher education (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). Most women of this period were not considered as students and spent their time as a homemaker and a caretaker of children. As we have seen, higher education was specifically for young, white, protestant men to learn to become leaders in the church or local politics (Thelin & Gasman, 2017)(Thelin, 2011). Women were normally educated until primary school or only had basic literacy. Between 1860 and 1900 institutions called female academies and female seminaries started to appear (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). The first female academy is thought to have been founded in 1791 (Thelin, 2011). Most of these first institutions for women focused on studies such as home economics, education, and “finishing school” (Thelin & Gasman, 2017)(Thelin, 2011). Between the 1860s and the 1870s many of the institutions for women were “degree-granting colleges in their own right” (Thelin & Gasman, 2017). As soon as women were starting to hit their stride, they faced a major setback. In 1973, Dr. Edward Clarke published a book, *Sex in Education Or A Fair Chance For the Girls* (Gordon, 1987). This book claimed that, “women who studied the same subjects in the same manner as men risked permanent injury to their reproductive health” (Gordon, 1987). Many critics of women joining as students in higher education widely cited Dr. Clarke’s publication (Gordon, 1987). When people could not push women out using biology, they tried to socially sabotage them. The next rumor was that women who went to college would become “unsexed” and men would not find them attractive so therefore the female students would not be able to get married (Gordon, 1987). Most men on campus, faculty and students gave the female students a

hard time but some just ignored them (Gordon, 1987). Unfortunately, Dr. Clarke's "scientific findings' held on for way too long. It was not until the 1890s that the climate for female students started to shift. Women as students in higher education suffered at the hand of social forces keeping them out of education. As well as no political forces or policies were in place to protect them. For reasons we cannot be sure of, men spent time and energy trying to keep women away from education and their fields of study.

### References

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