

Tripwires and Whisky Tenors: Student-Faculty Relationships in Alberta's Normal Schools During the 1930s

Shawn W. Brackett

University of Calgary

ABSTRACT

For the first half of the twentieth century, most prospective teachers in Alberta pursued certification by attending provincial normal school in Calgary, Camrose, or Edmonton. “Normalites” (as students called themselves) formed relationships with instructors that proved significant in their personal and professional lives. Faculty members acted *in loco parentis* as they guided students transitioning from learners to teachers. Instructors fostered typical notions of gender and the idealized teacher model, and their relationships with students characterized student life. Drawing upon Robert Patterson's Project Yesteryear questionnaires, yearbooks, and annual reports, this article examines the social worlds of normal schools. Educational historians in Canada have long examined student life and culture, but more work has focused on universities than normal schools. This study suggests the importance of survey accounts and student-produced documents as ways to enrich administrative perspective of histories of student life.

RÉSUMÉ

Pendant la première moitié du vingtième siècle, la plupart des futur.e.s enseignant.e.s de l'Alberta poursuivent leur certification au sein des écoles normales provinciales de Calgary, de Camrose ou d'Edmonton. Les « normaliens et normaliennes » (ainsi que se dénomment les étudiant.e.s) développent, avec leurs instructeurs, des relations significatives pour leurs vies autant personnelles que professionnelles. Les membres de la faculté agissent à titre de figures parentales alors qu'ils aident les étudiant.e.s dans leur transition d'élèves à enseignant.e.s. Les instructeurs véhiculent et consolident les rôles traditionnels de genre de même que le portrait idéalisé de l'enseignant.e modèle et les relations qu'ils entretiennent avec les étudiant.e.s déterminent la vie de ces derniers. S'appuyant sur les questionnaires, les albums de l'année et les rapports annuels du projet d'antan de Robert Patterson, cet article examine les milieux sociaux des écoles normales. Si les historiens de l'éducation se penchent depuis longtemps sur la vie et sur la culture étudiantes, la plupart de leurs travaux sont concentrés sur les universités plutôt que sur les écoles normales. Cette analyse démontre l'importance des comptes rendus d'enquêtes et des documents produits par les étudiant.e.s alors qu'ils enrichissent la perspective administrative de l'histoire de la vie étudiante.

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Reflecting on her time at Camrose Normal School, one former student recalled the strict rules that governed student life inside and outside the classroom: “We couldn’t have boys in our living quarters even in a mixed group. Our landlord wired the back steps so that when you sat on them, it rang a bell in his quarters. So, we stood in the backyard and so did the boyfriends.”¹ This anecdote, shared decades after the alumna completed her program, illuminates several important characteristics of the institution’s social world. From 1906 to 1945, teachers of one-room and elementary schools in Alberta usually earned certification by completing a program of study and practice teaching at one of three provincial normal schools.² Hundreds of “Normalites” (as students called themselves) packed the schools in Calgary, Camrose, and Edmonton every year, with student populations varying according to the demand for teachers in the growing province, fluctuating economic conditions, and provincial funding.³ Training to be a teacher meant leaving home for normal school and boarding with an approved area resident. Days were spent in class, under the observation of faculty members; nights and weekends were often passed by studying under the watchful eye of landlords.⁴

This study explores the ways in which faculty members and students co-constructed a social world centred on the institution, both physically and metaphorically. Other scholars have focused on the power dynamics of faculty-student relationships across postsecondary institutions and this study builds on those lines of inquiry.⁵ I argue that while faculty members crafted an institution based on typical gender norms and students largely conformed to that vision, faculty not infrequently overlooked or otherwise breached the unwritten and written standards for personal conduct. The model of teacher-as-moral-paragon remained in place, but personal relationships built on genuine care and concern meant that instructors, principals, and students together developed a social world far more nuanced than official regulations and documentation suggest. Despite the formality of academic cultures at the time and the existence of sometimes-severe penalties for straying outside the rules, alumni recall a world with a “happy degree of intimacy” with faculty members. Those close relationships came to define student life at normal school in their minds long after graduation.⁶

Historians K. A. Hollihan and John Calam have argued that faculty and administrators in normal schools exerted a significant influence on student life to ensure Normalites lived up to the institutional and community ideals of teaching.⁷ Their analyses start from an administrative perspective, taking seriously the coercive technologies limiting student autonomy. Hollihan’s work includes student views but does not adequately account for student agency or explain faculty motivations.⁸ In short, it inadequately responds to individual nuance and emotion. My work demonstrates that the faculty-student relationships at normal schools were informed in part by faculty desires to form students in an idealized mould of the noble teacher, but that faculty actions were far more dynamic than has previously been understood. Faculty members often formed close personal relationships with students and overlooked some infractions of the normal school code. This study highlights the importance of student-produced documents and surveys as ways to enrich the institutional and administrative perspective of histories of student life.

In the early 1980s, historian Robert Patterson undertook Project Yesteryear, an attempt to include teachers' perspectives on teacher education and experiences of teaching.⁹ Patterson worked for years on this project, eventually receiving 1,200 surveys from teachers across western Canada. This article draws upon all 380 surveys of teachers who attended normal school in Alberta between 1930 and 1939.¹⁰ While surveys may not constitute oral history, their form as a receptacle for personal memory suggests that approaches taken by oral historians are useful in guiding my use of surveys as historical evidence. I examined the surveys for patterns and then selected stories to illustrate those patterns, prioritizing accounts corroborated by other survey responses. Following the work of scholars in oral history and education, I take seriously—but not always literally—the written memories of normal school alumni.¹¹ Supporting the surveys as evidence in this study are documentary sources like annuals (yearbooks), correspondence among educational and government officials, and principals' reports to the province.

I begin my exploration of student life in the normal school classroom. At each of the schools, about a dozen instructors and a principal taught a dense curriculum that demanded quick movement from subject to subject, assigning reams of homework along the way. The order of the academic day was regimented and largely unchanging: classes began at 9:00 a.m. and ended by 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, with Friday afternoons set aside for all-school gatherings. Students spent much of their time outside of school working on assignments and studying for exams, connecting in-class with out-of-class experiences. Schoolwork kept students busy on a daily basis and occupied a significant portion of their attention.

Most students sat through classes with peers of the same gender. Faculty divided students into classes based first on academic standing (at least grade 11) and second on gender, with coeducational classes emerging as a result of too many women and too few men.¹² For example, Camrose in 1934–35 had five classes: three first-class and two second-class. Class IA was a group of students pursuing first-class certification that included only women students.¹³ Class IB was similarly all women and Class IC was all men.¹⁴ However, Class IIA was coeducational, while Class IIB was all women.¹⁵ Classes were the smallest unit of organization and students spent much of the academic day in their own class, although accounts of socialization during passing periods and in student societies indicate widespread intermingling among students. Despite the tendency of the institutions to group the Normalites by academic standing and gender, students were admitted without regard to gender.

This gendered arrangement largely went unnoticed and unchallenged, although a few would have welcomed the “distraction.” In 1933, one Edmonton student opined at length that classes were

segregated by sex, ostensibly to convenience Sergeant Barker, the Physical Education Instructor, thus better able to select exercises, gymnastics, and other activities more suited to each sex. Naturally we were disappointed and appeased ourselves that limited distractions enabled greater concentration on less delectable subjects. That made class change periods very popular and contributed

substantially to tardiness and the success of some joint classes... and numerous co-curricular social activities.¹⁶

The situation remained relatively static throughout the period. Some students noted their preference for separation from students of another gender: "I considered the arrangement 100% okay since I felt much less self-conscious in a purely male, chauvinist environment and I think most of my classmates felt the same way, although a few wondered how it would be in a mixed class."¹⁷ For the students who learned in coeducational classes, the situation was generally satisfactory and did not trigger much of a response at all. As one Camrose student put it, "I was one of [six] girls who were put into the boys' class. There was nothing in any of the classes at any time that made us feel we should not be in that class."¹⁸

For such a fundamental distinction, one might expect a more significant reaction, and this might have been the case if the barriers between women and men were higher and consistently enforced. Students were well aware of the permeability of the divisions between men and women. Having both coeducational and separated classes demonstrated that separation was a constructed, moral decision — not a natural one. Students noticed this and took advantage of other opportunities to socialize across gender lines. Passing periods provided a prime opportunity for students to speak with each other, exchange rumours, and flirt. Although the time between classes was short, probably about five minutes given the difficulty of students having to change their clothes between physical education and other courses in the allotted time, it was enough to maintain social connections.

Faculty seized other opportunities to reinforce gender roles in the curriculum as well as class organization. Domestic science courses, in particular, were offered to women students to provide them with cooking and home-making skills that were expected of working- and middle-class women regardless of what they did following normal school. For those women who went on to teach in rural schools, abiding by community social standards was key to maintaining respect and a job — especially because many lived with farm families.¹⁹ And while domestic science had negligible enrolment in the 1930s, women teachers almost always instructed those courses and made up 78.7% of the overall Canadian teaching corps in 1930 and 71.3% by 1940.²⁰ Regardless of the many ways Normalites would use such skills in their future, the faculty of the normal schools felt it important to encourage students to practice. At Edmonton, Dr. Donalda Dickie reflected in the yearbook:

Miss Hastie gallantly agreed to have her Domestic Science classes provide a "hot dish" for each lunch.... Every day, the girls cooked, every day the men set up temporary tables and served. The gayest memories of the alumni of those days are centered about those "hot lunch" tables.²¹

Despite the impression of many Normalites that their generation followed the rules of acceptable behaviour at all times, evidence of disregard exists. Student reactions to rules and what they considered to be oppressive policies covered the gamut from

behaviours in view of the faculty (overt) and those actions that took place away from the prying eyes of authority (hidden). Behaviours also ranged in severity, from minor infractions to significant breaches. Certain patterns of behaviour were recalled repeatedly by alumni, namely those that were both overt and minor, because they were more associated with memories of daily life at the school. In the view of the faculty, students understandably felt freer to violate minor expectations than major ones and evidence suggests a shared understanding of which actions would be considered by faculty as either significant or insignificant. In this framework, Normalites of Depression-era Alberta understood and accepted an academic and social framework (led by faculty) that privileged conformity in thought and behaviour but tolerated relatively minor violations.

Minor violations included talking back to faculty, or openly disagreeing with instruction. These were not new phenomena in 1930s Alberta, but they certainly risked bringing down the ire of faculty. Patterson's Project Yesteryear questionnaires (PYQ) included incidents of verbal disagreements between the faculty and students with some details on certain behaviours and the responses of the instructors and principals. One example at Calgary in 1938–39 stands out for its level of detail and its corroboration by two students: "Our class president once criticized the principal... in a Literary program because he [Principal Coffin] always used Lit time to make announcements. The student got away with it and was not reprimanded in any way."²² The tone of the criticism directed towards Principal Coffin seemed to a classmate to be shockingly "disrespectful."²³ It is easy to imagine why the student would have been shocked: by challenging the principal in public, the student forced him to deal with the matter in full view of the student body and the principal's faculty colleagues. Coffin seems to have preferred to deal with conflict in private—doing so would allow all parties to save face and cause as little disruption as possible, and therefore uphold the positive reputation of everyone involved. In a time and profession in which reputation played a key role, this public challenge would have been a test of Coffin's ability to command respect. Regardless, Calgary students overwhelmingly thought well of Coffin and his social skills, perhaps skills embodied by his measured responses to public (and possibly private) confrontations.

Another of the students' methods for reacting to and sometimes resisting the authority of faculty was to remove themselves physically from the normal school. "Playing hooky" was an overt action by students, but the act of being absent could be ambiguous. While some students "skipped classes, didn't complete assignments, or didn't pay attention during lectures," others did not attend because of illness or family emergencies.²⁴ Faculty likely noticed patterns of absence because of their close relationships with and monitoring of students. However, if a student missed school for one or two days and did not have other behavioural issues, the student probably got away with the absence needing little explanation. How, then, was playing hooky an act of rebellion? Students had limited options. The exigencies of economic depression and the struggles of local agricultural industries impacted all facets of life and reached into the private and semi-private lives of the Normalites. Because of external pressures, students saw formal discipline by faculty as a significant barrier

to their success and as a result avoided overt and major rebellions. Choosing to skip class for an entire day could be a marker of independence; it could also be something that built a measure of solidarity among peers, as felt, for example, by those who left Edmonton during warm weather to go swimming.²⁵ As Cynthia Comacchio notes, schooling generated pressures to conform among peers as well. Playing hooky thus represented two facets of student life: the drive to craft a distinct student culture outside of the view of faculty, as well as the hierarchical nature of some interactions.

Many students recalled faculty and principals fondly as upstanding individuals. Faculty performed the familiar roles of authority figures who seemed to know what was right and demonstrated how to properly comport themselves as adults. Much of the surviving documentation bears out a generally positive assessment of how the faculty acted in their positions of power. However, several cases of discordant, ambiguous, and frankly troubling relationships demonstrate that human foibles and caprice affected the normal school faculty and students. D. A. McKerricher taught history at Calgary; evidence suggests he was a veteran of the First World War who suffered from shell shock.²⁶ Alumni recalled behaviours such as him repeatedly buttoning his vest, swinging his watch in elaborate patterns, and pacing back and forth, likely responding to trauma he was experiencing. In any other context, these actions would likely not elicit a strong response or remain in someone's memories, but McKerricher was normally a quiet man with a distinct gravity about him. Many students felt sorry for him, but sometimes a student would imitate him.²⁷

The cruelty inherent in mocking someone's assumed disability was not unique to the Normalites, but it was unusual at the school. In a surprising confession, one alumna wrote "[McKerricher] often wondered why our class would break out in laughter for no apparent reason—and it was me mimicking him...."²⁸ In this scenario of adolescent behaviour, a temporary reversal of social power took place. A strong and well-respected man who literally stood at the head of the classroom was momentarily brought low by the actions of a young woman. McKerricher probably knew this was happening. In the early 1930s, Calgary faculty took turns writing staff biographies for the yearbook; it was McKerricher's turn in the 1930–31 edition. The entry he wrote for himself said:

Mr. McKerricher, the person assigned to the role of history, continues to hold a place in the cast. He still wrinkles his brow, still plucks at his watch chain and mumbles away in an undertone about something nobody considers important and nobody is interested in. You may not believe it, but he really aims to help. *Optamus Juvare* [We wish to help], the motto of the school, he yearly resolves to adopt as his own.²⁹

Despite his knowledge of what was happening to his own mind and body and what others were saying about him, he remained on staff until 1939, known as an instructor who guided students with a firm but gentle hand.³⁰

Academic concerns also kept students in line. Students knew that attendance in class was expected and most followed that rule.³¹ Being present physically, however,

is distinct from being engaged mentally. Needing to burn the candle at both ends, many students were busy with homework as well as holding jobs to pay for school. But this did not always work, as one Calgary student remembered: "I was suspended from a class for falling asleep, but was reinstated when I explained that I'd worked my way from Edmonton the night before handling freight and hadn't been to bed."³² Occurring during the Great Depression, this student had understandable reason to make ends meet however he could.³³ He further wrote: "[My] parents lived in Edmonton. I frequently caught rides with trucks (oil or transport) and helped with driving and handling freight in lieu of money as an incentive for the driver to take me—probably every 2 to 4 weeks."³⁴ This account shows the seriousness with which faculty took class participation, but also the delayed compassion on the part of faculty. Upon learning of the reason for falling asleep, they reinstated the student. History instructor Gerald Manning at Camrose responded to a similar situation with humour.

It was in the spring, the course was on the west side, it was warm in the afternoon, consequently, some students dozed off. Mr. Manning in a monotonous voice said: "I think I will apply for a position in a hospital which has restless patients. All I will do will be teaching history and it will calm them down." Those who were awake burst out laughing and woke up the sleeping students.³⁵

Examining accounts of students sleeping in class may not, at first glance, appear to enrich our understanding of general student behaviour—but doing so allows us to see how students reacted to expectations and how they related to one another and to faculty. Faculty rarely acted in ways that would jeopardize the reputations or careers of their students but at times chose instead to reinforce the teacher ideal by correcting with compassion and humour.

Some instructors' actions distanced students from faculty in damaging ways. Sometimes faculty members exercised their authority by pulling a student out of class and sending them to the principal for correction, a course of action that reinforced faculty power and social norms.³⁶ Perhaps unsurprisingly, words held a greater influence over students than actions alone. A Calgary alumnus from 1931 shared a hurtful encounter.

I was rebuked once by Mr. Loucks for asking about the instrument the bow man was carrying in a picture in the reader—it was a crossbow—but I had never seen one or used one. The scathing reply I received left a scar I still remember.³⁷

His pain is palpable decades later and powerfully signals that he, along with his peers, cared deeply what faculty thought about students. Mr. Loucks taught another lesson than the one he intended that day: to admit one's ignorance in an academic setting—to be vulnerable in front of friends and teachers alike—risked pain. In the main, however, alumni reported close and affectionate relationships between faculty

and students.³⁸ Despite Hollihan's suggestion that instructors and principals generally sought to "engender bewilderment, for a confused state of mind promoted submission," I find evidence that faculty laboured to create certainty—not confusion—among students.³⁹

Faculty involvement in student life may be clearest in the classroom, but faculty actions related to activities outside the classroom deserve attention. Normal schools in Canada did not carry over significant numbers of students from year to year because the programs were designed to be completed in one academic year. Because of that, faculty had to step in to create and mould an acceptable culture.⁴⁰ By comparison, colleges and universities maintained control over curriculum and standards of student conduct, but older students returning to the institutions helped perpetuate a particular social world by way of rituals and initiations.⁴¹ Normal schools in Alberta did not have an older, upper academic class that would exercise the social power to initiate younger students—every year began anew except for those activities sanctioned and sponsored by faculty. Historians have noted the power of initiations to mould and enforce gendered norms at universities and the consternation instilled in faculty by these actions.⁴² Without the class of older students to instill norms, faculty remained the most powerful group to shape what was considered to be the proper values and behaviours of their charges.

Faculty served as advisors to student clubs and organizations, principals were honorary presidents of the student councils at each normal school, and both faculty and administrators spent a significant amount of time with students. Not only were faculty physically present in social situations, they also influenced the behaviours of students in attendance. Usually faculty worked to ensure adherence to conservative social values like modesty, preventing students from embarrassing themselves or the institutions. But occasionally faculty themselves brought some shame to the students. In one situation, Edmonton played host to Camrose for a basketball tournament. Principal Lord caused "considerable embarrassment by failing to finalize banquet arrangements. Our 'sumptuous' banquet therefore was confined to pea soup, tea, coffee, and packaged cookies."⁴³

Outside of lunches, the most obviously social time of the formal normal school schedule was the "Friday Lit." Held at the end of the day at the end of the week, assemblies for the literary advancement of Normalites represented one highlight of widespread faculty involvement in student activities.⁴⁴ Each class was responsible for organizing, rehearsing, and performing a dramatic act for the benefit of the entire school—class honour and pride was at stake. Yearbook editors included reflections on the relative success and virtue of each presentation.⁴⁵ Friday Lits prepared Normalites for their responsibilities as teachers in rural areas to put on a Christmas concert as well as forcing reluctant or shy students to interact with one another.⁴⁶

As Robert Patterson argues, extracurricular activities were critical to understanding the gendered nature of relationships.⁴⁷ Normal schools, like their college and university counterparts, offered a wide array of programs and events in which students could get involved.⁴⁸ Some activities were created by students, some by faculty. But all activities considered to be "extracurricular" retained some connection to the

normal school itself, regardless of location or involvement of faculty. Two kinds of activities stand out among the archival evidence and alumni questionnaires as being highly salient for Normalites during their studies and for decades after: dances and sport.⁴⁹ Both activities resonated with gendered expectations and gave rise to growing exploration and, in many cases, solidification of what it meant to be women and men. Historian Kristina Llewellyn's exploration of women teachers in the 1940s demonstrates the longevity of these expectations.⁵⁰ Faculty recognized the importance of student life outside the classroom—it is no wonder that they desired “that much of the social life of the students centre about the school.”⁵¹ More importantly, the students themselves thought of dances and sporting events as warranting absence from visits home or excursions out of the city.⁵²

Under faculty supervision, dances provided a means of facilitating social interactions, social development, and welcome and deserved entertainment. Occurring at all three institutions throughout the period, dances also played an important role in the making of memories about normal school for students. Normalites held regular dances, almost always on Friday evenings after Lits, every few weeks over the course of the academic year. Faculty encouraged student attendance at school dances in place of dances in the city, and in the case of Camrose, outright forbade students from attending “Jitney dances” downtown.⁵³ By restricting a coveted social event to the school, faculty were able to monitor dances, and in so doing, reinforced their own authority. Prior to the school dances, students decorated the largest assembly rooms in their school while faculty served as gatekeepers and icebreakers. Edmonton alumni recalled that instructors would stand in a line at the entrance. Ostensibly forming a receiving line to greet students, this also had the benefit of allowing faculty to detect alcohol on students' breath.⁵⁴

Once inside, students were free to mingle with one another, all the while knowing that faculty were watching. No evidence remains of any restrictions on which Normalites could attend, but alumni recall a circumstance unique to Calgary: the shared physical space of the building on North Hill.⁵⁵ Because the normal school shared its building with the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art (PITA, today called SAIT), and because “Tech” had many more men than women, the gender order at normal school was challenged. Normalites were not permitted in the east wing (home of Tech) and Tech students were not permitted in the west wing (home of the normal school). Even a pair of sisters, one enrolled at the normal school and one at PITA, were told to remain on their respective sides of the building. “We explained we were sisters and [that her sister] went to Tech. Mr. Coffin's reply was, ‘I cannot separate you as sisters but as students I can.’”⁵⁶ In addition, women students at Calgary were not permitted to date the men at Tech. For dances, however, Tech students provided needed men and were given special permission to attend normal school dances. The Calgary yearbook tells the story: “October 29th. Well—here it comes—the first Formal. What's the matter with the men? There was a severe shortage and no excuses for it was free. A few ‘Techsters’ were roped in and the dance went on.”⁵⁷ When this option did not result in gender parity, women were allowed to ask other women.⁵⁸ Whatever the relative successes of allowing Tech students to attend normal school

dances, the faculty seemed to have failed at maintaining absolute separation outside of those dances: “We were not supposed to associate with the Tech students, but we certainly ignored that one!”⁵⁹ The practical realities of dances and students’ own desires intruded on the gendered order desired by faculty.

Sometimes, faculty recognized the issue of under-developed social skills compounded by what one student described as “skewed gender ratios” and stepped in to dance with students who lacked partners (or the courage to find a partner).⁶⁰ In a year packed with social activities, success in those social activities was important to the Normalites. Faculty-student interactions on the dance floor did not simply replicate what happened in the classroom. As one student noted: “Dr. Lord [was] a very private person. Once his teenaged son attended a dance and got a crush on my friend, Edna. That’s the only time I saw Dr. Lord beam—when she agreed to dance with the boy.”⁶¹ Alumni remembered that Calgary principal Dr. Coffin took special care to dance with “wallflowers” and spent basketball games moving “from one bench to another to get to know students.”⁶² Dances, along with other extracurricular activities, fostered more intimate relationships, ones that allowed instructors and principals to lower their professional walls temporarily. This closeness was more than social pleasantries—it became instrumental in how students experienced their year at normal school and had an indelible impact on their formation as future educators.

Beyond facilitated and formally approved social events on campus, students also faced regulations on matters of vice. Alcohol played a fairly visible role in the social world of the Normalites. It was the beverage that could harm, reduce one’s stature in the community, and for some had little positive use. As future teachers, Normalites were aware of the importance of reputation. As remembered by alumni, of all the decisions that appeared to have had consequences, alcohol use was the most obvious in its challenge. While the decision to have receiving lines at dances, as discussed above, would seem to indicate how seriously the faculty took the role of preventing students from drinking, the consequences of being caught consuming alcohol at school could be subtly influential. Challenges to reputation and embarrassment rather than immediately harsh punishment were remembered by a Camrose alumna: “One of our hometown boys came to a dance and had been drinking BEER [capitalization in original]. [There] was a serious assembly over that and we were embarrassed.”⁶³ Responses about alcohol violations were more common from alumni of the early 1930s than later in the decade, but most remembered only cursory warnings for violations, not outright dismissal. One student reported that “the only... instance that I can recall concerned the use of alcohol at a Normal School picnic. The two male students involved were up on the mat and given a warning.”⁶⁴ At least one woman was also warned, in this case because she and her escort had been drinking.⁶⁵ And while alcohol use and consumption was officially banned, at least one alumnus remembered a student who was a “whisky tenor and could sing after having a few.”⁶⁶ Faculty allegedly knew of this student’s drinking habit and permitted him to continue participating in choir.

Alcohol use, a controversial practice, warranted an official stance of intolerance but in reality, instructors reacted instead with a measure of resigned tolerance. By

warning but not suspending students, faculty may have been acting out of self-interest because a high-profile pattern of student violations in public drinking would reflect poorly in the surrounding community on the instructors and principal. The faculty could have been looking out for the students' best interests, knowing that failure to complete the normal school program would compromise the students' successful path to a profession and a way to earn a living. The faculty may have also been resigned to the fact that alcohol consumption was likely to occur in any such dynamic social environment, a concern shared by their colleagues teaching in high school, college, and university.⁶⁷

Despite the ramifications of participating in vice, such actions elicited a decidedly mixed response. From students admonished for drinking at Calgary dances,⁶⁸ but not expelled, to Normalites expelled for smoking at Camrose, to a student allowed to perform while under the influence,⁶⁹ implementing rules and regulations depended heavily on subjective interpretation of the violations by the faculty. And while alumni recollections do not indicate a stark division of *written* school rules along gendered lines, they do paint a picture of life experiences marked distinctly by gender.

Girls who smoked, were thought to smoke, or even suggested they might smoke were "asked" to leave. The women students were expected to be models of propriety both in the school, the town and living quarters. Men students were not nearly so restricted. And a girl who had one drink was in trouble while "boys will be boys." I don't recall any challenge to rules, because we didn't dare.⁷⁰

This Camrose alumna remembered living and studying under a regime that privileged her male peers and allowed behaviours that would have been unacceptable for women. This experience was shared to a lesser degree by alumni from Edmonton or Calgary by virtue of Camrose's comparatively conservative principal, George Haverstock.

Regarding unsettling experiences of students with normal school faculty, the most troubling incident surrounds Sergeant P. Sutherland, the physical training instructor at Calgary. Described as a handsome and vivacious young instructor on loan to the normal school from Currie Barracks, Sutherland was flashy. He owned a silver coupe and showed off for all the young students. His behaviour earned mention in the same edition of the yearbook that McKerricher used to defend himself. McKerricher described Sutherland as

altogether too good looking to be entrusted with the training of young ladies at an impressionable age. Evidences of this fact continue to be observed... by such folks the Sergeant is heard, at times, humming to himself this well-known ditty: "When I go out on promenade, I look so fine and gay,/I have to take my dog along to keep the girls away."⁷¹

It would be one thing for a young faculty member to develop a strong rapport with students close in age, but the number of alumni who recall feeling unsettled or

uncomfortable and who avoided spending time alone with him is notable.⁷² One student in 1934 remarked that

Sergeant Sutherland was an example of what teachers should not be... He was sarcastic, conceited, made crude remarks to and about students, ogled the girls, and blatantly flirted with the chosen few who were on teams whether capable players or not.⁷³

Another student from the same year shared that Sutherland had “a reputation for making passes at the girls so I was wary of him.”⁷⁴ Possible explanations for his behaviour abound, while details of his actions remain hidden. McKerricher’s mention of Sutherland could be a playful reference to young students having a crush on a slightly older, handsome man. It could also have been an example of authorities suspecting inappropriate behaviour and issuing a shrouded warning. In any case, sufficient evidence exists to suggest that Sutherland acted in ways that took advantage of his station and his gender. He was not the only faculty member to do so. Students at Camrose remembered the favouritism of Miss Twomey towards young men; their peers at Edmonton noticed Sergeant Barker “leering” at some women.⁷⁵ The complicated nature of gender impacted by unequal shares of social and professional power was not imperceptible in the normal schools—at times they may have seemed implicit in the daily lives of the Normalites, at other times more blatant—but they worked to define students’ lived experiences on and off campus.

Normalites cultivated many personal connections during their time in school. Pre-existing relationships with family and parents changed quite a bit as students left home and struggled to find secure social places in the midst of so many transitions. The interpersonal networks that Normalites formed among themselves and with faculty were highly gendered and students experienced and performed gender in ways specific to the context of normal schools. Even after fifty years, students recalled the myriad acts of kindness, malice, and indifference that punctuated student-faculty relationships, showing quite thoroughly the lasting impact of those relationships.

Beyond the grounds of the normal schools, faculty chaperoned activities in town and regulated travel. On September 15, 1932, the students and faculty of the Calgary Normal School gathered at St. George’s Island in the Bow River for the annual welcome picnic. This picnic paralleled those occurring at Edmonton and Camrose—except for one detail. Women students had been asked to bring old clothing “to assist in an old stunt.”⁷⁶ After filling island-bound streetcars with yells and other signs of youthful exuberance, and while enjoying refreshments served by faculty, each class presented a sketch to the school. Following all of these activities,

girls were then requested to choose a member of the men’s classes and dress him in the old clothes they had brought to the picnic grounds. After a period of hilarious merriment, various dames of fashion sauntered past the judges’ bench. The judges decided unanimously in favor of Fred Fisher, sponsored by the IIB class.⁷⁷

This semi-official account comes from Calgary's yearbook. It presents an image of cross-dressing that was hilarious largely because of its absurdity—no Normalite boy would typically wear “women's” clothing for fear of ridicule and/or exclusion from the community. For men to appear as women in a serious manner suggested an array of socially unacceptable desires, and all of those desires built upon the idea that manhood was inherently superior to womanhood.⁷⁸

This activity, however, turned the social consequences of cross-dressing upside down: male students were *expected* to perform in the exhibition for the school's entertainment. Notably, faculty seem to have arranged the cross-dressing and, at the least, actively participated in its execution over the course of two years.⁷⁹ Opening the social door for students to publicly play with gender identities likely different from their own did not mean the faculty had relinquished all control over student behaviour. Sources do not indicate that instructors permitted the women to dress in men's clothing, nor did faculty approve of student improvisation in terms of what garments to wear. An alumna recalled that “one boys' class modelled clothes [of] (girls') past, present, and future. A skimpy bathing suit was modelled for the future. The faculty took that class and the boys participating to task for indecent exposure.”⁸⁰ Students were imagining a possible future in which the rules defining appropriate clothing had become more relaxed, an exercise that generated negative faculty response. This event underscores both the complex relationship between faculty and students in terms of humour and authority, and also the differences between gender expression and sexuality. Open performance of sexuality through the exposure of the human body, even in parody, seemed to be a threat to the shaping of the ideal teacher in the eyes of the faculty.

Instructors and principals knew that certain conditions were more likely than others to lead to sexual contact between students. At a time of life when sexuality becomes biologically and socially prominent, facilitated by a coeducational setting, meant that students had an increased awareness of sexuality—its possibilities and consequences included.⁸¹ As discussed previously, Camrose was particularly conservative due to its principal. One alumna remembered that “behaviour in downtown Camrose was expected to be very lady-like.”⁸² Those who ventured downtown understood that dancing was off-limits—a rule based on the implication that dancing was ostentatious and potentially sexual if not chaperoned. The rule also reinforced the ideal place of normal school at the centre of students' social worlds. Camrose required Normalites to get written permission from the principal to leave town on weekends and have their parents sign the permission slip to prove they had gone home.⁸³ Alumni disagreed on whether permission came from parents or the principal, but most agreed that the principal had final authority and parents had corresponding authority. All agreed that the rule existed: “A note from parents had to be presented at Normal asking for permission to go home for the weekend. You received a slip each time which was given to the landlady before going home.”⁸⁴

On the way home, students occasionally used a weekend pass as a cover for an otherwise forbidden trip to downtown Camrose, a particularly risky choice since the normal school was a prominent institution in the town. Other times, students

escaped the watchful eye of town residents by attending dances in the country outside of the community. And in one case, a young woman went to a country dance before going home to Wetaskiwin (a town approximately forty kilometres west of Camrose). She was discovered and expelled.⁸⁵ Such a harsh response to simply attending a country dance demonstrated the anxiety that Principal Haverstock harboured regarding the morals and reputations of his students—especially the women. Country dances would have taken place in barns, on vacant lots, and at other locations away from prying or protective eyes. Of course, dancing in a barn was not equivalent to having premarital sex, but the fact that youth danced with one another away from authority figures implied that their behaviour was, or could soon lead to, activities that would ultimately be frowned upon. Again, this was the crux of gender-based rules at normal school: they reflected widespread social values that imposed punishments and controls more on women than men.

Efforts by faculty to monitor student life extended from the schools to boarding houses. The normal schools required students to secure off-campus accommodation only in approved residences, which tied together the students, the owners, and the institutions.⁸⁶ Students provided desperately needed income to the owners (who in many cases were older, widowed women). Principals retained the authority to take action in these residences, and while it is unclear what actions those might have been, one can assume the owners took their responsibility to watch the students seriously.⁸⁷ Normal school faculty did not rely solely on communication from landlords regarding students' health. In an interview with Robert Patterson, Rae Chittick, a registered nurse and the nursing instructor at Calgary, described some of her duties: "And I looked after sick students—there was a class monitor who turned in a list to me of the people who were away, and if they were away more than a day or so I phoned them or went to see them if they didn't have a phone, to see why they were sick or what was wrong."⁸⁸ In this example, faculty control related to academics and class attendance was intertwined with the institution's concerns about student health.⁸⁹ To suggest that this kind of monitoring and follow-up meant that students inhabited educational prisons, as Hollihan asserts, however, is to downplay the obvious emotional motivations of the faculty. Faculty had a clear responsibility to the Normalites. Instructors and principals also created intimate relationships with the students that carried significant emotional weight. When Chittick was made aware that a student was absent for several days without explanation, her roles as faculty and nurse and her feelings of compassion urged her to check on that student. Normal school was not a prison and faculty actions were not outside the realm of reasonable human care. While control was part of faculty motivation, I contend that care and concern played a significant role in the family-like networks that students and faculty forged together.

Certain behaviours, such as those perceived to be related to sexual licentiousness, were prohibited across the board. Sexual conduct was by far the riskiest of activities for students, especially for women. While Normalites seemed to have felt freer to stretch the less important expectations, they remained quite aware of the dangers represented by peer relationships. Despite the rhetoric of the new openness in sexuality

and the popularity of flapper girls, normal school students adhered to a commonly understood and shared set of morals that marked premarital and extramarital sex as inappropriate.⁹⁰ Dating, which took place outside the normal schools and therefore the supervision of the faculty, was expected to be a chaste experience.⁹¹ By spending time and sharing physical space together out of the view of faculty and community members, Normalites were challenging the rules that attempted to enforce a certain decorum.

Sexuality was one of the clearest ways in which experiences of Normalite women and men diverged. Sex before marriage was a major violation of social norms and carried the risk of recrimination and rejection for women more than for men: only a woman would face severe consequences if she were found out or if she became pregnant.⁹² While official records of student conduct are unavailable, and it is doubtful the normal schools kept track of pregnancies, alumni do recall at least three young Normalites who got pregnant. Sometime in the 1930–31 school year, a student at Camrose “was asked to leave,” possibly by a faculty member, due to her pregnancy.⁹³ The circumstances surrounding this student’s departure from the school—did she have the option to return at a later date?—remain unknown. But we do know that the student was not the only young woman to face such veiled hostility. Another alumna from Camrose recalled how pregnancy could endanger young women: “In those days, pregnancy outside of marriage was really frowned on. I recall one girl leaving Normal at [Christmas] for such a misdemeanor and also two left for poor performance. It was stated that they were just not suitable for teaching.”⁹⁴ Some alumni recollections about pregnancy indicated that a specific honour code related to sexual relationships among students permeated normal schools in Alberta. In 1935–36, a Normalite dropped out of the Edmonton school “when she became pregnant, probably because it was expected of her.”⁹⁵ No other institutional documents available from the 1930s indicate that any other women found themselves in such a position or the circumstances of their absence, but given the severity of the response doled out to the above students and the intensely personal nature of the situation, other pregnant Normalites would likely have left school quietly.⁹⁶ Withdrawal or expulsion resulted in the same effect: the women were no longer part of the normal school and would not have earned teaching certification.

But what of behaviours not specifically sexual? Students at all three campuses had cause and opportunity to violate rules. Throughout the decade and at all campuses, students undoubtedly snuck downtown to dance, stayed up past curfew, and socialized in mixed company. But evidence indicates that the faculty of Camrose took such activities more seriously than their counterparts at other schools; alumni have clear memories of the strictures. Curfew in particular elicited a strong reaction against it from Camrose Normalites. Students could, for the most part, understand and support prohibitions on sex and many respected curfew. As a way of promoting positive behaviours such as studying, and to mitigate negative behaviours such as exploring sexuality, faculty limited the free time available to students at night. Some students would have none of that, however.

The Normal School did have rules for the students which the boarding house keepers had to enforce.... The most talked about of these rules was the one regarding a curfew time at night. We did not challenge it—*we found ways to circumvent it*. (The one who was “in” studying would respond to pebbles thrown at the windows, unlock the door that had been secured as per regulations, so that the late-comers could tiptoe up the stair.)⁹⁷

Rather than outright rebellion, Normalites found inventive ways to obey the letter of the law, but not its spirit. When they encountered tripwires (metaphorical and physical), they took care to avoid them. And that looking out tells us that Normalites were more cognizant of the rules and their nuances and how to get around them than we have previously thought. On the other hand, although faculty members set rules into place, they were not devoid of paternalistic empathy, as the whisky tenor story illustrates. This account reflects a social world at once integrated with the faculty and community yet also set apart from them. Students acquiesced to many of the rules and regulations, but not all. They craved a measure of privacy: a space for youth and a space for intimacy.

Conclusion

Faculty played a central role in student life at Alberta's normal schools; the relationships between instructors and students were not solely based in control but also in care. In the main, faculty members guided Normalites in the transition from students to teachers. Notions of gender, established power dynamics, and the idealized vision of the teacher informed faculty-student relationships throughout this period. From the classroom to the hallway to the city, faculty acted *in loco parentis* and students largely accepted this as a basis for their relationships, but that did not mean that instructors were uncaring or that students were passive. Lived experience demonstrated that rules have exceptions and groups are not monolithic.

This study answers the call of historians Nancy Sheehan and Robert Patterson to investigate further the lives and identities of teachers, especially their “thoughts, feelings, behaviour, and challenges.”⁹⁸ Getting to the centre of teachers' identities, emotions, and actions requires considering that the nature of their work and who they were as individuals to be particularly fundamental. Alberta's normal schools demonstrate the importance of analyzing intimate relationships in the context of educational lives and practices. Faculty decisions related to Normalites can only be partially explained by rote pedagogical or professional concerns. Students and instructors developed close relationships at normal school that invariably had an emotional core. It was through the combination of professional and emotional motivations that faculty came to regulate the lives of students in a firm yet caring manner. Studying faculty involvement in student life matters because without understanding how and why faculty acted in relationship to student activities inside and outside the classroom, the history of an entire profession is compromised.

This study contributes to the broader history of education through a deeper

evaluation and analysis of the teacher-training institutions that remain understudied despite their great numbers and their position as professional gatekeepers. The lives of students were far more dynamic than typically presented, and the dynamism of their lives was due in large part to their relationships with the faculty members at the normal school. Knowing more about the contours of student life sheds light on how teachers acted in their first teaching jobs after normal school, why they acted in particular ways, how and in what ways communities valued students, and to what extent teacher education itself has changed. Historians should care about normal school students not only because they led dynamic, interesting, and unexpected lives, but also because their experiences mattered in shaping future teachers.

Notes

- 1 Project Yesteryear Questionnaires (hereafter PYQ), C31-229, Robert S. Patterson fonds, Faculty of Education Archives, University of Alberta. This study follows Patterson's organizational structure, with C referring to Camrose, CL referring to Calgary, and E referring to Edmonton. The two-digit number is the year of graduation, and the three-digit number is a unique student identifier.
- 2 Established in 1906 at four months in length, the curriculum was extended to eight months in 1919 and nine months in 1928. See Alberta Department of Education, *Annual Report—Normal Schools* (Edmonton: King's Printer, 1919), 38, and *Annual Report—Normal Schools* (Edmonton: King's Printer, 1928), 17 (hereafter *NSAR*). The University of Alberta's School of Education certified secondary and high school teachers after its opening in 1929. See Herbert J. Coutts, "From Normal Schools to Universities: How Teacher Education Found a New Home," *ATA* [Alberta Teachers' Association] *Magazine*, January 1982, 14–15, and John W. Chalmers, "Development of Alberta's First Faculty of Education," *Alberta History* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 12–16.
- 3 Students at normal schools across North America described themselves in conversation and documentation as "Normalites" from the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, especially in the context of institutional identity and athletic competitions. See Christine A. Ogren, *The American State Normal School: An Instrument of Great Good* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 1–2.
- 4 Calgary was the first school, opening in 1906; Camrose followed in 1912 and Edmonton in 1920. Occasionally, schools were closed due to an oversupply of teachers. See *NSAR*, 1906, 36; *NSAR*, 1912, 42; and *NSAR*, 1920, 55.
- 5 Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid, eds., *Youth, University, and Canadian Society: Essays in the Social History of Higher Education* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Sara Z. Burke, "New Women and Old Romans: Co-Education at the University of Toronto, 1884–95," *Canadian Historical Review* 80, no. 2 (June 1999): 219–41; Catherine Gidney, *Tending the Student Body: Youth, Health, and the Modern University* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Charles Morden Levi, *Comings and Goings: University Students in Canadian Society, 1854–1973* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).
- 6 Calgary Normal School yearbook, 1932–33, 5.
- 7 K. A. Hollihan, "'Making Us Do the Things We Ought to Do': Constructing Teaching Identity in Alberta Normal Schools," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 13, no. 2 (2000): 172–89; John Calam, "Teaching the Teachers: Establishment and Early Years of the B.C. Provincial Normal Schools," *BC Studies*, no. 61 (Spring 1984): 39–42.

- 8 For example, I do not contest Hollihan's argument that annual picnics welcoming students to the Calgary Normal School reflected the principal's view that students were homesick. I do, however, think his implication that the principal hosted the picnics partly to break connections between parents and the Normalites is overstated. Hollihan, "Making Us Do the Things We Ought to Do," 176.
- 9 Patterson was the foremost expert on Alberta's normal schools. See Robert S. Patterson, "History of Teacher Education in Alberta," in *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West*, ed. David C. Jones, Nancy M. Sheehan, and Robert M. Stamp (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1979), 192–221; Robert S. Patterson, "Alberta's Normal Schools," *ATA Magazine*, January 1982; Robert S. Patterson, "Go, Grit, and Gumption: A Normal School Perspective on Teacher Education," McCalla Lecture, 1983; Robert S. Patterson, "The Implementation of Progressive Education in Canada, 1930–1945," in *Essays on Canadian Education*, ed. Nick Kach, Kas Mazurek, Robert S. Patterson, and Ivan DeFaveri (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1986), 79–96; Robert S. Patterson, "Voices from the Past: The Personal and Professional Struggle of Rural School Teachers," in *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History*, ed. Nancy M. Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson, and David C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1986), 99–111.
- 10 The surveys were originally mailed to retired teachers and gave respondents time to consider and expand upon their answers. The surveys asked for respondents' demographic data (name, maiden name, address, year and location of attendance, age, birthplaces of the parents, occupation of the father) as well as eighteen open-ended questions. Patterson included the following advice in the survey: "In answering the following questions, please include anecdotes, stories, experiences, and recollections that will help provide the basis for a personal, down-to-earth account of life at normal school. If you recall things about others, rather than yourself, please include them." I reviewed the entirety of every survey from Alberta during the 1930s but paid special attention to questions and responses about living arrangements, paying for school, rules of conduct and discipline, separation by gender, memories of the faculty, and the importance of extracurricular activities.
- 11 The work of Patrice Milewski is instructive in this regard. Milewski used interviews with teachers to uncover how Ontario's curriculum revisions were "received, understood, and experienced by teachers" who trained in the 1930s. Patrice Milewski, "I Paid No Attention To It': An Oral History of Curricular Change in the 1930s," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 112–29. See also Angela Davis, "'Oh No, Nothing, We Didn't Learn Anything': Sex Education and the Preparation of Girls for Motherhood, ca. 1930–1970," *History of Education* 37, no. 5 (2008): 661–77, and Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- 12 Normal schools in the province required only grade 11 standing for admission throughout the 1930s, except for Calgary. Starting in September 1937, that institution required grade 12 for admission. See *NSAR*, 1937, 34.
- 13 Camrose Normal School yearbook, 1934–35, 23.
- 14 Camrose Normal School yearbook, 1934–35, 34 and 41.
- 15 Camrose Normal School yearbook, 1934–35, 50 and 60. This pattern was replicated throughout the period of study and by all three schools.
- 16 PYQ, E33–124, man, 3.
- 17 PYQ, E39–165, man, 3. Note the neutral-to-positive connotation of "chauvinist."
- 18 PYQ, C34–278, woman, 3.
- 19 Patterson, "Voices from the Past," 104–106.
- 20 R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar, *How Schools Worked: Public Education in English Canada, 1900–1940* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 143.

- 21 Dr. Donald Dickie, Edmonton Normal School yearbook, 1935–36, 12. Rebecca Coulter argues in a biography of Dickie that she made a significant contribution to progressive education in Canada. See Rebecca P. Coulter, “Getting Things Done: Donald J. Dickie and Leadership Through Practice,” *Canadian Journal of Education* 28, no. 4 (2005): 669–99.
- 22 The class president was male (PYQ, CL39–369). We cannot know for certain what “got away with it” meant—whether the principal spoke in private with the student later, whether the principal saw this reaction as indicating the student’s growth into adulthood and so let it be, or something else. Nevertheless, this encounter reflected a softening of faculty action towards students who might have challenged their authority.
- 23 PYQ, CL39–373, woman, 3.
- 24 PYQ, E31–082, man, 3.
- 25 “Many students felt, when it [was] too hot to study, [that] the swimming pool would be a good place to cool off.” PYQ, E32–110, woman, 2. See Cynthia Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of Modern Canada, 1920 to 1950* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 125–26.
- 26 PYQ, CL31–240, woman, 3. Searching the files of the Canadian Expeditionary Force on the Library and Archives Canada website has so far failed to produce a service record to corroborate the details of his service.
- 27 PYQ, CL33–284, woman, 3.
- 28 PYQ, CL32–269, woman, 3.
- 29 Calgary Normal School yearbook, 1930–31, 11.
- 30 *NSAR*, 1939, 37. It should be noted that one alumna remembered being admonished by Principal Coffin for “snickering at Mr. McKerricher’s speech.” PYQ, CL33–290, woman, 3.
- 31 As one alumna wrote, “classes at Normal School were from 9am–4pm with no spares that I can remember. It was a busy time.” PYQ, E33–117, woman, 5.
- 32 PYQ, CL34–310, man, 3.
- 33 Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1990), 244.
- 34 This student mentioned receiving special dispensation to attend Calgary instead of Camrose (because Edmonton was closed in 1933–34). Details of this exception are not available. PYQ, CL34–310, man, 1.
- 35 PYQ, C31–222, woman, 3.
- 36 “Students whose dress was not acceptable were expelled from class by Madame Browne.” PYQ, CL34–299, woman, 2.
- 37 PYQ, CL31–243, man, 3.
- 38 Calgary principal Earnest W. Coffin “was strict, but he had a soft heart. It was rumored that when two boys were expelled for shoplifting, [Coffin] paid their bail.” PYQ, CL31–241, woman, 3. See also PYQ, CL31–243, man, 3.
- 39 Hollihan, “Constructing Teaching Identity in Alberta Normal Schools,” 178. Paul Axelrod’s description of university student life is helpful in this regard: “Universities were agencies of social control, but they were not prisons, and students found ways of shaping their own culture while participating—not merely as passive objects—in the socialization process.” See Paul Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 172.
- 40 PYQ, C31–244, woman, 5.
- 41 Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*, 101–03.
- 42 E. Lisa Panayotidis and Paul Stortz, “Feverish Frolics of the Frivolous Frosh: Women’s Cultures of Initiations in Western Canadian Universities, 1915–1935,” in *Women in Higher Education, 1850–1970: International Perspectives*, ed. E. Lisa Panayotidis and Paul Stortz (New York: Routledge, 2016), 184–85.

- 43 PYQ, E33–124, man, 5.
- 44 PYQ, E38–163, woman, 6.
- 45 Calgary Normal School yearbook 1933–34, 59.
- 46 Patterson, “Voices from the Past,” 108.
- 47 Patterson, “Go, Grit, and Gumption,” 13–14.
- 48 For a discussion on the origins of the extracurriculum in North American universities, which certainly influenced and were influenced by other educational institutions, see Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*, 98–101.
- 49 This study does not examine student government. For useful work on that complex phenomenon, see Sara Z. Burke, “New Women and Old Romans: Co-Education at the University of Toronto, 1884–95,” *Canadian Historical Review* 80, no. 2 (June 1999): 219–41; Sara Z. MacDonald, “An Insurrection of Women: Deans of Women and Student Government after the Great War,” *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2019).
- 50 Kristina R. Llewellyn, *Democracy's Angels: The Work of Women Teachers* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012).
- 51 *NSAR*, 1930, 31.
- 52 “[I] sometimes stayed in town Friday evening for... dances and sports events.” PYQ, C37–237, man, 1.
- 53 PYQ, C38–355, woman, 2, and PYQ, C38–336, woman, 2. “Jitney” was a popular form of public dance in which male attendees purchased tickets for individual dances and asked female attendees to join. See Peter Young, *Let's Dance: A Celebration of Ontario's Dance Halls and Summer Dance Pavilions* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2002), 6.
- 54 “We used to be amused at the ‘Receiving Line’ of faculty at dances—but felt it was all part of polishing us up.” PYQ, E38–160, woman, 2. Capitalization in original.
- 55 Edmonton Normal School also shared its facility (with Garneau High School), but given age difference and the future careers of Normalites, this appeared to play a smaller role than Calgary-PITA. See PYQ, E36–139, gender unknown, 2.
- 56 PYQ, CL31–241, woman, 2. Regarding dating, see PYQ, CL34–310, man, 2.
- 57 Calgary Normal School yearbook, 1937–38, 29.
- 58 PYQ, CL31–241, woman, 6.
- 59 PYQ, CL37–357, woman, 3.
- 60 “There were dances but there was always a shortage of males so that wallflowers were numerous.” PYQ, E31–083, woman, 6. See also PYQ, E32–098, woman, 5, and PYQ, E33–119, man, 3.
- 61 PYQ, E31–086, woman, 3.
- 62 This alumna went on to recall that Dr. Coffin “made a great impression on me.” PYQ, CL31–256, woman, 2.
- 63 PYQ, C31–224, woman, 3.
- 64 PYQ, CL32–277, man, 3.
- 65 PYQ, C31–239, woman, 3.
- 66 Typically, a “whisky tenor” refers to a strained tenor. While the respondent understood the term to indicate alcohol use, it is unclear whether the respondent would have described his peer with the same terminology in the 1930s. PYQ, E33–119, man, 3.
- 67 Catherine Gidney, *Tending the Student Body: Youth, Health, and the Modern University* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Mona Gleason, “Disciplining the Student Body: Schooling and the Construction of Canadian Children's Bodies, 1930–1960,” *History of Education Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 189–215.
- 68 PYQ, CL32–277, man, 2, and PYQ, CL39–376, man, 2.
- 69 PYQ, E33–119, man, 3.
- 70 PYQ, C33–264, woman, 2.
- 71 Calgary Normal School yearbook, 1930–31, 11.

- 72 Sutherland and all physical training instructors were considered faculty by the principals and students alike.
- 73 PYQ, CL34–316, woman, 3.
- 74 PYQ, CL34–307, woman, 3.
- 75 PYQ, C33–264, woman, 3, and PYQ, E37–150, woman, 3. See also Camrose instructor Mr. Shane's offer to drive a lone young woman, because he needed to "unwind," PYQ, C36–354, woman, 3, and Calgary nurse Miss Chittick's alleged flirting with young men, PYQ, CL36–343, man, 3.
- 76 Calgary Normal School yearbook, 1932–33, 37.
- 77 Calgary Normal School yearbook, 1932–33, 37. This was at least the second school-sponsored cross-dressing event at Calgary.
- 78 Scholarship on the history of cross-dressing is vast. Much of the latest research focuses on cross-dressing vis-à-vis gender identity, but the available evidence does not suggest that male Normalites participated in this event as part of an internal negotiation or working out of their gender identity. Susan Stryker notes that the motivations for cross-dressing spanned the personal, political, sartorial, and theatrical. I believe this case is one of theatrics couched in gendered assumptions. See Laurel Halladay, "A Lovely War: Male to Female Cross-Dressing and Canadian Military Entertainment in World War II," *Journal of Homosexuality* 46, no. 3–4 (April 20, 2004): 19–34; Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), especially 17–18; and Peter Boag, "The Trouble with Cross-Dressers: Researching and Writing the History of Sexual and Gender Transgressiveness in the Nineteenth-Century American West," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 112, no. 3 (2011): 322–39.
- 79 In 1931, the yearbook described a similar happening as the "famous Normal School drag." See Calgary Normal School yearbook, 1931–32, 59. It is unknown whether cross-dressing or drag shows occurred at Camrose or Edmonton.
- 80 PYQ, CL33–293, woman, 3.
- 81 Paul Axelrod describes this phenomenon as an "inevitable consequence of coeducation" and goes on to discuss proliferation of dances and certain music as heralding a change in the sexual mores of youth. See *Making a Middle Class*, 112.
- 82 PYQ, C34–282, woman, 2.
- 83 While this requirement cannot be corroborated by the annual reports or the yearbooks, throughout the early 1930s, many Camrose students made reference to the rule. See PYQ, C31–207, woman, 2; C31–211, man, 2; C31–218, woman, 2; C31–219, unknown, 2; C31–229, woman, 2; C31–234, man, 2; C31–238, woman, 2; C31–240, woman, 2; and C32–250, woman, 2.
- 84 PYQ, C31–218, woman, 2.
- 85 "Later, permission was given to return, but [she] had obtained a job clerking, so [she] refused," PYQ, C31–218, woman, 3.
- 86 Evidence of this requirement survives not in official documentation, but in the PYQ and the annual reports.
- 87 Principal Lord of Edmonton reported, in the context of student health, that "boarding places have been visited, and in some cases action has been taken. Living conditions here are generally very good indeed." See *NSAR*, 1931, 32.
- 88 Nurse Rae Chittick, interview with Robert S. Patterson, no date or page, box 17, Faculty of Education Archives, University of Alberta.
- 89 The Alberta Department of Education was highly vested in the health of students, dispatching doctors for regular examinations at each normal school and requiring detailed reports of the status of student health, including "defects" in eyes, teeth, tonsils, weight, thyroids, heart (VDH), and posture. While an in-depth discussion of these records is outside the scope of this study, the Provincial Archives of Alberta (hereafter PAA) has several of these reports. See PAA, accession 78.92, boxes 1, 2, and

3. In addition, one alumna recalled “the school nurse made medical examinations and threatened to withhold my certificate unless I had my tonsils extracted and my teeth fixed. I resented this since being depression times I did not have two nickels to rub together.” PYQ, CL32–371, man, 2.
- 90 Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*, 114–16; Anne Warner, “‘It Is a Dancing and Frivolous Age’: 1920s Youth Culture at Queen’s University,” *Ontario History* 101, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 44–45; James M. Pitsula, “Student Life at Regina College in the 1920s,” in *Youth, University, and Canadian Society: Essays in the Social History of Higher Education*, ed. Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 133–35.
- 91 PYQ, C31–229, woman, 2.
- 92 Lara Campbell notes the increasing fears of illegitimacy at this time. See Lara Campbell, *Respectable Citizens: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in Ontario’s Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 101.
- 93 PYQ, C31–232, woman, 2. See also PYQ, C31–244, woman, 3, which likely refers to the same (unknown) student.
- 94 PYQ, C32–386, woman, 3.
- 95 PYQ, E36–310, woman, 3.
- 96 Correspondence between school inspectors and the Department of Education indicates increased concern over the moral development of Normalites in the mid-1940s. See letter from Superintendent of Schools L. A. Broughton to Deputy Minister of Education W. H. Swift dated November 11, 1944, accession 78.92, box 1, PAA.
- 97 Emphasis mine. PYQ, C31–206, woman, 3. Peers at Edmonton and Calgary also recall curfews; see PYQ, E32–104, woman, 2, and PYQ, CL38–368, woman, 2.
- 98 Patterson, “Voices from the Past,” 99, and Nancy Sheehan, “History of Higher Education in Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 15, no. 1 (1985): 35.