

Similarities Between the Second Generation of Female Psychologists and Female Students in Cal
Poly's Child Development Program.

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By

Jenny Delk

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ABSTRACT:

This essay aims to uncover the similarities between female students in Cal Poly's Psychology and Child Development Department and the second generation of female psychologists in American society. The department's history will be examined in order to establish its importance at Cal Poly, a traditionally vocational institution. Additionally, this essay will consider how female students in the department argued its importance and validity through on campus advocacy and their senior projects. The essay will close with a section detailing faculty perspectives on the validity of psychology and child development as a true science amongst other disciplines at Cal Poly. The goal of this essay is to illustrate how female students were able to aid in the progress of Cal Poly's Psychology and Child Development Department in similar ways to that of the second generation of female psychologists who aided in the progress of the discipline in American society and academia at large.

INTRODUCTION:

“The field of child study extended more or less easily out of the belief that children were appropriately – and, of course, naturally – entrusted to the care of women.”¹ As David Noon concludes, from its very conception in the 1920s, child development has been intimately tied with the role of women as mothers and child educators. The women responsible for sparking interest in children's welfare and development came largely from the second generation of American female psychologists, despite suffering discrimination from their male counterparts

¹ David Hoogland Noon, “Situating Gender and Professional Identity in American Child Study, 1880-1910,” *History of Psychology* 7, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 108.

who denied them access into scientific research institutions within academia.² Regardless, these women were able to make considerable progress within the discipline even without being allowed into academia or experimental laboratories. In addition to this, several women from the second generation of American psychologists came from multiple different ethnic and religious backgrounds, bringing with them a heightened awareness of minority issues. Thus, as women became more integrated into the discipline of American psychology during the 1920s through their involvement with child development, they faced stronger discrimination. Despite this, they still brought awareness to intrapersonal issues such as minority and children's welfare and created new methods to address them. Women in Cal Poly's Psychology and Child Development Department during the late 1960s to the 1980s faced similar inequalities while simultaneously shifting focus onto comparable issues through their senior projects and on campus advocacy. This essay will examine both groups of women in an effort to highlight the similarities they shared in their efforts to expand the field of psychology and child development in American society and at Cal Poly.

HISTORIOGRAPHY:

Ample research has been done on female American psychologists concerning both the first and second generations, the latter of which has just recently become the subject of further study. The historiography of these two generations suggests they faced similar amounts of discrimination but in different fashions. This essay is more concerned with the second generation of female psychologists, but it is important to note that these women were highly influenced by their predecessors. In the 2008 article "Searching for the Second Generation of American

² Hoogland Noon, 109.

Women Psychologists,” the authors Elizabeth Johnston and Ann Johnson define the second generation of female psychologists as earning their doctorates between the years of 1906 to 1945.³ The authors further characterize the second generation as being less outwardly feminist while still raising awareness regarding minority groups and promoting inclusivity within the field. This awareness came more easily to the second generation, because the group included more minority populations, such as black, catholic, Jewish, and lower socio-economic classes of women. The article argues that although the second generation of female psychologists in America didn’t subscribe to a feminist agenda, they still made great strides in the domains they were allowed to occupy.⁴

The separation of women from men in the field of psychology is further explored by Laurel Furumoto in the 1987 book chapter “On the Margins: Women and the Professionalization of Psychology in the United States, 1890-1940.” Furumoto specifies “two different working classes of psychology: academicians and practitioners,” with men occupying the first group and women being separated into the second.⁵ The chapter claims that although female psychologists often shared intellectual similarities with their male peers, they were placed in an “occupational status relegated to inferior positions” such as applied domains including clinical and educational psychology. These applied “practitioner” positions became much more numerous after WWI and were dominated by female psychologists. The author defines these occupations as more people oriented (i.e. service branch jobs) that allowed female psychologists to become more people oriented and “assume care of young, poor, immigrant, intemperate, and sick” groups in “helping

³ Elizabeth Johnston and Ann Johnson, “Searching for the Second Generation of American Women Psychologists,” *History of Psychology* 11, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 41.

⁴ Johnston and Johnson, “Searching for the Second Generation,” 53-55, 64.

⁵ Laurel Furumoto, “On the Margins: Women and the Professionalization of Psychology in the United States: 1890-1940,” in *Psychology in Twentieth Century Thought and Society*, ed. Mitchell G. Ash and William R. Woodward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 93.

professions such as social work and public health.”⁶ This separation (although sexist in nature) allowed female psychologists to get first-hand experience with new subfields of psychology that were open to research that had never been done before. Subsequently, these women succeeded in establishing theories concerning the occupational fields they were relegated to.

These accomplishments are further explored by Florence L. Denmark and Linda C. Fernandez in the 1992 book chapter “Women: Their Influence and Their Impact on the Teaching of Psychology.” In this chapter, the authors highlight multiple female psychologists who were able to establish ground breaking theories within the field, despite discrimination from their male peers. Among this group is Mamie Phipps Clark who (along with her husband) established a child development center in New York in 1946 and conducted research in personality development and color preference of black children.⁷ This same research would be cited in the infamous *Brown v. Board of Education* in order to desegregate schools in the United States. The chapter goes on to explain how Clark “taught psychologists that their studies could be used as a tool for social change,” exemplifying how female psychologists were able to make great strides within the field, regardless of the inequalities they faced.⁸

Previous historiography has often declared that during the interwar period psychological research took the backburner in American society, and most of its efforts were directed to war oriented goals. Because the positions available for psychologists in the war effort were often reserved for men, this gave women the opportunity to find their way into slightly more

⁶ Furumoto, 97, 102, 105, 109.

⁷ Florence L. Denmark and Linda C. Fernandez, “Women: Their Influence and Their Impact on the Teaching of Psychology,” in *Teaching Psychology in America: A History*, ed. Charles L. Brewer, Janet R. Matthews, & Antonio E. Puente (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 1992): 180.

⁸ Denmark and Fernandez, 180.

professional positions.⁹ In the article “Up the Years with the Bettertons: Gender and Parent Education in Interwar America,” the authors Elizabeth Johnston and Ann Johnson explore how women at the Minnesota Institute of Child Welfare were able to disseminate knowledge about parent child relationships and development through the use of radio during the interwar period. Marion Lyon Faegre and Pearl Thompson Cummings, who were both married mothers, created a fictional radio show called “Up the Years with the Bettertons” with the goal of highlighting “the dilemmas faced by the intellectual full time mother facing contradictory cultural messages about women's roles.”¹⁰ American women (including psychologists) were often faced with the choice between family or professional life, but these women sought to end the stereotype that a women could not do both.¹¹ This exemplifies how female psychologists, even though they could not conduct academic research like their male peers, were still successful in circulating psychological knowledge as “a cultural force, while still undermining the separate spheres doctrine.”¹²

This section has emphasized multiple instances where female psychologists were able to succeed in establishing their role within the field despite the limits placed on them by their male peers. The struggles of second generation female psychologists are defined by Claire E. Cameron and John W. Hagen in their article “Women in Child Development: Themes from the SRCD Oral History Project.”¹³ By examining the interviews of 102 female members of the Society for Research in Child Development the authors were able to categorize their experiences into four

⁹ Elizabeth Johnston and Ann Johnson, “Up the Years with the Bettertons: Gender and Parent Education in Interwar America,” *History of Psychology* 18, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 254.

¹⁰ Johnston and Johnson, “Up the Years with the Bettertons,” 254-255, 266.

¹¹ Furumoto, 98.

¹² Johnston and Johnson, “Up the Years with the Bettertons,” 267.

¹³ Claire E. Cameron and John W. Hagen, “Women in Child Development: Themes from the SRCD Oral History Project,” *History of Psychology* 8, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 289-316.

groups: obstacles, buffers, struggles, and ambiguous events. Of these four categories obstacles were the most prominent and “reflect [the] hardships [women] endured because of gender discrimination at all stages in their lives and careers.” This conclusion illuminates the group consensus of second generational female psychologists in terms of the types and amount of inequality they experienced throughout their entire life. The authors conclude that “perseverance, intelligence, and hard work were important for women to overcome obstacles,” which can also be said about the female students in Cal Poly’s Psychology and Child Development Department.¹⁴ These students would utilize the same kind of attitude to overcome obstacles in their major as well as argue the validity and importance of their chosen field at Cal Poly. Although the obstacles they faced were not as severe, female students combatted them in a way that is similar to the second generation of female psychologists. It is necessary to know the origins of Cal Poly’s Psychology and Child Development Department in order to understand the role that women played in it.

HISTORY OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AT CAL POLY:

The bachelor’s of science in child development first appeared in the course catalog in 1968-69 under the School of Applied Arts, and as an interdisciplinary program, it had no dedicated courses. Instead, its curriculum consisted of a myriad of different disciplines including: home economics, psychology, sociology, music, english, speech, physical education, biology, math, education, history, political science, philosophy, and anthropology. The new department developed under the home economics discipline, which began offering a master’s degree of

¹⁴ Cameron and Hagen, 293, 295, 312.

science degree during the same year.¹⁵ An article in the *Mustang Daily* claimed that the need for Child Development was a “growing number of pre-school children in the national population and the increasing emphasis...on the importance and value of pre-school education.”¹⁶ This reasoning is strikingly similar to the rationale behind child development studies in American society.

In addition to this, just three years later, Cal Poly would make the switch from a college to a university. Robert E. Kennedy wrote about this change in his memoir, where he describes some of the struggles in meeting the criterion for becoming a state recognized university. In order to do this, Cal Poly had to expand beyond a purely vocational curriculum, the addition of new disciplines would allow the school to broaden its horizons and offer students the opportunity to become well versed in several different fields of study. A university is capable of producing a student with a well-rounded world view that is beneficial not only in their professional life but also in their everyday life, something Cal Poly had previously been unable to do.

The new child development and home economics degrees not only helped fulfill criteria that required the school to have a certain number of both masters and bachelor’s degree programs, it also ensured that students could gain an understanding of fields outside of the traditionally vocational ones Cal Poly had offered.¹⁷ Through programs such as the child care laboratory and courses designed to offer students hands on experience in the field, the discipline still followed Cal Poly’s learn-by-doing curricula. During the 1970-71 academic school year, eighteen dedicated child development courses were added to the course catalog. These courses

¹⁵ California Polytechnic State College, San Luis Obispo. *1968-1969 Catalog*. (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1968), p. 183, 193-195.

¹⁶ “New Major to be Offered in Applied Arts Next Fall,” *Mustang Daily*, October 18, 1967.

¹⁷ Robert E. Kennedy, *Learn By Doing: Memoirs of a University President: A Personal Journey with the Seventh President of California Polytechnic State University*, (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University: 2001): 311-312.

focused on general topics in child development (i.e. family dynamics, parent education, and nursery school programs,) but also included topics such as the Afro-American and Mexican-American pre-school child. This might be correlated to a growing diversified student body, but is also representative of Cal Poly's effort to emulate the diversification of child development studies within America at large. Immediately after it was introduced an article in the *Mustang Daily* wrote that "one of the fastest growing majors is child development, which increased 21%" during Fall enrollment of the 1971 academic school year.¹⁸ This growth mirrors the growth of American psychology and child development that took place during the 1920s and continued through the interwar period.

With the addition of several new disciplines and classes, in 1970 the curriculum was reorganized into seven different, with child development (and home economics) falling under the School of Human Development and Education.¹⁹ Finally, in 1972 the state legislature deemed the school as having university status and the name officially changed to California Polytechnic State University. During the same year child development became overcrowded and began to discourage applications, showing that the major was highly sought after even in a traditionally vocational institution like Cal Poly.²⁰ In 1973, child development began offering two concentrations: nursery school teaching and child and family services, along with six additional courses. These courses had a heavy focus on family development and issues, once again illustrating Cal Poly's growing concern with topics in child development that is comparable to the progress of the discipline overall.²¹

¹⁸ "Fall Enrollment Drop Record," *Mustang Daily*, September 28, 1971.

¹⁹ California Polytechnic State College, San Luis Obispo, *1970-1971 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1970), p. 144-146, 213-214.

²⁰ "Packed Majors May See Some Relief in the Future," *Mustang Daily*, November 7, 1972.

²¹ California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, *1973-1975 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1973), p. 166-168, 245-247.

Two years later, the concentrations would change to child development and family studies, with another eight courses added for a total of thirty-two dedicated child development courses. The new courses were concerned with laboratory observation, data reporting techniques, and more topics within the family.²² The addition of several new courses over the span of just three years can be attributed to a growing number of students interested in child development. The *Mustang Daily* supports this claim by writing that “the chief limitation on additional students remains a matter of facilities, especially in the case of upper division classes in...child development.”²³ The rapid growth of this major is representative of its importance and growing interest in American society more broadly, especially among women, who made up the majority of students under this department at Cal Poly.

In 1980 the schools were reorganized once again due to budget cuts, with multiple disciplines merging with one another. One of these mergers was the combination of child development and home economics during the 1981-83 school year.²⁴ Carl Cummins, dean of the School of Human Development and Education first recommended the merge to vice president Hazel Jones. He felt that both departments would benefit from the merger, because it would allow for the accreditation of the Child Development Department while broadening the curriculum of home economics. This suggestion took place before the head of child development, David Englund, ever had a chance to submit a memorandum against the merge. Englund expressed his concerns about the merger claiming that child development had a “delicate balance” between disciplines. He felt that combining with home economics could

²² California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, *1975-1977 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1975), p. 170-172, 256-258.

²³ “College Changes Plans for 1972-73 Enrollment,” *Mustang Daily*, January 6, 1972.

²⁴ California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, *1981-1983 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1981), p. 186-192.

potentially ruin this balance by leaning more towards home economics curriculum. He also explained that because home economics had more faculty members they could easily outvote certain courses in the curriculum, damaging the department overall.²⁵

Additional opposing views of the merger were printed in subsequent additions of the *Mustang Daily* during the same year, claiming that child development “students and faculty feel the merger diluted the importance and visibility of the child development program in the academic community.” The same article also explains that the merger was “seen as damaging [to] the departments reputation for original research and theory,” with a female child development student remarking that “child development has more to do with education than home economics can offer us.”²⁶ These repudiations of the merger mirror the female psychologists of the second generation who often had to fight for the validity of child development being more than just ‘woman's work’. Another article printed in the *Mustang Daily* recognized the opportunity for child development to merge with psychology rather than home economics, a decision that would have made more sense for the curriculum's focus. The merger was denied on the basis that combining child development with home economics saved more money than combining it with psychology.²⁷

The merger was made official in 1980, regardless of multiple oppositions from child development students and faculty.²⁸ During the following year, child development courses were renamed child and family development, most likely as an effort to make them appear more home economics oriented.²⁹ The merger only lasted a short while before the curriculum was

²⁵ Kathy McKenzie, “Department Head Disputes Merger,” *Mustang Daily*, April 30, 1980.

²⁶ “Disagreement over Department Merger,” *Mustang Daily*, October 23, 1980.

²⁷ Vern Ahrendes, “Home Ec-Child Development Merger Suggested,” *Mustang Daily*, April 19, 1980.

²⁸ *1981-1983 Catalog*, p. 187-192.

²⁹ California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, *1984-1986 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1984), p. 214-221.

reorganized a second time, which changed the School of Human Development and Education into the School of Professional Studies and Education. Under this school, the new department of psychology and human development offered a degree program in child and family development with concentrations in applied developmental psychology, early childhood education, and family studies. Courses no longer existed under the title of child and family development and were instead renamed to human development.³⁰ In fact, during the following school year, the child and family development major was also renamed to just human development, but it retained the same concentrations.³¹ This can be attributed to an effort by faculty and staff to change the common misconception that child development was a women's only discipline, by renaming it human development, they hoped to attract more male students to the department.³²

In 1992, the schools were reorganized for the third and final time, with psychology and human development falling under the School of Liberal Arts. Although this department should have technically fallen under the School of Science and Mathematics, faculty within this school made it clear that psychology and human development was unwelcome, because they felt it wasn't a legitimate scientific discipline.³³ These attitudes are reflective of the public opinions concerning psychology as not being truly scientific in nature, which has been the case ever since its introduction in the 1890s.³⁴ Regardless of this, psychology and human development continued

³⁰California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, *1986-1988 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1986), p. 300-303, 321-325.

³¹California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, *1988-1990 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1988), p. 301-318.

³² Kathy Ryan, Interviewed by Jenny K. Delk, 3 March 2020.

³³ Gary D. Laver, Interviewed by Jenny K. Delk, 27 February 2020.

³⁴ Ludy T. Benjamin, "Why Don't They Understand Us? A History of Psychology's Public Image," *American Psychologist* 41, no. 9 (Fall, 1986): 941.

to grow, and a new concentration of applied social psychology and a master's degree in psychology were offered during the same year.³⁵

Minor changes took place within the next few years, such as the renaming of concentrations, separation of bachelor's degrees in psychology and human development, and an additional concentration in psychology: individual course of study.³⁶ In the 1998-99 school year human development courses were renamed to child development once again, and finally in the 2001-03 course catalog the department became psychology and child development, which is the name it has retained to this very day.³⁷

The intellectual ideology behind child developments initial introduction at Cal Poly are the same as those held by the second generation of female psychologists who are responsible for the creation of the discipline in the 1920s. The multiple changes and merges to this department during its existence at Cal Poly is similar to the adversity faced by the discipline in American society more broadly. The oppositions of the merger of home economics and child development mirror the arguments of second generation female psychologists who constantly were trying to prove the validity of the discipline to their male peers. The rapid growth of courses due to high numbers of student interest is similar to the growth of child development's popularity in America during the 1920s. The additional courses focused on different topics within child development also echoes the growing fields of study within the discipline overall. The overwhelmingly female student population under the child development discipline at Cal Poly further supports the

³⁵ California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, *1992-1994 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1992), p. 243, 269-274

³⁶ California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. *1994-97 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1994), p. 228, 257-262; California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. *1997-98 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1997), p. 223, 251-257.

³⁷ California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. *1998-1999 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 1998), p. 221, 249-255; California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. *2001-2003 Catalog* (San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, 2001), p. 232, 259-263.

argument that these students share similarities with the second generation of female psychologists involved in the discipline more broadly.

WOMEN IN CAL POLY'S CHILD DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT:

Quarterly internal reports cataloging the gender ratios of each individual department at Cal Poly between the years of 1972 to 1977 prove that child development had a majority female population. Each quarter (including Summer) had an overwhelming amount of female students compared to male, with the number of women often tripling the number of men. The last of these quarterly internal reports came in the Fall quarter of 1990, and showed that for both child and family development and human development the sex ratio of students were still mostly female. With 25 females compared to 2 males in child development and 306 females compared to 39 males in human development, these numbers clearly indicate that females were more dominant in both of these departments.³⁸ After conducting interviews with the three longest standing faculty members from the Psychology and Child Development Department at Cal Poly, it can be concluded that the population remains predominantly female.³⁹ This serves the argument that Cal Poly's child development major mirrors the discipline at large, which has also always been constituted of a largely female population.

Another similarity between the department and the discipline at large is the inequalities women in both sectors faced. Female students in the Child Development Department at Cal Poly were ridiculed for doing 'women's work' that served no higher purpose in society. One specific

³⁸ "Quarterly Internal Report on Enrollment," November 1972 to May 1977 and Fall 1990, Office of Institutional Research collection UA0066, 151.05: Institutional Studies - Research, Quarterly Internal Report on Enrollment, 1972-1977, <https://digital.lib.calpoly.edu/rekl-91075>.

³⁹ Gary D. Laver and Donald Ryujin, Interviewed by Jenny K. Delk, 25 and 27 February 2020.

letter printed in the *Mustang Daily* during November 1983 from a male student by the name of John Fremont claimed that “most girls are at college to get their Mrs. Certificate,” which was a catty way of saying that women only attended college to find a husband and not to further their own education. He goes on to assert that “if these girls were deeply concerned about an education, would they be enrolled in child development...?” He finished the letter with a suggestion that women only be allowed on campus every other weekend to fulfill their goal of finding a husband.⁴⁰

Just four days later a female student, Lisa Scanlin, submitted a rebuttal to this letter, declaring that Cal Poly was “not an easy (or cheap) place to get into” and that men “too have to want marriage.” She goes on to explain that women within child development (and among other liberal arts majors) are “an important part in society’s make up.” She also presented the point that “it would be pretty tough for you to go to college if there were no elementary or high school teachers, right?”⁴¹ The issue of a Mrs. Degree appeared in *Mustang News* seven years prior in an article where David Englund, head of the department at the time, was quoted explaining “people have a misconception about this major. It’s no longer enough to just like little kids and want to be a glorified babysitter. It’s much more involved than people realize.”⁴²

These misconceptions mirror the discriminatory claims made by male psychologists about their female counterparts being incapable of higher thinking and needing to be kept separate at all costs. Male psychologists often denied women from participating in lab work, relegating them to applied positions.⁴³ When women subsequently made progress in these fields

⁴⁰ John Fremont, “Taxpayers Support the Dating Game,” *Mustang Daily*, November 14, 1983.

⁴¹ Lisa Scanlin, “Alpha Phi Responds,” *Mustang Daily*, November 18, 1983.

⁴² Elena Koster and Susie White, “Mrs. Degree: A Diamond Studded Career?,” *Mustang Daily*, March 10, 1976.

⁴³ Cameron and Hagen, 267.

of work, men often felt threatened and communicated this through insulting said field (i.e. child development), which is exactly what was happening in this instance. And like the second generation of female psychologists, women in Cal Poly's Child Development Department were not scared to adamantly argue the validity of their discipline.

Regardless of the inequalities they faced, women in the Child Development Department were able to bring awareness to certain issues through campus advocacy and senior projects. Several editions of the *Mustang Daily* highlight discussions and presentations put on by the Child Development Club and/or Department from guest speakers or students concerning topics such as child abuse, child advocacy, children's rights, and men's role in child rearing. Even outside the realm of child development, several students from the department were involved in other issues on campus such as rape, sexuality, alcoholism, and mental health.

It's also interesting to note that several female child development students were awarded the title of Poly Royal Queen, and the department itself often placed second or third behind the Home Economics Department in competitions for exhibits at the Poly Royal function.⁴⁴ Even more interesting is the fact that black women in the Child Development Department were also involved in the creation of the BSU (Black Student Union) and its own Black Queen contest, first introduced in 1971.⁴⁵ Later articles in the *Mustang Daily* covering the competition often highlighted black women in the Child Development Department winning the title and/or being appointed a member of the queens court. This kind of inclusivity and black achievement is similar to the more diverse women in the second generation of female psychologists who raised

⁴⁴ "First, Second, and Third Finishers," *Mustang Daily*, April 26, 1971.

⁴⁵ "7 Seek BSU Queen Title," *Mustang Daily*, February 5, 1971.

awareness about issues related to their own personal experience, even if sometimes unrelated to their discipline.

Female child development students at Cal Poly were also able to raise awareness about the discipline through their senior projects. For example, in 1980, four female child development students created ‘The Week of the Child’ which consisted of “events and seminars” hosted by experts pertaining to topics such as “schooling, education, and children’s rights.” The week culminated in “a festival... at the mission plaza” where members of the community could get involved and learn about topics in the field of child development. The Children’s Service Agencies and the Child Care Resource Center aided the senior project, which proved to be successful in disseminating important information about the discipline.⁴⁶ The following year, another two female child development students recreated the same project with even more success. An article in the *Mustang Daily* from 1981 describes the event as “a very practical senior project” that had a turnout of “more than 1,000 parents and children” who got involved in “activities includ[ing] speeches and discussions for parents and others interested in children’s program[s].” The students who put on the event hoped it would raise awareness about resources available to both children and their parents, which proved to be more than successful.⁴⁷

The examples of both inequality and raised awareness pertaining to female child development majors at Cal Poly echoes those of the second generation of female psychologists. Throughout their careers these women faced discrimination from their male counterparts which separated them into ‘less pure’ applied fields in psychology.⁴⁸ Despite this, they were still able to make great strides within the discipline through recognition of children’s and minority issues, as

⁴⁶ Seanna Browder, “Senior Project becomes a Community Celebration,” *Mustang Daily*, April 9, 1980.

⁴⁷ Jeff Levy, “Student make Children’s Week a Treat,” *Mustang Daily*, April 15, 1981.

⁴⁸ Furumoto, 110.

well as the establishment of new groundbreaking theories. Women in the Child Development Department at Cal Poly made similar accomplishments on a smaller scale by raising awareness of issues in child development through on campus advocacy and senior projects. The viewpoints of current faculty members is important to understand the reputation of Cal Poly's Psychology and Child Development Department amongst other scientific disciplines at the university.

FACULTY IN CAL POLY'S PSYCHOLOGY AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT:

By conducting interviews with the three longest standing professors under Cal Poly's Psychology and Child Development Department, several interesting themes and facts became apparent. The disapproval by the School of Science and Mathematics towards the Psychology and Child Development Department during the 1992 curriculum reorganization appeared throughout all three interviews.⁴⁹ This is reflective of the broader public opinions towards Psychology in America since its conception in the 1890s, which can be attributed to the internal disagreements among its founders as well as the pseudo-psychologists who published unscientific 'psychological' books during the 1920s and 1930s. Subsequently, psychology's public image was tainted, painting it as a non-scientific field rooted in lofty theories that were not grounded in true research.⁵⁰ This common misconception continues to permeate throughout academia, as in the case of Cal Poly's Psychology and Child Development Department. All three professors interviewed made it clear that their department was unwelcomed by the School of Science and Mathematics, because the field was seen as an illegitimate science.

⁴⁹ Curriculum at Cal Poly is currently organized under different colleges, the renaming of school to college took place in 1994. The remainder of this essay will be using the title school, but it should be noted that this is not the same title used today.

⁵⁰ Benjamin, 941, 945.

Kathy Ryan earned her doctorate degree in experimental psychology in 1980 from Bowling Green State University, and was employed at Cal Poly by 1982. During her time as a grad student, and even in the beginning of her career at Cal Poly, Dr. Ryan explained that “psychology was called soft science, sometimes not even a science” and as “a psychologist you had to prove yourself.” After the School of Professional Studies was disbanded by President Baker, the Psychology and Child Development Department had two choices: the School of Liberal Arts or the School of Science and Mathematics. Dr. Ryan explained that the dean of the School of Science and Mathematics didn’t want psychology and child development because they weren’t a true science. She goes onto claim “that was the perception of psychology and I’m sure it still exists in some of the departments and colleges in the university.”⁵¹ The perception of other disciplines at Cal Poly towards psychology and child development is similar to that of American society, both of which believe that the field is not actually rooted in science.

Don Ryujin earned his doctorate degree in 1983 from the University of Michigan and has been employed at Cal Poly’s Psychology and Child Development Department for over thirty years. He can also speak on the movement of the department to the School of Liberal Arts, and explained that “the science area made it pretty clear to us [that] they didn’t want us, they didn’t feel it was appropriate for us to be with the sciences.” Dr. Ryujin went on to describe how psychology has fields of study in both the social studies and human sciences, which can feed into the common misconception that the entire field of psychology is unscientific.⁵² Other fields of study under the School of Science and Mathematics are rooted in scientific study that has little or nothing to do with human nature, making it difficult to accept such a multi-disciplinary field

⁵¹ Kathy Ryan, interviewed by Jenny K. Delk, 3 March 2020.

⁵² Donald Ryujin, interviewed by Jenny K. Delk, 25 February 2020.

such as psychology and child development. Due to the nature of the field being involved with both social studies and human science, it is possible that outsiders will always be uncertain of its validity as a purely scientific discipline.

Gary Laver earned his doctorate degree from the Claremont graduate school and began working at Cal Poly in the Fall quarter of 1991 as a part time lecturer. He clarified during his interview that “more than technically, psychology and child development are identified as STEM disciplines” but when the department had to relocate at Cal Poly, it wasn’t seen this way. He goes onto explain that the department “probably made the right practical decision coming to the College of Liberal Arts, we would have been treated like the bastard at a family reunion, just because of the ignorance... [and] not knowing what psychology is within that college.” Dr. Lavers description of how psychology is treated by other STEM majors within Cal Poly directly mimics how the discipline was seen by other scientific disciplines and society within America during its creation and subsequent growth from the 1890s to the present day.

All three of these faulty perspectives support the idea that the discipline of psychology and child development has continued to struggle with their public image as a legitimate science. After WWI psychology experienced exponential growth within American society, broadening its fields of employment beyond just academia. This brought about several people who posed as psychologists and published books that weren’t rooted in scientific study or psychological theory, severely damaging the disciplines public image. Internal disagreements did little to help the situation, and the American public became distrusting in the fields validity.⁵³

The same public opinion permeates today and is apparent at Cal Poly, as seen with the case of psychology and child development being essentially shunned by the School of Science

⁵³ Benjamin, 945.

and Mathematics during the 1992 curriculum reorganization. Despite this, the field continues to grow in popularity and has become the most impacted major under the School of Liberal Arts at Cal Poly. This is representative of how the discipline advanced regardless of the negative connotations it held amongst a majority of American citizens. The women in the second generation of female psychologists helped with this advancement by creating new theories and fields of study in child development and minority issues. The female students in the Psychology and Child Development Department at Cal Poly have aided in its growth by continuing to fight for the validity and importance of the fields through both their senior projects and on campus advocacy.

CONCLUSION:

Hopefully the information presented in this essay has successfully illustrated the similarities between female students in Cal Poly's Psychology and Child Development Department and the second generation of female psychologists in American society. The department at Cal Poly was established for the same reasons the discipline was created in the 1920s and females in both settings had to work to prove the validity and importance of child development as an integral part of American society. Female students at Cal Poly did this by coordinating several on campus events concerning issues within (and outside of) child development in order to raise awareness and educate people about the discipline. They also created senior projects with the same goal, which proved to be successful amongst not only Cal Poly students but also the community overall. Faculty under the Psychology and Child Development Department also faced similar inequalities in the form of other disciplines on

campus deeming them not truly scientific in nature, forcing them to reorganize under the School of Liberal Arts, which doesn't truly encapsulate all of what psychology is capable of.

Despite this, both faculty and students within the department worked hard to expand it, which has been successful, as it is now the most impacted major under the School of Liberal Arts. The efforts at Cal Poly mirror those of the second generation of female psychologists who had to continuously argue the validity and importance of the field to their male counterparts. Both sectors accomplished what they set out to do despite the inequalities they faced, and provide an example of what perseverance, hard work, and dedication can accomplish even in the face of adversity.

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