



Is Coeducation From the 1960s-1970s in the USA a Feminist Movement?

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Abstract. In this paper, the intended purpose of coeducation, and women's situation in the coeducation revolution that took place in the 1960s-1970s will be discussed to illustrate that the coeducation revolution is not a feminist movement. In the studies in the 1980s, most researchers sharply pointed out that the coeducation revolution was a self-interest strategy for all-male education institutions to maintain the high-quality source of students, their economic operation, and academic status concisely without many illustrations. To firm the view, the education policy of Amherst College in 1974 and the college magazine designed for the one-hundred coeducation anniversary of Middlebury College will be analyzed to see through the male attitudes towards coeducation and the difficulties women students and faculty faced in coed colleges, providing evidence and demonstration of the deceptive essence of coeducation revolution. By analyzing the essence of revolution, the paper is written intended to bring the reflection on women's place nowadays, ringing the alarm of facing the reality of women rather than indulging in extolling women's power in "electronic-only equality".

Keywords: coeducation, feminism, high education, women.

1 Introduction

Speaking of coeducation, choosing a coed college with both male and female students is a common choice for most people nowadays. Do you know before the 1960s, most high education institutions block women out of the door even though female college students account for almost 50 % of college students in America? Most people may automatically treat coeducation as an advanced result of feminism. However, the truth is on the opposite side. Personally, the coeducation revolution in the 1960s to 1970s is not a feminist movement. In this paper, the motivation of the coeducation revolution, the effects of coeducation on women will be discussed to illustrate that the coeducation revolution in the 1960s to 1970s is not a feminist movement. In the second wave of feminism, education was discussed as one of the heated topics. Before the 1960s, most of the high education institutions, for example, the Ivy League, refused to accept women as students. However, from the end of the 1960s to the 1970s, lots of single-sex colleges chose to adopt coeducation. In 1969, Yale University took the first place in

coeducation, starting to admit female students. With the debut of Title IX Education Amendments in 1972, more and more single-sex education institutions chose to admit opposite-sex students. With the opening of education opportunities, women had more opportunities to access to high education, rather than having women's college as the only access. A large percentage of studies about coeducation were produced in the 1980s. Feminists, educators, and historians fiercely discussed coeducation, contributing to compiling the coeducation construction history of schools, analysis of women's place in coeducation, and discussing the disadvantages and potential development direction of high education. In the twentieth century, recompilation of institution coeducation history and investigation of the development of female-only colleges were talked about among the limited number of studies which is related to the coeducation wave. In lots of studies in the 1980s, authors directly reveal that the essence of coeducation is the strategy for the self-benefit of all-male institutions [1]. However, most of the studies lay great importance on the argument of the women's difficulties caused by sexism and the experience of women. This view seemed to be the consensus of most researchers, but most of them use simple one or two sentences to reveal the nature of coeducation. There were seldom studies focused on illustrating the relationship between coeducation and all-male colleges. I totally agree that the coeducation revolution is not a feminist movement since the purpose and supplied resources are designed for the benefit of all-male institutions, rather than women. Analysis of the 1974 education policy of Amherst College and Middlebury College journal in 1983 will be included in this paper to bring a closer view to the coeducation revolution. The analysis of the event which seemed to benefit women will also bring a reflection on the women's place and misleading propaganda of women's power without tangible benefits in contemporary society. It may also contribute to a reflection on avoiding falling into the traps of over-exquisite and exaggerated propaganda when fighting for human rights.

2 Analysis

To illustrate the research question, the basic characteristic of feminist movements should be discussed first. For most movements, the intended purpose is to chase the right equality. And the major participants are feminists. In the following paragraphs, the discussion about the benefited role in coeducation and women's place in coeducation will be presented.

2.1 Coeducation, a self-benefit strategy for all-male college

The purpose of admitting women is to help the further development of the institutions. Males were the benefited and dominant role in coeducation, rather than women. By analyzing the attitudes of the decision-makers and the male students, the intention of the coeducation revolution can be found. Take Amherst College, one of the famous private liberal art colleges which act as a member of Five College Archives, as an example. In 1969, Amherst College started its process of contributing to coeducation. However, the coeducation policy didn't adopt by the Board of Trustees until 1975 [2].

In the final report of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) to the Board of Trustees as well as the Education Policy of Amherst College announced in February 1974, CEP offered their observation and response to male students' and Board members' worries. Both the two significant school official documents about coeducation lay great length on defending coeducation itself apart from demonstrating possible models that would work for coeducation. The report for the Board was constructed in two parts while defending coeducation took the first part. In the education policy, CEP used ten pages to argue against the worries of school students and faculties. After analyzing the answered worries of Board members and male students, it is plain to be seen that there was a large part of male students show resistance publicly. At the end of page two of the education policy, it was directly mentioned that coeducation objectors think "a sense of fraternal pride and male solidarity" is the key element of education further development in Amherst College [3]. However, the importance was not attached to "solidarity" but "essential maleness". In the education policy, there were lots of worries about losing the honor created by proud male-created traditions in the college, which reflect the sexist stereotypes impression imposed on women. For example, there was one argument that the entry of women will distract men from pursuing intellectual excellence seriously. The assumption of women's learning motivation in high education or women's intelligence reflects the hidden sexist view that women are unable to pursue intellectual development. In another argument, the discommender showed the worries of losing the dominance if women study together—"The presence of women in the classroom in large numbers might lead to excessive sexual role-playing, inhibition of male expression, and even the driving of men away from subjects traditionally popular with women" [3]. In addition, when talking about the possible loss brings by coeducation, the quality of the athletic team and excellent men singing were mentioned in the education policy. It was reasonable to take the athletic ability of the sports team as a possible disadvantage since in 19c women avoid sports to avoid being evaluated as "too competitive" [4]. However, treating the loss of male singing as a cost implies a preconceived image that women students can't sing as well as men students. Words used to express potential are not included in the expression. From the worries contain in the 1974 Education Policy of Amherst, defensiveness, arrogance, and prejudice found in the assumptions without foundation reveal the resistance of males.

The coeducation admitting process can also reflect the resistance of the Board of Trustees towards coeducation. According to Amherst in the world published by Amherst College Press, Long-Rang Planning Committee suggested developing coeducation for the first time in 1969. However, the board rejected it. Furthermore, to delay the thing, the board asked the newly appointed school president and the Select Committee to make further investigation on coeducation. In November of 1972, the Select Committee made a report to the board and recommend coeducation. Again, the board voted against the proposal. In 1973, the board just admitted the equal opportunity for women education. The trustee had different opinion on the application of coeducation [5]. Finally, in 1975, part of the board agreed to admit women in the situation that younger new trustees enter the board. Even some of the trustees were forced by the pressure to choose to admit women. [2] Think of the constructed structure of the Final Report of

CEP together with the rejection of the board, it is undeniable that the reason why Amherst admits women is for its self-interest. The report was formed into two parts. Part one defense for coeducation while part two discusses the potential size of students for coeducation with data analysis. In part one, CEP states the justice in principle that providing equal opportunities for qualified students to assess Amherst regardless of gender, followed by an explanation of how coeducation can improve the quality of education. Then, competition, quality of applications, and peer competitors were mentioned to illustrate the necessity of admitting women. After that, five paragraphs were used to elaborate on the relationship between coeducation and the competitiveness of Amherst College. To defend coeducation, CEP paid a lot of paragraphs to illustrate that coeducation will help Amherst to maintain competitiveness. Since the board was emotionally conflicted about coeducation, maintaining the economic safety and the quantity and quality of student applications were the only reason for them to accept women students.

In both the education policy and the report for the Board, some parts of the text divulge the main purpose of admitting coeducation obviously. In the original text of the education policy, it was clarified that the broadest meaning of coeducation is to maintain the institution alive and reinforce the status of Amherst [3]. What's more, when analyzing the advantages that would be brought by coeducation, CEF directed pointed out that coeducation will contribute to a 50% increase in student application, while helping the selection of high-quality high school applicators. In the final report, CEF suggested to the Board that coeducation can be developed when there is no economic growth. Basing on the analysis above and the mainstream attitude of men students and alumni that making fun of the frailty of women over beer, or meat is one of the luxuries of Amherst [6], it is obvious that the purpose of admitting women students were not serve for the evolution of women's education right. Amherst College was not the only institution that choose coeducation for its benefit. Yale College, the pioneer in the coeducation revolution, used coeducation as a means to compete for first-class application and enrollment as Princeton College and other colleges did [1]. It is not surprising since most of the decision-makers in this revolution were male. Women took limited influence. Faced with economic recession and the new value of the rebellious young generation, coeducation is definitely a suitable way to ensure economic security for high education institutions.

2.2 Limited benefits for women

After analyzing coeducation from the perspective of all-male institutions, analysis from the perspective of influenced females, women students as well as women faculties will be presented in this section. A report on the quality of undergraduate life of Amherst in 1980 and a published address in Middlebury College magazine for one hundred years coeducation celebration will be analyzed.

2.2.1 Women students.

The quality of college life report was written based on a questionnaire filled out by the college students. From the report, the cultural climax of the campus and the institution regulations and facility design are found unfriendly to women students. 77% percentage of female students and 59% percentage of male students believed that sexist discrimination existed on the campus. Objectification of women, defensiveness, and hostilities from some peer male students which emerge from remarks and social habits brought female students a sense of exclusiveness, feeling they are the "second class status at College". Women were not "appreciated as an individual", even being treated as a sexual objects. The vulgar games in the interaction of fraternity, an influential student organization with female students would be the best evidence. In the report, the published offensive articles and letters on Amherst Students, slanders, libels, and physical assaults were recorded as sexist incidents. Except for the discrimination from peer students, course content design also showed sexism. According to the report, there was no work authored by women on topics that related to women in several syllabi in literature. "Some women and men believed that men were having trouble accepting women's views as creditable or legitimate and that men often failed to make the connection between traditions and patterns that exclude women" [7]. Comprehensive studies found that women students had lower self-esteem compared to male students who has the same grades or lower grades [8]. Although coeducation brought women more opportunities to assess to high education, women students' mental health and learning outcomes in a sexist atmosphere in which the course content may be sexist should be worried.

Not only the chilly campus climax was not suitable for women to study, but also the equipped faculty, institution, and facility design did not give enough resources for women to live and study in the campus community. Both male students and female students in Amherst required more women faculties and administrators, especially female students. University is an important stage for personal psychological maturity. For young women who were placed in a discriminated circumstance, in which the male-to-female ratio was four-to-one, the power of a role model and support can lead the young female a direction in vast and hazy. Female faculties or administrations can easily understand the need of women students since they are more experience in facing the challenges caused by sexism. Need-satisfied support and understanding can direct young women in the way they want. Thus, female faculty members and female administrations are essential for the intellectual development and personality growth of young women students. However, due to the limited number of women faculty in Amherst College, generally, the women faculties were overworked. According to the report of women in Amherst written by John William Ward, the president, there were only twelve women faculty worked as regular, full-time job in the one-hundred- and-fifty-member faculty team in Amherst [9]. The support can be provided by the women faculty was limited by their underestimated teaching work and possible exclusion from male faculty. As for the institution design, students complained that the college provided limited ways to report problems. The supportive channel was Amherst Student, the newspaper of Amherst College, and personal letters. As the report mentioned that the institution was in the transition stage of coeducation, setting a way for suggestions-posting or problems-asking was necessary since women students were the minority compared to male

students. Advice from women students can help the transition and improve women students' living and study experience. Before admitting women students, school administrations clearly understood the sexist opinions and resistant attitudes of male students. In the circumstance that the male-to-female ratio was intentionally controlled, setting up a channel can ensure the quality of experience in Amherst. However, the college didn't set it. In addition, women also mentioned their desire to improve campus lighting, and emergency telephones. One of the principal security needs of women was the student body- including security education. Poor management of campus security, unreasonable design of facilities, or an unfriendly campus climate is the possible reason for women students to raise the security problems. Whatever the cause was, it is the duty of the institution to make sure students' safety. However, the College didn't fulfill its responsibilities. It was difficult for women students to develop with limited support and a discriminatory environment. Although women students had more options in college selection, the provided environment didn't suit women students' basic needs. The negative effects of the coeducation environment were greater than the advantages led by coeducation itself. It is hard to define the coeducation revolution, which did not benefit women as a feminist movement. In the report, the Committee attributed the smooth transition of coeducation to the cooperation of male students and the institution. The contribution of women students was not mentioned, making the first group of women students seemed like a tool for coeducation operation.

2.2.2 Women faculty

For women faculty, the coeducation revolution didn't change inequity in careers. On the Celebrating anniversary of the centennial of coeducation held in 1982 in Middlebury College, one of the famous private liberal arts colleges which started to enroll women students in 1883, representative faculties and administrations were invited to talk about the problems in coeducation in Middlebury. Nicholas Clifford, the provost, and academic vice president mentioned that 8.3 percent of faculty were made up of women in 1975[10]. Even in an institution with such a long history of admitting women, the percentage of women faculty was that small, not to mention the colleges adopted coeducation in the 1960s to 1970s. In the report on challenges of coeducation, it was mentioned that women faculty have very little right to speak in committees since only small numbers of women faculties were distributed in the same committees. Women had a weak social connection with each other. Besides, the Middlebury community was small, and the social life of women was limited, especially for women who have small children. Middlebury had similar problems with tenured professors as Amherst did. Carol Rifelj, the chairman of the French department in Middlebury, argued that women faculty were considered of a lower rank. There were few women chairman and women tenured professors. She said, "the administration structure was dominated by men". Despite the inequality caused by institutions and colleagues, women faculty also faced students' prejudice [10]. Compared to male professors, people tend to doubt women professors' abilities rather than trust their competence before proving themselves capable. Women professors paid more effort to win respect, especially the respect of male students. The ability of women faculty tended to be underestimated while having a limited voice in faculty meetings and administration structure. Women faculty's needs

such as social life are neglected. Women faculty also suffer from stereotypes and inequality in coeducation. Even the women faculty in Middlebury, a college with more experience in coeducation still faced prejudice and inequality, not to mention the situation of women faculty in institutions which just adopt coeducation for several years. For example, one of the women who worked in CEF in Amherst "was turned into a feminist" after working there [2]. Coeducation didn't improve the condition of women faculty. Thus, the coeducation revolution in the 1960s-1970s was not a feminist movement.

3 Conclusion

To conclude, the coeducation revolution in the 1960s to 1970s was not a feminist movement. The benefited and dominant role in the revolution was all-male institutions, which took coeducation as a strategy to maintain the economic security and quality of application source. Although coeducation gave women more chances to assess to high education, there were no other substantial benefits for women. Both women students and faculty still stayed discriminated and prejudiced environment in the coeducation institution. The intention of analyzing the coeducation revolution is to remind women nowadays to face up to the challenges and avoid being confused by the slogan-only equality in the digital world, which provides limited benefits than it seems. This paper might help to inspire reflection on women's place and contributes to inspiring necessary support finding for women in the contemporary world. For further studies, the positive meanings of the coeducation revolution and the process of women colleges admitting male students can be choices since most studies focus on criticizing shortcomings of the coeducation process of all-male institutions.

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