

Hyperlinked Scholarship: Exploring the  
New Existence of [www.ccsws.org](http://www.ccsws.org), the *Community*  
*College Women's Studies Web*

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Master of Arts Creative Work Project Narrative

May 8, 2008

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It is no secret that the Internet is a booming space of connections and information sharing. The last fifteen years have seen the sharp rise of the medium, bringing a proliferation of Web pages, blogs, photo sharing technologies, and many other methods of communication that are increasingly available to the public. This electronic forum is the home of my creative project, Community College Women's Studies Web, or [www.ccsw.org](http://www.ccsw.org). Through the launching of this site, my goal is to (literally) increase the visibility of Women's Studies in a variety of locations, and to expand the quiet discussion within the field over whether it belongs in community colleges. It is considering the latter that is guiding this paper, as I aim to situate the Web site in a discussion of why it is a worthwhile endeavor and how it as a project intervenes in the field of Women's Studies. Through the pages of this written portion I will also situate myself in the project and locate my own interests in it, as well as discussing the methods and strategies I have used to shape both the XHTML and written halves of the whole project. Within a transnational feminist framework, situating oneself in a piece of academic work is a necessary and worthwhile endeavor both in grounding the scholarship and contextualizing its subjectivity; therefore, this written exploration will begin with a discussion of my relationship to this topic and this project.

Community colleges have played a central role in the economic and educational development of my life and in the lives of many of my friends and family members. Growing up for several years in a female-headed, single-parent household on public assistance meant that my access to expensive education, like private schools or even public universities, was not exactly on a level playing field with my financially-privileged peers. And so I decided to enroll at my local college, Indian Hills Community College in Ottumwa, Iowa. My mother had attended this same school a short six years before I arrived, as one of the first graduates of the college's program to offer training to displaced homemakers. My mother chose to go into vocational training for office workers, and I chose the liberal

arts transfer-oriented degree. While I enjoyed experiencing a range of classes across the traditional disciplines, I was disappointed by the lack of classes engaging in some sort of cultural analysis or social justice-oriented studies. My desire for these classes was not met until I later transferred to the University of Iowa, where my introduction to the departments of American studies and Women's Studies gave me some academic room to study my interests, which eventually led me to pursue a graduate degree in Women Studies at San Francisco State.

This brief story of the formal education of my mother and I illustrates a pivotal point about the purpose of U.S. community colleges today. They offer a range of programs, including adult education, vocational training, and transfer degrees to a diverse and often non-traditional student population. A mainstay of the transfer degree, general education in the liberal arts and sciences forms a large part of community college curriculum<sup>1</sup>. The flourishing presence of the liberal arts on community college campuses support this popular transfer function, as many campuses offer classes in a range of humanities and social science disciplines, and some have interdisciplinary programs as well.

In several community colleges, Women's Studies departments, programs, or focus areas are included in this range of liberal arts curriculum. Quite a few of these departments have been coherent for years, and some (like City College of San Francisco) can even claim longevity that stretches back to the 1970's days of Women's Studies' academic founding. However, in all that I have read about the ongoing development of the field as a whole, I rarely read about its existence in locations like community colleges or places that are outside of the four-year college or university realm. The first class I encountered as a postgraduate student, the WOMS 700 Introduction to Graduate Women Studies class, included a lengthy consideration of Women's Studies and its place in higher education but never mentioned the field in community colleges. The one exception to this was a project done by myself and

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1 Higginbottom, George and Romano, Richard. "Appraising the Efficacy of Civic Education at the Community College." in *Community College Missions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Barbara Townsend and Kevin Dougherty (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007) p24

a classmate. Beyond the sparse attention afforded to the topic in my own graduate experience, this lack of information is painfully evident field-wide in both a near-absence of feminist scholarly writings on the topic (including few writings from those teaching in the field at community colleges) as well as being almost undetectable on the Internet.

This oversight or seeming lack of interest in the issue of Women's Studies in community colleges is quite surprising, particularly because there is so much scholarly effort being spent on discussing the development of the field. There are countless books and essays laboring over the field's disciplinary status, its relationship to the politics of higher education, and how it is complicit with and/or challenges forms of hegemonic education; and yet, it so rarely focuses on Women's Studies in locations other than universities and four-year colleges. This lack of attention to the topic is not limited to the space of academic publishing or graduate discussion, however, as a quick Web search will illustrate. There are many excellent sites that list and link to Women's Studies programs at the university and four-year levels: [artemisguide.com](http://artemisguide.com) and [userpages.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/programs.html](http://userpages.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/programs.html) are sites that contain links to over 700 programs and departments worldwide. Unfortunately, they do not have a section for those programs at community colleges, and only a few of them are sprinkled in among the university links. This almost exclusive focus on university and four-year Women's Studies departments and programs puts across a hierarchical message that the field “belongs” solely at the university or four-year level, even though it has been prospering at many two-year institutions for decades.

Exploring this gap in the field has become a large part of my academic feminist inquiry. Therefore, drawing on these observations about the lack of scholarly and Web-based (or public) information on the topic, the goal of this project is to make an intervention into the field by arguing for its location at community colleges, in part by pointing out the programs that already exist. To do this, I have built a Web site that lists all such programs in my home state of California. I am using the space

of this paper to situate the site in the larger field of Women's Studies. This includes a discussion of linking activist/academic work, technology as a useful feminist realm, the politics of higher education, community colleges and their general mission of providing civic/general education, and the field of Women's Studies as both a contributor to and leading critic of assimilationist higher education. Through these aims, my intervention into Women's Studies is to literally create a site that contributes to the field's accessibility at "other" locations and is grounded in a practice of activist-oriented scholarship.

Developing this rather untraditional culminating project raises a number of diverse questions. What does it mean for me, a second-year graduate student at a public university, to be engaged in a political community-oriented creative project that will earn me an academic degree? What is the relationship of technology and technological advances to the field of Women's Studies, and what are the implications of using it in this project? In terms of the academic location I have chosen, how does the community college operate as a complicated space for providing publicly-accessible education, particularly general education? And how does the field of Women's Studies, in its existence on these campuses, challenge and/or reinforce assimilationist and consumerist ideologies that underpin much of the general education endeavor? This paper-bound section of my culminating project explores these questions and provides context for the existence of the endeavor beyond serving as an online resource. With that in mind, I am using this written space to argue two distinct but related points. The first is that activist-oriented scholarship can and does continue to thrive within Women's Studies, and the ways that this type of work has changed and been changed by global processes (like the many uses of the Internet or other technologies, or by transnational feminist analyses) offers new possibilities for activist-scholar work. I have tried to construct my project along these lines. The second point of this paper argues that the structure of U.S. general education (particularly as provided in the first two years of college) is constructed with ideologies of assimilation into our "democratic" system, and Women's

Studies complicates these notions when the field is a part of the general education curriculum. As many students complete their general education at community colleges, particularly in California, strengthening fields like Women's Studies in this location is a big step toward spurring on progressive social change through education. Developing this argument has made it necessary to research in the areas of cyberfeminism, Web design, Women Studies, U.S. and California community colleges, and general education, and to draw these pieces together in order to focus on this topic of Women Studies, community colleges, and feminist uses of the Internet. In the next section I will discuss my method and the creation of this project, and will then move on to explore the two points raised above.

### **Method: the Traditional to the Technological**

The wide scope of this project has necessarily called for a varied archive and approaches, ranging from what I loosely call the "traditional" to the "technological". By this, I mean that I am combining standard research approaches used in the humanities and social sciences with online opportunities for scholarship. As such, this section will explore both avenues that combine to structure the Web-based and written parts of the project.

Before I go any further, I want to give consideration to my choice of words. I have named the site "Community College Women's Studies Web", a seemingly innocuous moniker that actually points to an ongoing debate among feminist scholars within the field. Over the last decade or so, people have begun to discuss name changes to what is traditionally known as Women's Studies. Departments have taken on a range of alternatives with which to rename themselves, with the most common ones being Feminist Studies, Gender Studies, Women Studies, and most recently in my own home department, Women and Gender Studies. All of the sixteen departments and programs at California's community colleges continue to publicly identify themselves as Women's Studies. For this reason, I have chosen to use the apostrophe-s in the name of the site, and also throughout this paper as well for purposes of

continuity. As a matter of personal preference I actually prefer Women Studies, mostly because of the sans-apostrophe possibilities that this label offers. I am often asked why the field 'excludes men' from the inquiry of gender construction, how it is that the academic study of gender can 'belong' to women. This is an interesting point as there is much to be said in a name, particularly when that name contains a grammatical expression of ownership. I do not think, by any means, that Women's Studies *owes* it to men to explicitly include them in gendered analysis; however, I do think that for substantive changes to occur, gender needs to be examined across the spectrum. Having said that, I think it is important that the site be accurate in terms of the programs listed on it. I respect the right of each local department to label themselves as they choose, and as I noted above, all of the sixteen programs identify themselves with an apostrophe-s. Therefore, since my site links to these programs, I want to use the terms that the programs themselves are using.

The inspiration behind Community College Women's Studies Web began to take shape in June 2006 at the National Women's Studies Association annual conference in Oakland. I attended a panel organized to respond to a 2005 essay by Emily Sohmer Tai that questioned the need for Women's Studies in community colleges. Panel members included several community college instructors who had some relationship to Women's Studies on their campuses, ranging from being the chair of their department or program to instructors in the process of establishing the field in their locale. This was the only panel in the entire conference dealing with the field at community colleges, and the panelists here raised a number of interesting questions. What would be the benefits of forming Women's Studies departments/programs in community colleges? Would feminist theories and ideas, and feminist pedagogies, be best served in these departments, or should they be dispersed to the disciplines already established in those schools? And why, in the whole conference on Women's Studies, was there only one session devoted to the topic? Were community colleges of no interest to the development of the field? Observing the discussion among these feminist educators provided the impetus to research the

topic, and served as a jumping-off point for my later interview with one of the panelists, Leslie Simon of City College of San Francisco. Researching around some of those questions has led me into a sparsely-covered area, and has proved quite difficult at times (especially in terms of locating published accounts) to learn about Women's Studies in this particular academic location.

One of my interventions into the field is bringing together a number of areas of scholarship to discuss this topic with the goal that it will increase the discussion and information flow around it. Operating in this framework, the method of textual analysis is an essential part of this project. Drawing together a literary archive across disparate fields is an interdisciplinary endeavor and as such, the knowledge gathered from specialized areas combines in this project to create new knowledge that is linked to its many genealogies. To create the kind of knowledge I am looking for, I have engaged with writings in the areas of cyberfeminism and feminist theories of technology, feminist pedagogy, Women's Studies in academia, community college organization and missions, and the politics of higher education and (more specifically) general education in the U.S. In the sections that follow, I will discuss relevant pieces from each field and bring them together to create new knowledge about Women's Studies in community colleges.

Transnational feminist practices are an important part of the project's framework, particularly in terms of method. Using interviews and one-on-one discussions is a method that was formed within this framework, one that pays attention to the implications of doing work “for” a community that the researcher is not necessarily a part of. (In this case, please note that the author is also a hopeful future community college Women's Studies instructor!) Feminist scholars Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan lay out a helpful framework of self-aware and contextualized scholarship in their 1994 introduction to *Scattered Hegemonies*:

We use the term 'transnational' to problematize a purely locational politics of global-local or center-periphery in favor of what Mattelart

sees as the lines cutting across them...Transnational linkages influence every level of social existence. Thus the effects of configurations of practices at those levels are varied and historically specific.<sup>2</sup>

In this project, the academic locations represented on the Web site are physically local (all are within the state of California) and do not literally extend to or include a transnational sphere. As Grewal and Kaplan suggest, however, taking a transnational focus means to engage in scholarship that is contextualized, grounded in a recognition that social dynamics are specific to a certain location in time and space.

When I originally conceived of this project I thought I would be able to engage or at least contact the heads of the state's sixteen programs, and so one of my methods has been seeking out interviews and one-on-one discussions with faculty from the departments that are represented on the site. I have been able to successfully contact and communicate with several of the instructors up to now, both in the planning and development stages and in getting feedback on the now-live site. I have kept the conversations relatively informal, as my goal is to get as many suggestions, comments, and open feedback as possible; but I have also asked specific questions when it comes to clarifying the placement of Women's Studies in a particular college. My main questions, especially in the planning and development stages, have been to ask about the structure of each: is it a department, program, or a certificate program, or how does it fit within the college? And how long has it been around? I also wanted to know if the people involved with these programs would possibly use the site, if the collection of information on this public site would be useful and if so, what specific information would be good to include?

After putting the first version of the site online, I've sent an e-mail to a person from each

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<sup>2</sup> Grewal, Inderpal and Kaplan, Caren. "Introduction: Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Modernity" in *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1994).

program that contains a link to the URL, along with an invitation to explore the first version of the site and let me know any comments, suggestions, or corrections that come up for them. To date I have received some positive comments on the site, with several instructors and other staff indicating that the project is a useful one, especially in terms of its concentration of difficult-to-find information and the focus on Women's studies in "other" locations. As I do not own a car, I have not been able to meet in person with more than a couple of the people involved with these programs. I was able to meet with Leslie Simon of City College of San Francisco in October of 2007, and with the office staff of the Women's Programs at Monterey Peninsula College in the late spring of 2007. I only had one day in Monterey so I was not able to personally meet with any of the faculty, but I was able to communicate over e-mail with the former chair of the program, Phyllis Peet. E-mail conversations were the most plentiful of my contacts. I sent e-mails to each of the contact people, and did receive a fair number of responses, which continue to increase. Via e-mail, I have been in touch with Alison Kuehner of Ohlone College, Sarah Mawhirter of Monterey Peninsula College, Jessica Amato of Napa Valley College, Georgia Platts from Foothill Community College, and I still hope to get more responses. Professor Kuehner wrote that she would share the site with other faculty at a meeting about the college's Women's Studies program, and also that "At first glance, the website looks very useful and informative- but I'll try to look it over more carefully and get back to you with more specifics. It's great that you are doing this!"<sup>3</sup>. I also had phone conversations with two sociology professors, Cynthia Barnett from Moorpark College and Jill Stein from Santa Barbara City College. The former used to have a program and a women's center but have both been closed for over a year, and the latter does not have a Women's studies program yet but Professor Stein did voice her support, speaking as a faculty member who has tried to establish the field on her campus and thought this site would be useful for such an endeavor in the future. In the former's case, Professor Barnett suggested that I list Women's

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3 Allison Kuehner, e-mail message to author, April 24, 2008.

programs on campuses as well as Women's Studies, and she offered to help on the site in the future if needed<sup>4</sup>. In other cases, as with El Camino College and the Compton Community Education Center in southern California, I have been unable to make contact even after leaving phone messages and sending e-mails. I have no answer for this except my own speculation, and I wonder if some of these instructors are just too busy to respond, or if they are uninterested in the project. This has been rather disappointing, especially because when I first conceived the project I thought it might be widely useful to people teaching in the field, not just for students and researchers trying to find out information about Women's Studies in other locations. However, the one-on-one discussions with the above named instructors have been immensely important, with each one giving her input as to what useful features the site should contain. As the project has developed without total input from all of the instructors, within a transnational framework neither I nor the project itself can (or want to) claim to speak for or work on behalf of these instructors. And yet, I am still putting the project out there. I argue that it is a valuable source of information, and my hope is that the site will be used by anyone and everyone interested in Women's Studies at community colleges, be they students, researchers, current or future faculty members. The possibilities for use are endless, and vary according to the desires and ideas of those who choose to engage with it.

Identifying the programs constitutes another leg of the project. The method I have used to locate which of the state's 111 community college campuses have a Women's Studies department or program has been one of quantitative research. This part of the research was conducted by carrying out online research of the colleges, making phone calls to the campuses, and amassing the data in a color-coded spreadsheet that identifies which colleges support Women's Studies and in what capacity. I recorded whether they have a department, program, or certificate offering, and which ones also have a community-linked portion, like a Women's Center or other Women's programs. There are sixteen of the

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<sup>4</sup> Cynthia Barnett, telephone conversation with author, November 30, 2007.

state's community colleges that have a Women's Studies presence, and they range from strong departments with several faculty members to small programs housed in other departments with women-centered classes situated across the traditional disciplines. This amassed collection of information about Women's Studies in California's community colleges makes up what I think of as the raw material for the Web site. In order to work with this raw material, I have had to learn how to process it and turn it into the desired end creation, as code writing and online building are a set of skills I have lacked until recently. This points out two methods that are grounded in the technological realm: building and launching the actual Web site, and learning to manipulate XHTML. Learning this process has led me to seek out more education. In order to do this project, I have utilized my local community college and became a non-credit student at City College of San Francisco in order to take a Dreamweaver class. This method is rooted in the notion that education and knowledge production are part of an ongoing process, one that requires individuals to embrace continuous learning at the same time they are helping to encourage it in others.

### **Feminist Action-Oriented Research and Women's Studies**

Scholarship grounded in a transnational feminist approach necessitates that the knowledge producer engage in self-reflexivity about the project they are creating. I am linking my work to the literature that discusses Women's Studies as an academic location and its dis/connections to feminist activist work taking place 'in the real world', because this is how I conceive of my own project. Feminist scholar Bonnie Zimmerman has written extensively on the topic of academic Women's Studies and how it has been/is/could be linked to feminist activism that is not (necessarily) linked to the academy. In her essay, "The Past in Our Present: Theorizing the Activist Project of Women's Studies", Zimmerman reflects on the connection between feminist activism/politics and feminist academics. She explores an essay penned by herself and colleagues Christine Grahl, Elizabeth Kennedy, and Lillian

Robinson in 1972 called “Women's Studies: A Case in Point” to discuss the ways that this connection has shifted in the four decades since the field's official founding. As she compares and contrasts the past and present developments of the field, she argues that Women's Studies hasn't necessarily undergone a drastic split. Instead, she theorizes that the connection has not shifted all that much. Zimmerman maps the connection between theory and practice, arguing that things like consciousness-raising or studying women and locations of power do not in and of themselves create a radical education, but that these and other practices need to be linked to theoretical exploration as a way to ground them in a larger framework<sup>5</sup>.

In Zimmerman's re-consideration of her 1972 piece on the state of the field she is drawing important connections between theory and practice, effectively linking the second-wave feminist and Women's Studies projects as she saw them from her position in the academy. It is important to remember, however, that this viewpoint of Zimmerman's is necessarily partial. Many people involved in feminist movements have and would continue to disagree with this tidy link between activism and academia, including activists who do not have access to the ivory tower as well as scholars who urge a divide in the name of legitimizing feminist academic endeavors. Zimmerman addresses this concern in her 2002 essay and she argues for a similar framework in twenty-first century Women's Studies, one that takes current considerations into mind and “respect[s] the goals of both activism and academia” while looking for new ways to connect going forward, rather than being nostalgic for an idealized past<sup>6</sup>. She does this through her remembering of early Women's Studies as a site for building theory that connects with real-life practice, which in itself dispels notions of the “idealized past” and argues that Women's Studies in the present can recognize and integrate these two notions in a more mindful way. I agree with her theory of linking the two as separate but related realms, or in taking a both/and approach

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5 Zimmerman, Bonnie. “The Past in Our Present: Theorizing the Activist Project of Women's Studies” in *Women's Studies on Its Own*, ed. Robyn Wiegman (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2002), p184.

6 Zimmerman, Bonnie. P189.

rather than an either/or perspective of activism vs. academia. As noted above, it is important to recognize that this both/and model of connecting the two is by no means universal or essential to feminist practices. On the other hand, this cannot overshadow the ways that activist-directed academic work can be utilized to strengthen both the areas of Women's Studies and direct social contributions in its engagement of both.

Zimmerman's call for a both-and framework is taken up by Women's Studies graduate students Jacky Coates, Michelle Dodds, and Jody Jensen in their essay, "Isn't Just Being Here Political Enough? Feminist Action-Oriented Research as a Challenge to Graduate Women's Studies". As the second part of the title implies, the authors want to contest the division between Women's Studies and feminist activism at the same time that they challenge "old" rubrics of doing scholarship that presume universal sisterhood, hinted at by the first section of the title and its explicit connection of the personal and the political. They argue for a way of engaging in scholarship that does not restrict its reception to the highly educated or people with certain resources or access, but is committed to enriching the public dialogue in a more accessible way. Coates, Dodds, and Jensen suggest what they call "feminist action-oriented research" as a possible framework for this kind of scholarship. In their definition, this type of research aims to act in cooperation with or at the request of a particular group or community with the intention of bringing about change in a material way<sup>7</sup>. This could apply to researchers working to contribute to public communities and/or networks among progressive elements of the academy, and the strategies could contain a variety of approaches from the use of more accessible language to its distribution through community or public channels.

Their concept of feminist action-oriented research does pose a challenge to the popular discussion in Women's Studies that the political project of the field is somewhat of a dinosaur, or a

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7 Coates, Jacky, et al. "Isn't Just Being Here Political Enough? Feminist-Action Oriented Research as a Challenge to Graduate Women's Studies", *Feminist Studies* 24:2 (Summer 1998): 334.

second-wave hold over; and it also provides a situated framework for people who want to do scholarly work of this kind. At the same time, it refuses the Eurocentrism, homophobia and class elitism that was also a hallmark of some second-wave feminist work. Their approach addresses transnational notions of representational politics as it calls specifically for partnerships with the community around whom the project is being shaped, and they pose a useful action-research strategy as a way of addressing and integrating the important questions raised by transnational feminism. My approach is to link the concept of feminist action-oriented research as theorized by Coates, Dodds, and Jensen with the possibilities of the both/and, activist/academic approach as theorized by Bonnie Zimmerman. By this, I mean that my project recognizes that there is no essential or finite connection between feminist activist work and feminist academic research; however, I want to argue that it's possible and sometimes positive to engage in projects that link the two in specific contexts, particularly when the job is undertaken with a framework of feminist action-oriented research in mind. The project of Community College Women's Studies Web is grounded in this both-and approach to activism and academia and embraces the connections between the two at the same time it respects their often separate goals.

### **Cyborg Endeavors: the Online Presence of Women's Studies**

This section considers the use of technology for the purpose of engaging in a feminist action-oriented research project. In creating the Web site [ccsw.org](http://ccsw.org) and placing my research on this publicly-accessible page, I am creating knowledge that is tangible and useful for those seeking information about Women's studies in community colleges as well as for some faculty involved in those programs (per my conversations with a number of community college professors and informal conversations with a few community college students). One of the reasons I am calling my project feminist and action-oriented is that I am learning to create within the technological realm, which has only recently become more widely available to some women through the somewhat open access of the Internet; and also

because of the Net as a communication medium that has space for people to add their own perspectives and challenge grand discourses in a tangible way. At the same time, this endeavor is mindful of the limits to online access that many people face, as well as of the militaristic history of the web itself and the way it has been used for imperial projects (sometimes even falling within the rubric of feminism, see the FMF's online advocacy of Afghan women, for example). Of course there are also many progressive Web sites that aim to do other types of feminist work, including hundreds of pages devoted to the field of Women's Studies: its academic locations, history, discussion boards, professional organizations, activism, and the like. The sites in the latter group have greatly influenced the creation of ccsw.org not only by promoting awareness of the proliferation of online Women's Studies material, but also in noticing the gaps still left by this virtual coverage and by setting up a model for other feminist informational sites.

WMST-L, or the Women's Studies e-mail list, is a worthy example of this group of Web sites. Created by University of Maryland English and Women's Studies professor Joan Korenman in 1991, the site was her first foray into Web design and provided a basis for her later launching of the Center for Women and Information Technology (CWIT) on her campus. Dr. Korenman's scholarship on women and technology has been instrumental in linking this consideration to feminism, and the sites she created and (perhaps more importantly) continues to maintain provide up-to-date, publicly accessible information on the topic that might be difficult or extremely time-consuming to otherwise obtain. The Web site for the CWIT contains a bibliography of sources concerning women and information technology, which is generally difficult material to find.

In her essay "A URL of Our Own", Korenman advances an insightful perspective on the possibilities of online information. The location of the bibliography on the Web site rather than solely in ink-and-paper print "utilizes the advantages of the online environment. It is updated frequently, and it provides links to information about the books...Sometimes, the entire book or journal issue is

available online, in which case the bibliography links to the work itself”<sup>8</sup>. The issue of time and the ability to regularly update information, especially on a dynamic topic like women and technology, is a major benefit of placing one's work on the Internet. Information is constantly changing and going out of date, a feature of publishing that obviously carries more problems for traditionally printed work. She also raises the notion of links, a feature of Web pages that allows remote sites to connect with and identify one another. Links are significant for the way they can increase visibility and real-time networking among people who may be spatially/temporally distant from one another, and also in providing connection to information housed online.

Beyond the literal workings of Internet connections, links are also present in feminist theory in more metaphorical forms. The work of Donna Haraway generally explores science and technology through a feminist lens or, more particularly, through a cyborg one. In chapter eight of her book Simians, Cyborgs, and Women, Haraway explores the idea of the cyborg and uses a framework of weaving in considering the makeup of women's lives, particularly in this late-industrial and high-technological capitalist system. “I prefer a network ideological image, suggesting the profusion of spaces and identities and the permeability of boundaries in the personal body and in the body politic. 'Networking' is both a feminist practice and a multinational corporate strategy- weaving is for oppositional cyborgs”<sup>9</sup>. If cyborg is the preferred position (as I will discuss shortly), then weaving is an ideal way to think about how our lives are constructed and how we choose to construct them.

To understand the notion of the cyborg, one must think in terms of partial, interdependent beings; in other words, notions of life that weave together or link to one another. In our current reality, the 'real-life' incarnation of the cyborg is a creature that does not live by rigid boundaries between person, machine, and animal, but rather recognizes the interdependence among these forms of existence

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8 Korenman, Joan. “A URL of Our Own: The Center for Women and Information Technology”, *WSQ* 3/4 (2001):151.

9 Haraway, Donna. “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the late Twentieth Century” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) p170.

and embraces the fluidity of borders that separate them. Haraway's theorizing on technology and the construction of subjectivity has interesting implications for this project, particularly at a time that access to the Web continues to ascend among women users. "We are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation<sup>10</sup>." She offers an interesting perspective on the meaning of technological changes and how they can influence subjectivity. As the Western society I live in (and to varying degrees, the 'rest' of the world) escalates its dependence on technology, the way we think and operate our lives are increasingly shaped by our interaction with these new systems. Access to information via the Internet is a daily reality, even necessity, for many people (myself definitely included) and it's important to be conscious of how that structures our realities. However, taking stock of how we change and are changed by technology is not meant to be a negative vs. positive discussion of its effects. To follow the latter part of the quote from Haraway, the joining of "imagination and material reality" shapes the way we perceive ourselves and the world. Engaging with this notion of hybrid or "cyborg" invites the possibilities of changing and being changed by technology in a way that recognizes our multiple linkages with it. In other words, we can consciously utilize technology for and with our own meanings/agendas attached, with all its possibilities for power and resistance.

The act of constructing feminist knowledge in an online space calls on the cyborg existence as it refuses distinctions between technological pursuits and feminism and challenges how the Net is coded as masculine or as leisure-centered. Nina Wakeford, UK scholar and creator of the online Octavia Project, focuses on the way that feminist projects have claimed an online space for conducting and

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10 Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the late Twentieth Century" in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) p 150

disseminating research. She argues that this poses a challenge to constructions of the Internet as an insufficient realm for “serious” work. “I resist the notion that working on the Web, whether 'surfing' or creating the pages, is always or necessarily insignificant, marginal to women's lives and to cultures of feminism. I reclaim the activity known as 'surfing' as *serious play* which can create and maintain relationships, be they between individuals, organizations or hypertext documents”<sup>11</sup>. The notion of “serious play” dovetails with Haraway's cyborg, as it implies that the user can embrace both aspects of the medium to create new feminist knowledges. This framework offers new possibilities for weaving and linking in feminist scholarship at the same time it challenges hegemonic meanings of 'surfing' as masculine or being strictly for the privileged. I am taking up Wakeford's reclamation of surfing and web design in this project, because it is through these activities that the project will both come into being and be experienced by its users.

### **Women's Studies in Community Colleges: a Complex Challenge to the Status Quo**

Because they are distinct from four-year colleges and universities in so many ways, community colleges occupy a unique space for postsecondary learning that is accessible and community-based, especially in terms of their close physical locations to the community and in their open admissions policies. Students can find a range of programs at these colleges to fit different educational paths, and the general education program is a significant part of that structure. As Liza Fiol-Matta argued in a special edition of *WSQ*, general education at community colleges provides a low-cost avenue for learning basic skills and in some ways function as thirteenth and fourteenth grades, useful for those seeking to transfer their credits to a four-year college or university for an eventual bachelor's degree as well as for students whose formal education does not move beyond the community college<sup>12</sup>. The

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11 Wakeford, Nina. “Networking Women and Grrrls with Information/Communication Technology: Surfing Tales of the World Wide Web” in *Processed Lives: Gender and Technology in Everyday Life* (New York: Routledge, 1997) p 54

12 Fiol-Matta, Liza. “The Community College in the United States: a Profile of Innovation and Change” in *WSQ* 3/4 (1996): p 4

colleges often provide the training ground for general education programs that have a focus on university and four-year transfers, as well as being more accessible to non-traditional students or those returning from the work force<sup>13</sup>. Statistically speaking, the colleges are home to a diverse population. “Nationally, community colleges enroll forty-seven percent of black undergraduate students, fifty-six percent of Hispanic undergraduates, forty-eight percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders, and fifty-eight percent of Native American students<sup>14</sup>”. Considering these statistics, it is important to recognize issues of accessibility and who is gaining access to higher education. The open-door policy is one of the main pillars that structures how community colleges in this country operate. In their essay “A Case for the Community College's Open Access Mission”, Henry Shannon and Ronald Smith offer a description of how such a framework operates:

The community colleges' proverbial *open door*, which ensures access for all who can benefit, is the foundation on which all other community college operations rest. The open door concept influences admissions and enrollment processes, curricular structures, faculty hiring, the relationships between community colleges and four-year institutions, advising and counseling activities, and colleges' responses to the needs of the K-12 sector, as well as those of the local economy. Indeed, the open door concept is critical to the understanding of the community college itself.<sup>15</sup>

This overview account of the open-door framework touches on one important aspect in particular.

Whatever barriers people may face in getting a college education, gaining admission is not one of them

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13 Fiol-Matta, Liza. p 5

14 Fiol-Matta, Liza. P 7

15 Shannon, Henry and Smith, Ronald. “A Case for the Community College's Open Access Mission” in *Community College Missions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007) p 16

when the institution is a community college. Within this rubric, admissions and enrollment are inclusive of anyone who would benefit from attending the colleges, which in effect provides highly accessible education to the public.

The state of California is particularly relevant to the open-door discussion. Under California's Master Plan for Education passed by the legislature in 1960, all three areas of state-funded postsecondary learning (the Universities of California, California State Universities, and California Community Colleges) are structured to foster competition and collaboration among the schools and the students<sup>16</sup>. In this relationship, the community colleges were “authorized to offer instruction up to the 14<sup>th</sup> grade (including courses for transfer to four-year institutions, vocational and technical instruction, and general or liberal arts courses)”<sup>17</sup>. And Californians have definitely made use of the system. In the 2005-2006 school year, the state's 111 community colleges reported a total attendance of 2,550,492 students- of that population, roughly seventy-five percent claimed an ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white<sup>18</sup> (Student Demographics).

The multi-tiered system does go a long way toward providing the opportunity for the general population to get access to post-secondary education. At the same time, it also raises questions about the stratified organization of the state's colleges, and about community colleges more generally. Some scholars (Cohen and Brawer, 2003) argue that community colleges are meant to be a buffer zone, where people with few resources often get “stuck” or detoured from attaining a bachelor's degree, or routed into the job market via the colleges' multiple vocational programs. This argument is bolstered by the fact that many students do not successfully transfer to a four-year college or university, an

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16 Bracco, Kathy Reeves and Callan, Patrick M. “Competition and Collaboration in California Higher Education” (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education: 2002.

17 Bracco and Callan, p 8.

18 Student Demographics by Academic Year: Student Headcount by Ethnicity Statewide for 2005-2006. Accessed on April 2008. <misweb.cccco.edu/mis/onlinestat/studdemo\_annual\_college\_rpt.cfm?RequestTimeout=1000>

important reality to keep in mind when the colleges are the first post-secondary stop for such a large percentage of minority and non-traditional students. In his 1994 monograph The Contradictory College, Kevin J. Dougherty discusses the various actors that have had a role in shaping community colleges, including members of the public and their demands for accessible education, regional businesses seeking state-subsidized education for their workers (future or current), faculty members of universities trying to reduce their task of teaching general education courses, and government officials acting through bureaucratic machines to fund, promote, and regulate these sites. Considering these varied interests, Dougherty argues, makes it hard to simply look at the community college as a bastion of equal opportunity<sup>19</sup>. Dougherty's perspective of combined interests provides a realistic view of how groups like businesses, the public, higher education interests, and governmental structures often work together (and not necessarily consciously) to shape institutions like the community college. If we use this approach to think about one of the college's main functions, providing general education, we can begin to see that this goal is not 'innocent'- that is, general education is provided to the masses on the premise of training citizens in the lifeways of the country, and these efforts are very much grounded in notions of race, class, gender, sexual propriety, and nationalism, encapsulated in the college's popular mission of teaching general education.

The concept of general education is a major force that has shaped the educational system for at least the last century. In an essay published in the 2007 collection Community College Missions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, George Higginbottom and Richard Romano explore the general education mission at the nation's community colleges. Drawing on the early to mid-twentieth century work of scholars concerned with democracy and education, they argue that the mission of providing training in civic competence is a mainstay of U.S. public education, and that the community college is an ideal place for

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19 Dougherty, Kevin. *The Contradictory College: The Conflicting Origins, Impacts, and Futures of the Community College* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994.) p 8

building such programs centered around civic learning. “Further, we claim that the general education curriculum, in particular its contributions to effective democratic citizenship education, advances a critically important societal goal”<sup>20</sup>. Within this framework, they argue that the community college general education model should embrace or consist of the following: “(1) the provision of general education is more a public good than a private one; (2) civic competence has historically been the essence of a general education's public purpose; and (3) effective general education needs to be cross-curricular and integrative”<sup>21</sup>. Drawing from the fact that community colleges are open to most members of the community through their offerings of a variety of programs and relatively low tuition, Higginbottom and Romano argue that the institution is an ideal place for providing the public with these elements of general education. This is a sound assertion in terms of the college providing education to almost any community member who wants it. However, it also raises a lot of unanswered questions about the ideologies behind the structure of a general education that is based in civic competence. It points to issues of constructing ideal citizens and begs the questions, what *is* this notion of civic competence, this construct of an ideal citizen of this so-called democracy, and who gets to decide what that means? Many feminist scholars have done important work around this issue, showing that notions of proper citizenship are shaped by expectations of gender, race, sexual orientation, and physical ability, and people who fall outside of those expectations are excluded from the legitimation that civic belonging bestows.<sup>22</sup>

Higginbottom and Romano's current discussion of the community college general education mission are not the first to advance such a set of ideas. Their 2007 publication makes the case for general education's significance in the nation's community colleges based on current considerations of

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20 Higginbottom, George and Romano, Richard. “Appraising the Efficacy of Civic Education at the Community College” in *Community College Missions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007) p 24

21 Higginbottom, George and Romano, Richard. p 23

22 See Eithne Luibheid, 2002 and Martha Gardner, 2005.

the campuses' diverse student base, their popularity with transfer students, and their cross-curricular programs. It is significant, however, that these ideas are not brand new, but are grounded in an old and ongoing discussion over the goals of general education in the U.S. Therefore, it is useful to take a brief look at the formulation of general education in the nation's educational circles, particularly in thinking about how community colleges fit into higher education as a whole and how Women's Studies is located in that.

Listed on Higginbottom and Romano's bibliography is the 1916 edition of John Dewey's book, Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education. A professor of philosophy at Columbia University, Dewey was a leading voice for developing education built on pragmatism and the use of the scientific method during the Progressive Era in the U.S., building on ideologies of strengthening society through teaching and therefore uplifting the masses to take their place in the public sphere<sup>23</sup>. One of the central issues that Dewey considers is the meaning of education in a society, particularly in a democratic society. He argues that education is a means of transmitting values, morals, and the general way of life from the elder to the younger generations. Dewey raises an important point about the process of cultural transmission when he argues that the reception and integration of culture from the elders to the youth is not a “natural” process, but one that must be actively created and maintained. “The natural or native impulses of the young do not agree with the life-customs of the group into which they are born. Consequently they have to be directed or guided...The basic control resides in the nature of the situations in which the young take part”<sup>24</sup>. This process of training takes place through a variety of social avenues, and formal education is among the most central of these.

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23 Miller, Gary E. *The Meaning of General Education: The Emergence of a Curricular Paradigm* (Teachers' College: Columbia UP, 1988) p 73

24 Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education: an Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916) p 47

Harvard University's Committee on the Objectives of a General Education in a Free Society takes up another strand of this popular discussion. Published in 1945 by Harvard Press under the title General Education in a Free Society, the 267-page tome with at least sixteen re-printings makes the popular case for a central and unified notion of general education in the U.S. Published in the immediate aftermath of World War II, this study attempted to set forth a comprehensive path for general education that dealt with the rising of a new urban population and a production/consumption-based economy. This transition did not happen overnight, of course; it was dependent on large-scale changes in the nation's population and in how members of that population were educated to take their appropriate place within it<sup>25</sup>.

The rising capitalist economy demanded a pool of both skilled and unskilled workers to literally run the machinery, which required the public to prepare for a range of jobs in the post-agrarian order. Educating the population for certain divisions of labor rests on notions of social class, an idea with which the authors engage (while simultaneously lamenting) and use as a basis for a unified system of general education-

“...we have in mind the powerful, widespread, and very unhappy distinction of atmosphere and general standing between academic and vocational courses...It is a strange state of affairs in an industrial democracy when those very subjects are held in disrepute which are at the heart of the national economy and those students by implication condemned who will become its operators. The question, to which no adequate answer has as yet been found, is, then, how to endue all subjects in the modern high school, and the teachers of these, with a respect commensurate to *their equally necessary part* in American

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25 Harvard Committee. *General Education in a Free Society* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1945) p 15

life.<sup>26</sup> (emphasis added)

The authors of the study, all male (presumably white) professors in one of the country's most prestigious universities, make it very clear that the new postwar American economy is to be unified under the banner of capitalism and therefore, its inhabitants must be trained in the ways of maintaining that economic structure. This formulation involves not only a consideration of class distinctions, but its intersections with race, gender, sexuality, age and (dis)ability, in terms of who was and is integrated into certain sectors of the work force and levels of education. All of the pronouns are male-gendered, which is not particularly surprising as the report was being published just as middle-class women were being pushed out of the labor and educational spheres and into the domestic realm at the end of the war. This was the beginning of the cult of domesticity, and the way that the book is aimed at certain groups of men is telling in its expectations of who was expected to take up important roles in the new economy. The authors of the Harvard study largely glossed over the multiple social stratifications that structure access to education within the U.S. in favor of focusing on how education could be used as a tool to instill a sense of “unity” among Americans, a sense of personal-meets-national identity that could be taught to and hopefully adhered to by each citizen.

Interestingly enough, the notion of citizenship is still relevant today in relation to higher education in the U.S. Chandra Talpade Mohanty addresses this area in her essay “Privatized Citizenship, Corporate Academies, and Feminist Projects”, paying close attention to formations of democracy and how they shape citizens. She considers the presence of antiracist feminist scholars and fields like Women's Studies and how they fit within an increasingly corporatized academy, arguing that the latter is a crucial site of struggle for people involved with the former. Mohanty likens the new corporate academy to the “military-prison-corporate-media complex”, relating all of these endeavors

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<sup>26</sup> Harvard Committee, p 27-28

along an axis of increased privatization and decreased public control<sup>27</sup>. *This point is a crucial one*: Mohanty acknowledges that the U.S. university is a site where global capitalism is entrenched, and yet, she argues that Women's Studies belongs there to create challenges and alternatives to the universities' business-as-usual. She's advancing a both/and argument, where being purist and withdrawing from legitimation within the university is not the way to go, and neither is full cooperation in its corporatized structures. Instead Mohanty posits that in order to change these structures we have to *be there*, that *the university is the site* to struggle against hegemonic and predatory social trends. From this standpoint, Women's Studies within the academy is important for effecting social change from a sort of insider/outsider position, by being present and involved but also in thinking up creative alternatives.

Mohanty also links a consideration of democracy to this discussion. In tracing the U.S. shift from an educational system concerned with training citizens in civic life to one concerned with molding consumers of a late capitalist society, she argues that conceptions of democracy and democratic rights have kept pace with this shift. Instead of claiming democracy as the right to be informed and to collectively participate in all aspects of public life, democracy under late capitalism means the right to be a consumer, as well as encouraging a conception of democratic life only in terms of what the individual can gain and how they can get a leg up on everyone else. This is one of the challenges for academic programs and presences like Women's Studies, to engage with formal education as a site for analyzing capitalist models of democracy and democratic education, and using this site to create more equitable democratic structures. Quoting Iris Marion Young, Mohanty writes: "...democratic citizenship in higher education would not just entail working to create a space for free scholarly inquiry and exchange in a nonrepressive environment; it would also entail the just and equal participation of all social groups in the institutions that affect their lives...Young thus argues for

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27 Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Privatized Citizenship, Corporate Academies, and Feminist Projects" in *Feminism Without Borders* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2003) p 173

attentiveness to gender, race, class, and sexual difference and inequality in theorizing democratic citizenship”<sup>28</sup>.

At the same time, it is important to recognize how useful this notion of “diversity” (or diversity management) has become in maintaining the status quo order of things. Alternatives to traditional education like Women's Studies challenge mainstream ways of teaching and learning, and yet, by virtue of the field's location in higher education, it is also vulnerable to appropriation by the corporate university in its desire to “embrace” diversity. In her essay “Rethinking Collectivity: Chicago Feminism, Athenian Democracy, and the Consumer University”, Judith Kegan Gardiner acknowledges this reality. “Because in recent years our university claims an urban mission to the state legislature and to the public, our program's commitment to serving the community was sometimes helpful to the administration, which supported our conferences on fair housing, activist research, and other topics, and our workshops on antisexist and antiracist pedagogy”<sup>29</sup>. This is something of a symbiotic relationship. The university gets the P.R. advantage of being pro-diversity, and Women's Studies gets somewhat legitimized in its position of critique. Does this dull the critique? Possibly. But if we follow Mohanty's argument and recognize that an essential site of struggle is within the belly of the beast, then I can think of no better location than Women's Studies as the place for such struggle and creativity.

The both/and, inside/outside model of engaging that many parts of Women's Studies embraces gives it a critical edge that is important to this project of reforming democratic higher education. In other words, in our moves to resist corporate democracies, we must not look longingly back to the nineteenth and early twentieth-century days of educating for civic duty. The points made by influential people like John Dewey and the 1945 Harvard Committee must not be forgotten- whose idea of

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28 Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. p 176

29 Gardiner, Judith Kegan. “Rethinking Collectivity: Chicago Feminism, Athenian Democracy, and the Consumer University” in *Women's Studies on Its Own* ed. Robyn Wiegman (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2002) p 193

heritage is being taught, in what ideologies is it grounded? And who is being invited, being educated to join the civic society? These questions have been raised, discussed, and creative alternatives implemented in academia by feminist theorists like Mohanty and countless others for decades, again supporting the argument that Women's Studies is a fruitful location for grounding and continuing the struggle to *really* democratize education. Judith Kegan Gardiner makes this point particularly well, writing about the building of Women's Studies at UIC. "Among our goals was the fostering of a public university as a place to learn about the world and change it in progressive ways, a goal that implied changing university structures- or, at least, providing alternative models within them"<sup>30</sup>. We can see how Women's studies is an important part of higher education, particularly in its capacity to challenge (from the inside) the hegemonic capitalist base that structures much of it. But Women's Studies' possibilities are not just limited to the spheres of universities, as we can see with the presence of these programs on community college campuses. Although they are not as numerous as the programs on university and four-year college campuses, they do exist; the question is, how do such programs intervene in assimilationist education at the community college level?

It's important to recognize that trends toward privatization and corporate education affects community colleges as well but to a lesser degree, possibly because overall they don't have much of a research capacity. Kevin Dougherty argued this point in his book from 1994, and the corporate partnerships have gotten much stronger since then. A look at the American Association of Community Colleges' Web site shows that large multinational corporations with a record of violating human rights and the environment and who also play big roles in sustaining the (im)balance of wealth are providing a lot of money to U.S. community colleges, including 2008 Corporate Program "Leader" Coca-Cola and "Advocate" IBM. The designations are based on how much money each corporation contributes, and the "Leader" label is bestowed upon those businesses that donate \$50,000 per year. A banner ad for

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30 Gardiner, Judith Kegan. p 192

the AACC's Corporate Program invites corporations to “Obtain valuable benefits for your company. Connect with leaders from our nation's largest and most dynamic *postsecondary market*, and learn about emerging trends in our sector”<sup>31</sup> (emphasis added). It is interesting to note the explicit shift from a place of learning toward a place of business in this particular context, as students are constructed as the marketplace and companies are invited to compete for their loyalty. The increased corporate partnerships operating at the community college level thus links up with Mohanty's argument and makes it relevant to postsecondary locations other than the university. With this similarity of corporate trends in mind, we can also use Mohanty's both/and framework and look at how the community college is an ideal place to create equitable social structures, in spite of its “unpure” and even conflictual location. This is partly because the community college has traditionally been the most democratic form of higher education. My earlier discussion of writings by Dougherty and Shannon and Smith argues that community colleges are widely accessible to the public by virtue of their open-door policy, relatively low tuition, and the variety of programs they offer. Community colleges do constitute a more democratic space than universities because of their availability to a much wider swath of the public. With the colleges' flexible enrollment policies (credit, non-credit, continuing education, vocational training, etc.), students are taught about things that will affect their daily lives. What better venue to learn about gender, race, class, sexuality and other identity considerations than a place that's so central to increasing community knowledge?

This is exactly what makes programs like Women's Studies such a worthwhile endeavor in community colleges. Feminist engagement with the general education mission and how it can be re-created along more equitable lines is of utmost importance, especially in California where millions of the state's diverse students attend these institutions. Women's Studies and its feminist pedagogical styles advance and teach general education while simultaneously challenging the status quo ways of

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31 American Association of Community Colleges, Corporate Program. <aacc.nche.edu>

learning and knowing that have traditionally grounded it. In one of the few published essays discussing Women's Studies/feminist pedagogy at the community college level, instructor Shirley Parry argues that feminist methods of teaching and classroom interaction shifted the ways her students engaged with each other and with the process of knowledge construction. “Feminist pedagogy promotes the awareness that knowledge is not a discrete body of 'truths' that the instructor knows and imparts to students. It reframes the relationship between students and the course material by suggesting that students are capable of active learning and that this, rather than passive receiving, is what works best”<sup>32</sup>. The (often-negative) hierarchical dynamic between the instructor and the students has traditionally been a part of mainstream education, and Women's Studies' mission to reformulate that dynamic continues to be one of its radical contributions. Its challenge of truth-doctrines and of “natural” or “common sense” knowledges mark it as an indispensable intervention to traditional frameworks of teaching and learning, which is especially important at the beginning college levels because that's where the building of a critical approach is grounded. In this way, Women's Studies challenges the assimilationist arc of general education. It encourages students to take their learning into their own hands in a sort of do-it-yourself spirit, and emphasizes a relationship in which all parties have a voice in the proceedings that affect them. In her essay, Parry goes on to discuss how this classroom style fosters connections among students and “helps create a sense of community”<sup>33</sup>, a style that stands in direct challenge to an individualistic consumer-democracy form of general education. If we conceive of the community college as a more democratic (though still unpure) structure of higher education than four-year colleges or universities, we can see how such a use of Women's Studies in this site is a strong move toward creating democratic participation in the educational sphere.

While community college Women's Studies plays a role in crafting equitable education, it's also

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32 Parry, Shirley. “Feminist Pedagogy and Techniques for the Changing Classroom” *WSQ* 3/4 (1996) p 45

33 Parry, Shirley p 46

linked to strengthening democratic participation on a wider level. Building a sustainable democracy entails social and community participation that falls outside the sphere of formal education. However, the spheres are not wholly separate, and Women's studies should be attentive to the ways that social processes of citizen-building are linked to one another. Quoting Mohanty once more, she argues that a good strategy for challenging corporate democracy is by connecting to interests outside of academia. “Perhaps one of the only ways to fight the corporatization of the university (which has led to the rollback of affirmative action and the recolonization of marginalized peoples and our knowledges) is to link this struggle to other anticorporatization struggles (e.g., the anti-World Trade Organization movement)”<sup>34</sup>. Her argument for connecting the anticorporate struggle between the academic and non-academic spheres uses a framework of 'the personal is political', and suggests a strategy of examining one's own circumstances to connect yourself (you, the local, the personal) to larger, intertwined, global political processes.

I see a similar strategy at work in some community colleges, where classroom Women's Studies flourishes alongside Women's programs and related community-oriented organizations. Two examples of this are Monterey Peninsula College and City College of San Francisco. MPC's academic Women's Studies department offers classes in Women's Studies, has both part and full-time faculty, and offers students a major geared toward transfer to a four-year college or university. The first line in a document called “What is Women's Studies?” from their Web page links the field there to the mission of the community college more generally: “Women's Studies classes fulfill general education requirements and transfer to the university systems”<sup>35</sup>. The next few lines bring home the point of how Women's Studies at community colleges can create new ways of conceiving general education: “Our methodology is inclusive. Teacher and students work together to create a safe, supportive, collaborative

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34 Mohanty, Chandra Talpade p 177

35 <http://www.mpc.edu/studentservices/womensprograms/Pages/WhatIsWomensStudies.aspx>

classroom environment for a diverse student population...Academic study and life experiences come together in the Women's Studies classroom". Existing alongside the Women's Studies department is the Women's Programs, a number of incredible efforts focused on assisting women and men students as well as community members. Women's Programs includes services like the Emergency Food Pantry, which donates up to 2 bags of food to any MPC student in need. The Re-Entry & Multicultural Resource Center supports students of all backgrounds in their efforts to succeed at MPC by hosting meetings and groups, providing counseling services, and offering information on referrals as well as maintaining a collection of relevant videos and books<sup>36</sup>. The Women's Programs have a central role in the presence of Women's Studies on the MPC campus. They play such a large part that the structure of the Programs have a direct role in the academic side of the endeavor: "Women's Programs serves women and men students and community members through the Re-entry and Multicultural Resource Center. We administer the Women's Studies Department and the Re-entry Program"<sup>37</sup>. This link between the academic and non-academic is one of the ways that community college Women's Studies challenges the corporate democracy of higher education. By using the position within the academy to create a space for students and non-students to come together, programs like MPC help to create models of cooperative democracy while simultaneously critiquing market-centered education from the inside.

City College of San Francisco is another academic space that encourages the active participation of its students in connecting education to life in other spheres. Project SURVIVE is a program of the Women's Studies department that trains students to make classroom presentations about power and violence in the interest of building healthy relationships. A quote from their flier reads: "Although Project SURVIVE focuses on ending sexual violence, especially violence against women,

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36 <http://www.mpc.edu/student-services/womensprograms/Pages/default.aspx>

37 Mission Statement, <http://www.mpc.edu/student-services/womensprograms/Pages/default.aspx>

the program is dedicated to ending all forms of power abuse in relationships- both gay and straight- and in social groups and in public institutions”<sup>38</sup>. The explicit link between educating about abuse in interpersonal relationships and abuse in larger structural and social relationships recalls Mohanty's argument about connecting struggles to democratize education with struggles to build democracy outside of the academy. Not only does the approach to the subject foster connections between micro and macro forms of domination, it encourages students to take action and involve themselves in building an equitable democracy.

Looking at these two examples of community college Women's Studies, we can get a glimpse of how individual programs themselves pose a challenge to privatization trends in education. If the new corporate democracy way of educating students emphasizes following market trends and pushing for a so-called ownership society, then a significant critique is being built by Women's Studies programs operating at community colleges. The field draws upon its long legacy of challenging dominative social structures and constructions, and its critique is sharpened by its location in the community college, with its open-door policy and wide accessibility for a diverse public to learn about the processes that shape their lives.

In this exploration of Women's Studies and community colleges, I have argued that community college Women's Studies' possibilities for building equitable education and a more evolved democracy are located in its re-shaping of the general education sphere and through its encouragement of personal/community participation. This theme of my project also underlies the Web site, ccsw.org. The way that I understand Women's Studies at community colleges grounds the creative project I have built. As I argued at the beginning of this paper, the aim of the Web site is to expand the discussion over Women's Studies at community colleges by making information on these programs easily accessible to folks interested in them. In some ways, I see this Web site as contributing to a democratic

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38 Project SURVIVE flier, City College of San Francisco, October 2007

framework. By publishing this information on the Net, I am putting it into the public domain, not protected by passwords, and not charging a fee. Calling again on Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg and Nina Wakeford's idea of claiming the Web for feminist purposes, one of my intentions for this site is the both/and approach of working with a militaristic technology and simultaneously creating a space within it for a new feminist knowledge. In taking this approach my goal is to contribute to movements for equitable democracy in this country, both in arguing how Women's Studies at community colleges helps to accomplish that and by making information about these programs easily accessible to a wide range of people.

The components of the Web site help to achieve this goal of making information on these programs widely available. The index page, or home page, has a short discussion of the site and its relationship to Women's Studies and to higher education in the U.S.: "Ever wonder why Women's Studies is rarely associated with community colleges? Do you think these colleges are a great place for feminist teaching and learning that challenges the assumptions of general education? Out of this space of too-little discussion comes this Web site"<sup>39</sup>. This language is an effort to place the site in the ongoing dialogue about the place of Women's Studies in the academy, but it's also an effort to engage the reader and get them to think about the field's possibilities in other places.

The second page of the site, [Programs, Departments, Certificates, and Centers](#) is one of the main contributions of the site. This page lists all sixteen of the Women's Studies programs at community colleges within the state of California. The programs are grouped by geographic region, separated into sections by northern, central, and southern California. Each college is listed with a short description of whether they have a Women's Studies department, program, or certificate program, a feature suggested by both Professor Leslie Simon of the Women's Studies department at City College of San Francisco and Professor Cynthia Barnett at Moorpark College. Each

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<sup>39</sup> Community College Women's Studies Web, Index Page [ccsw.org/index.html](http://ccsw.org/index.html)

program/department/certificate area is linked, so the user is one click away from each Women's Studies Web page of the sixteen community colleges. The bottom section of the Programs, Departments, Certificates, and Centers page has a listing of Women's Centers that are on these campuses. In this section, I included those colleges that have an extra-academic program that focuses on Women's Studies or gender issues. I listed four such programs in this section, and considered listing community college LGBT resource centers and ethnic/race-based resource centers as well; however, I thought it best to keep the focus on programs explicitly tied to Women's Studies because of my project's focus on this field, even though a listing of these other centers could be a contribution to coalition-building.

The third page, Links, contains connections to other sites that I have grouped within two sections. The first section is Women's Studies programs at universities and four-year institutions. As this site is focused on California, I have only linked to such programs that exist within this state. My reasons for listing these programs are twofold, the first being my support for solidarity between Women's Studies programs at all educational levels and hence my listing of them on this community college-focused site. The second reason is that many people who take Women's Studies during their community college experience choose to transfer to a four-year college or university, and I hope that this can serve as a resource for students who might want to transfer into Women's Studies at that level. This is one of those areas where my goals for the site's use might be different from what people might actually use it for, but this is one of my intentions as the site's creator, a former transfer student, and a part of the field of Women's Studies. The second grouping of links connect to sites similar to mine, sites like [artemisguide.com](http://artemisguide.com) and [NWSA.org](http://NWSA.org) that have extensive listings of Women's Studies academic programs, but do not have listings of such programs at community colleges. Because these sites inspired [ccsw.org](http://ccsw.org) and because of their great information on four-year and university programs, linking to them is another way to build continuity within the field across different educational spheres.

The fourth page of [ccsw.org](http://ccsw.org) is a bibliography. To quote from the page's heading: "Published

writing about Women's Studies at community colleges can be hard to find; so with this in mind, I am posting a bibliography of the sources I've come across in my research”<sup>40</sup>. The bibliography page includes some of the materials cited in this written portion, and it also lists sources that are relevant to the topic but I chose not to formally include. The page lists several short essays written by Women's Studies instructors at community colleges and one from a high school, one essay by a feminist history instructor that challenges Women's Studies relevance at the colleges, and pieces on the field of Women's Studies and on community colleges as a whole. Again, this supports my goal of making information accessible to the public, with the hope that people will make use of this bibliography in ways that are helpful to them.

The fifth page is entitled About the Site. It contains a .pdf file of this paper. I wanted to post the paper on the site because, beyond the public information purposes of ccsw.org, it is a part of my larger project on contributing to the discussion of Women's Studies in institutional locations and contains information that the site as such does not have. Further, due to the fact that I am completing this Culminating Project as a “Creative Work” and not as a “Thesis”, San Francisco State University will not put my written work in the library with the rest of the Master's theses. This bureaucratic exclusion requires a creative solution, so I have chosen to publish my work on the Web site. Unfortunately, the project won't be available on the fourth floor of the J. Paul Leonard Library; however, it is available to a much wider audience via the public space of the Net.

The sixth and last page of ccsw.org is called Suggestions for using this site. This consists of a short discussion of how I think people might make use of the site, from the listing of the programs themselves to a brief exploration of my paper. Some of my suggestions come from my discussions with Women's Studies instructors and those involved with the programs at community colleges, but most come from my own ideas about the site, as the creator of it. To quote myself: “No creation comes

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40 Community College Women's Studies Web, Bibliography page [ccsw.org/index.html](http://ccsw.org/index.html)

without an agenda, and no person is without subjectivities”<sup>41</sup>. Again, I have certain ideas as to how the site can be used, but I also realize and embrace others' creativities in how they might use it, or in the suggestions I hope to receive. I've posted my e-mail address on each page of the site with an open invitation to contact me with suggestions, corrections, or additions. This is one of the ways that the site aims to expand the discussion among people concerned with the field, and one of the ways it is flexible to the ideas of those concerned with it and with the subject matter.

I have spent several months dedicated to constructing and launching this Web site and the corresponding paper. Both the written and the online halves of the project have been a meaningful experience for me in several ways. One such experience is realizing the difficulty of trying to engage in a project guided by a transnational feminist approach. No one initially contacted me about setting up this Web site or writing this paper. The idea was mine, and I realize the implications of doing a project concerned with a community that I am not exactly a part of. To be sure, I attended community college, I am a Women Studies major, and I hope to teach in Women's Studies at community colleges; but I am not currently in that location, and I am doing this writing as a part of a university program that will reward me with a Master's degree for my hard work. And yet, I have done my best to take a transnational feminist approach to this project. I've tried to contact at least one person from each program at the sixteen community colleges, leaving several messages and sending a lot of e-mails. As I discussed in the first section of this paper, however, these attempts did not overwhelmingly pan out, although I did have contact with several people and received a lot of valuable suggestions and feedback. I have used these suggestions both in the site and in the crafting of this paper, and while I haven't been able to successfully communicate with everyone whose program is listed on the site, I have done my best to do so and to operate within a transnational feminist framework.

Another significant piece of this project, of course, is the creation of this paper, in which I've

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41 Community College Women's Studies Web Suggestions page [ccsws.org/index.html](http://ccsws.org/index.html)

laid out my argument as to why Women's Studies at community colleges is a promising endeavor. I have argued that Women's Studies as a field of inquiry poses challenges to both the assimilationist trends of general education in the U.S., and to the trends towards privatization and corporatization that are ongoing within four-year colleges and universities but also to a lesser degree at community colleges. Further, I've argued that Women's Studies at community colleges is a particularly strong challenge to these trends in education, through its challenging of status quo general education (which is a main goal of community colleges, especially in California) and through many programs' joint efforts to establish feminist endeavors that link the classroom to the community. In making this argument, I hope to expand the discussion over the future of Women's Studies, to encourage a more open-minded conception of where the field can flourish. This paper and the Web site are my contributions toward that endeavor, and I hope to see my efforts at amplifying this dialogue taken up by others concerned with the future of the field.