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To Seek The Good, the True, and Beautiful: White, Greek-Letter Sororities in the U.S. South and the Shaping of American 'Ladyhood,' 1915--1975

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**"To Seek The Good, the True, and Beautiful: White, Greek-Letter Sororities in
the U.S. South and the Shaping of American 'Ladyhood,' 1915-1975"**

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A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

American Studies Program

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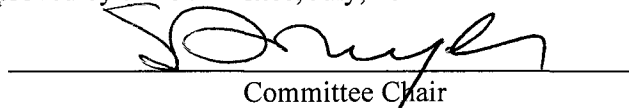
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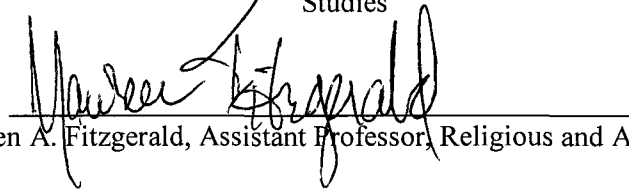
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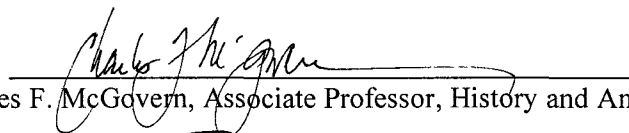

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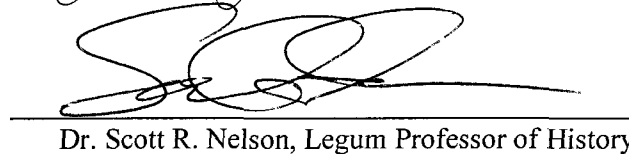
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ABSTRACT PAGE

This dissertation examines the role of white, Greek-letter sororities in the creation and enforcement of standards for white women's behavior during the twentieth century. While sororities at white, southern universities first served as supportive networks for the few female students on newly coeducational university campuses, I argue that they transformed into spaces that promoted "heterosocial" activities and enforced members' heteronormativity through "lessons of 'ladyhood'" and required attendance at fraternity parties and participation in heterosexual dating. As a means to guarantee their popularity among students on their respective campuses, sorority chapters sought the attention of the campuses' fraternity elite. This national emphasis on chapters to maintain or gain status through relationships with men's fraternities shifted the focus of sororities from supportive systems for women students to that of organizations, which functioned in support of, and ancillary to, the male-centered university's culture of masculinity. Consequently, the groups' realignment of purpose taught women to interpret their social value in terms of their relation to, and acceptance by, men.

With a focus on sorority chapters at southern universities, this work brings attention to the understudied subject of southern women's higher education in this period and part played by institutions of higher education in maintaining conventional gender norms for white, southern women. To many deans of women, university administrators, and parents of young women, sororities seemed to provide positive lessons such as social skills and citizenship training. Yet, I argue, white college sororities' "educational" programs fostered elitism, encouraged, discriminatory behavior, and required group conformity, all while the national organizations made claims that they were training women to become good citizens. I examine the functions of these groups at both the regional and national level, to show the common mission of these national organizations in defining, through their membership, the "acceptable" United States citizenry as white, middle to upper class, and, for the most part, Protestant. By placing the story of white, college sororities in an historical context, this dissertation demonstrates how the organizations' relationship with college campuses, university administrators, and non-Greek-letter (independent) students changed over the course of the twentieth century. Not only a story of Greek-letter groups, this work examines the changing nature of student cultures on university campuses over this period and how those shifts reflected transformations in American society beyond the campus.

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For my family.

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project I was completing. My brother, Doug Freeman (who is not my twin, contrary to popular belief), is, like myself, a member of a white, Greek-letter organization. I hope he will appreciate my arguments about the ways in which we need to reassess our understandings of these organizations. My greatest thanks go to my parents, Pat and Doug Freeman. They offered key emotional and financial support that made the completion of this project a reality – and never once suggested that I “just write about Thomas Jefferson, or someone like that.” As I discussed my research and writing with them, I have enjoyed hearing their memories of attending universities in the South during the 1960s. In the finished work, I hope they will learn new and interesting details about their alma maters as well as other universities in the region and the nation.

**LISTING OF GREEK-LETTER SORORITIES AND FRATERNITIES DISCUSSED IN
THE DISSERTATION**

<u>National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) Sororities</u>	<u>Greek-Letter Name</u>
Alpha Chi Omega	ΑΧΩ
Alpha Delta Pi	ΑΔΠ
Alpha Epsilon Phi°	ΑΕΦ
Alpha Gamma Delta	ΑΓΔ
Alpha Omicron Pi	ΑΟΠ
Alpha Phi	ΑΦ
Alpha Sigma Alpha	ΑΣΑ
Alpha Xi Delta	ΑΞΔ
Beta Sigma Omicron*	ΒΣΟ
Chi Omega	ΧΩ
Delta Delta Delta	ΔΔΔ
Delta Gamma	ΔΓ
Delta Phi Epsilon°	ΔΦΕ
Delta Zeta	ΔΖ
Gamma Phi Beta	ΓΦΒ
Iota Alpha Phi°	ΙΑΦ
Kappa Alpha Theta	ΚΑ
Kappa Delta	ΚΔ
Kappa Kappa Gamma	ΚΚΓ
Pi Beta Phi	ΠΒΦ
Phi Mu	ΦΜ
Phi Sigma Sigma°	ΦΣΣ
Sigma Kappa	ΣΚ
Sigma Sigma Sigma	ΣΣΣ
Theta Phi Alpha‡	ΘΦΑ
Zeta Tau Alpha	ΖΤΑ
 <u>National Pan-Hellenic Conference (NPHC) Sororities</u>	
Alpha Kappa Alpha	ΑΚΑ
Delta Sigma Theta	ΔΣΘ
 <u>Interfraternity Council (IFC) Fraternities</u>	
Alpha Tau Omega	ΑΤΟ
Kappa Alpha Order	ΚΑ
Kappa Sigma	ΚΣ
Lambda Chi Alpha	ΛΧΑ
Pi Kappa Alpha	ΠΚΑ
Phi Gamma Delta	ΦΓΔ
Sigma Alpha Epsilon	ΣΑΕ

Sigma Nu
Zeta Psi

ΣΝ
ΖΨ

National Pan-Hellenic Conference (NPHC) Fraternities

Alpha Phi Alpha
Kappa Alpha Psi
Omega Psi Phi

ΑΦΑ
ΚΑΨ
ΟΨΦ

* Absorbed by Zeta Tau Alpha in 1964.

‡ Denotes Catholic sorority.

° Denotes Jewish sorority. Iota Alpha Phi disbanded in 1971. Phi Sigma Simga is now “non-sectarian.”

PREFACE

I have undertaken this project on white, Greek-letter sororities from the perspective of the objective historical researcher. I am also, however, a non-active alumna of one of the national sororities I discuss in this project. I became interested in researching the history of these organizations when I considered the fact that, as a college member, I had learned little about my sorority’s role in relation to historical events or the history of my undergraduate institution. Along with other members of my chapter, I learned basic facts about our sorority’s founding as part of the pledging process. The memorization of the names of the sororities founders, the college of the sorority’s founding, and the sorority motto and songs were all part of our sorority education as pledges. While this information seemed designed to create an imagined bond between the new sorority members, and the “revered” founders, it did not encourage us to consider our new identities as sorority women in a larger historical context. “What happened within my sorority and the other National Panhellenic Council (NPC) groups *between* the late nineteenth century and today?” I later wondered. This project is designed to fill in that history and to analyze the interactions of sororities with one another, with non-Greek-letter college students, with university administrations, and with the American public. My dissertation utilizes the stories of white, Greek-letter sororities to study the reinforcement of white, middle and upper class gender norms for women in the twentieth century, demonstrating the far-reaching influence of these organizations in American society.

My intent with this work is not to write an “exposé” on sorority life – journalist Alexandra Robbins has already charted that path in *Pledged: The Secret Life of Sororities* (2004) – but to place these organizations into an historical context that takes into account changes in

American society, higher education, and the status of women in the United States over the twentieth century.¹ While in Chapter Two I discuss sororities' reasons for incorporating rituals into their activities I do not describe the secret rituals of individual organizations. I respect that the secret ceremonies are important to members of these organizations. Furthermore, the specific words and actions in ritual activities are not integral to the story that I tell.

My analysis of sororities does not always yield a positive image of the groups. This has been a source of some ambivalence on my part, as I am well aware that many women, young and old, are fiercely loyal to their national sororities, their chapters, and their "sisters." I understand that these organizations are of the utmost importance in some women's lives and that many sorority women feel that their sororities have afforded them meaningful experiences and lifelong friendships that they could not have had if not for their membership. I have not set out to construct a damaging narrative for the organizations, but have let the various source materials speak for themselves. Instead, it is my hope that sorority members and alumnae will understand the importance of addressing all aspects of their groups' histories and will consider the issues I raise in my work as they "educate" their future members.

¹ Alexandra Robbins, *Pledged: The Secret Life of Sororities* (New York, NY: Hyperion Books, 2004).

INTRODUCTION

In her annual report of the 1922-1923 school year, University of North Carolina (UNC) adviser to women, Inez Koonce Stacy, remarked that, “the local [women’s] fraternities of Beta Alpha Phi and Lambda Tau have become affiliated with the national Pi Beta Phi and Chi Omega [women’s] fraternities.” To this, she added her own assessment:

The existence of women’s fraternities on the campus is too new for any discussion as to influence or desirability. The students involved feel keenly that fraternities will do much to make college life what it should be. The future will tell the story.

Beginning her fifth year as adviser to the seventy-nine women students at the university, just over half of which were undergraduates, Stacy saw the groups as a welcome addition to the dearth of women’s activities on campus.¹

At UNC and other newly coeducational, white universities across the American South during the first quarter of the twentieth century, Greek-letter social sororities became important components of the fledgling women’s student culture. In these previously male homosocial spaces, sororities helped create a sense of community for the women students, while recreating the intimacy of the conventional family. Moreover, the groups would become critical sites for the reinforcement of southern gender prescriptions and would provide arenas for the display of women students’ femininity. Femininity of the elite, white variety was an integral characteristic of white, southern womanhood. Cherished by whites hoping to resurrect a social structure based on antebellum understandings of race and class hierarchies, white women’s femininity seemed threatened by the South’s changing social structure, in which women’s higher education played a great part.

Sororities existed both at white coeducational institutions and white women’s-only colleges in the South by 1900.² In addition to chapters at state-run schools, the organizations also

¹ “Annual Report, 1922-1923,” UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women (#40125), Series 1, Box 1, Folder 1.

flourished at private denominational and private nonsectarian colleges. Historian Diana Turk observes, however, that by the turn of the twentieth century, some national sororities chose to “populate only those campuses that were popularly considered elite.” This practice often eliminated chapters at smaller, denominational colleges, Land Grant institutions, or schools where coeducation was in question.³ These restrictions would hamper national sorority expansion at schools in the South during the first quarter of the twentieth century, where coeducation remained an unsettled (and unsettling) issue.

White women’s colleges were among the first schools in the South to have chapters of national sororities. Sororities’ national officers, however, revoked a sizeable portion of these chapters as the groups began to require that schools meet certain scholastic standards.⁴ Furthermore, some deans of women, administrators, and faculty at women’s colleges opposed sororities because they felt the groups were unnecessary in the small, women’s-only setting or they feared that the groups led to divisiveness among the student body.⁵ At women’s-only

² Francis W. Shepardson, ed. *Baird’s Manual of American College Fraternities*, 13th ed. (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing Co., 1935), 739-795.

³ Diana B. Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow: Sisterhood and Women’s Fraternities, 1870-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 96-97.

⁴ From the time of its founding in 1898 to 1915, seven of the thirteen southern chapters of Zeta Tau Alpha (ZTA) sorority inactivated, three because they were at schools not of collegiate rank. Those schools were Virginia State Normal School (where the sorority was founded), Farmville, VA, Hannah More Academy, Reisterstown, MD, and Mary Baldwin Seminary, Staunton, VA. Kappa Delta (KD), also founded at Virginia Normal in 1897, had a similar experience, losing four of its sixteen southern chapters founded prior to 1915 for academic reasons. These schools were Virginia State Normal School, Chatham Episcopal Institute, Chatham, VA, Gunston Hall, Washington, D.C., and Farmount Seminary, Washington, D.C. Phi Mu, also founded in the South, deactivated four of its chapters for academic reasons. Saint Mary’s College, Raleigh, NC, Chevy Chase College, Washington, D.C., Hardin College, Mexico, MI, and Belmont College, Nashville, TN relinquished their charters in 1910 and 1911 so that Phi Mu could join the National Panhellenic Congress (NPC). The NPC, an intersorority organization required that member sororities only held chapters in schools of collegiate rank. See Shirley Kreasan Strout, *The History of Zeta Tau Alpha 1898-1948* (Zeta Tau Alpha, 1956), 101, 106, 113; Genevieve Forbes Morse, *A History of Kappa Delta Sorority 1897-1972* (Kappa Delta Sorority, 1973), 530, 536-537, 541; Annadell Craig Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu: The First 130 Years* (Atlanta, GA: Phi Mu Fraternity, 1982), 273.

⁵ In 1896, Charles McIver, president of the North Carolina Normal and Industrial Institute in Greensboro, NC (later the North Carolina College for Women and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro) made students dissolve a local Greek letter sorority because he considered such organizations exclusive and possible sources of resistance against administrators and faculty. When May L. Keller became the first dean of women at Westhampton College in Richmond, VA, in 1914, she chose to prohibit sororities on campus. Although a lifelong, active member of Pi Beta Phi sorority (including service as the sorority’s

colleges, students often prioritized organizational and social affiliations related to their university class over sororities. Typically, individual university classes carried out their own traditions and functioned as social groups. For these reasons a number of women's colleges in the South chose to end their relationships with national sororities, closing their campuses' chapters.⁶

Although sororities were popular at both private and public institutions, they played an especially significant role in the evolution of student culture at the latter. Founded as democratic institutions, state universities aimed to educate all classes of a state's white citizenry. The introduction of Greek-letter social organizations on the state university campuses, however, provided a ready-made means of social stratification, undermining the pretensions of egalitarianism. In this study, I examine sororities at white, public, coeducational colleges and universities to highlight the paradoxical nature of Greek-letter groups at these supposedly democratic campuses. I also include examples from white women's state colleges, private single-sex, and private coeducational universities for white students to create a more comprehensive picture of sororities in the South during this period.

By focusing on the cultural role of white, Greek-letter sororities in the American South, this study enables a greater understanding of the ways in which these organizations functioned simultaneously on a regional and national level. Read against an analysis of these national

national president), Keller observed that, "the class structure at Westhampton served, in effect, the purpose of a sorority by defining a small group within a larger body." See Pamela Dean, "Covert Curriculum: Class, Gender, and Student Culture at New South Woman's College, 1892-1910," (PhD Diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1995), 169; Barbara Fitzgerald, "Twenty Years Later: Sororities Provide Leadership, Social Outlets for Women," *Richmond Now*, Nov. 2006, <http://oncampus.richmond.edu/news/richmondnow/2006/11/sororities.htm>.

⁶ Women's colleges in the South that banned sororities include: Salem College, Winston-Salem, NC (May 1909), College for Women, Columbia, SC (1910), St. Mary's College, Raleigh, NC (1911), Georgia Wesleyan College, Macon, GA (1914), Judson College, Marion, AL (1919) Hollins College, Hollins, VA (1929), Goucher College, Baltimore, MD (1942), and Randolph-Macon Woman's College, Lynchburg, VA (1960). Beta Sigma Omicron, a sorority founded at the University of Missouri in 1888, specifically aimed their national expansion at southern women's colleges. However, *Baird's Manual* (1935) states that, "so many chapters were killed by faculty opposition and anti-fraternity legislation" that by 1925, the sorority was left with only seven active chapters from its twenty-four charters. See Lamb, *History of Phi Mu*, 273; Margaret Paddock Haller, *History of Delta Delta Delta, 1888-1988* (Delta Delta Delta, 1988), 32; Morse, *History of Kappa Delta*, 537, 539, 544, 546; Strout, *History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 282; *Baird's Manual*, 308-309.

societies, my work shows that, in many respects, the concerns held by members and alumnae of sorority chapters in the South in regard to such issues as their sororities' images, activities, and qualifications for membership, were shared by their "sisters" in other regions of the United States. The similarities found in the groups' nationwide approach to contemporary issues of the era, suggests that the organizations managed to operate in an increasingly structured and "top down" fashion over the years of this study.

My work emphasizes the importance of the highly orchestrated national sorority system in shaping standards of women's behavior based on white, middle and upper class norms. While the transformation of white, southern girls into southern "ladies" was integral to the maintenance of the class and racial hierarchies that supported white, male supremacy – and was a task at which sororities excelled – these same types of sorority lessons extended to the molding of young, white "ladies" all over the United States. The South may have had more to lose in the event that the image of the "lady" toppled from her proverbial pedestal, but other regions of the nation clung to similar ideals for women's behavior, even if they did not recognize them as southern "belles." The reinforcement of gender-specific behavior, regularly practiced by college chapters of national sororities, ensured that sorority women nationwide would learn "appropriate" attitudes toward men. A key and unchanging part of these lessons taught women that their social station and acceptance depended on the achievement of male approval and [sexual] desire, thereby placing limitations on women's individual self-worth.

By placing the story of social sororities in an historical context, my research demonstrates how the relationships of these groups' to the college campus, university administrators, and non-Greek-letter, or independent, students changed over the course of the twentieth century. This contextualization also aids in an understanding of the, at times, contentious relationship between members of college sorority chapters and their alumnae counterparts throughout this period. Building on the work of Diana L. Turk's *Bound by a Mighty Vow* (2004), I continue the analysis

of white sororities beyond the 1920 endpoint of her study, while extending her examination of sorority chapters at schools in the Midwest and the Northeast to focus on colleges in the South.⁷

In my first chapter, I locate my study with a survey of women's higher education in the southern United States during the early twentieth century. In particular, I focus this chapter on the introduction of female students at newly coeducational universities. It is within this space – that a number of white southerners continued to view as “inappropriate” for young, white southern “ladies” – where social sororities became an important piece of the burgeoning college women's culture. By highlighting the differences from as well as similarities to other women student's activities found on campuses in this period, I show how sororities provided support for their members even as they divided the small numbers of female students on campuses by socioeconomic status and popularity.

Even from their beginnings as support mechanisms for women students in newly coeducational colleges in the Midwest and Northeast during the 1870s, Greek-letter sororities relied on classifying and separating as they chose for new members women whom they believed would best represent the ideals of womanhood held by their respective national sorority or local sorority chapter. I argue that, from the outset, these groups placed great importance on what they saw as the “civilizing” aspects of membership. The popular perception of sorority membership as a marker that set Greek-letter affiliates apart from their independent classmates as well as from Americans who did not attend conventional, four-year universities, persists throughout the years of my study. While for some incoming college women, the possibility of sorority membership represented the chance for upward social mobility, sororities typically did not select women possessing fewer social skills or coming from working class backgrounds.

In Chapter Two I contend that sororities claimed to impart a classically based cultural sophistication that would serve to mark members as part of “civilized” society. The groups'

⁷ Turk, *Bound by a Mighty Vow*.

spoke to white middle and upper class Americans concerned with the nation's shifting demographics in these decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. During these years, sorority alumnae were preoccupied with the creation of what they believed was a suitably aristocratic and civilized heritage for their respective groups and founders. For some national sororities, the development of this "heritage" drew on an imagined past that pitted the genteel image of the southern, white planter class against the contemporary American vision of an urban and industrialized, multicultural society where socioeconomic class lines were becoming increasingly fluid. In this environment, sorority leaders expected, their organizations would act as a means of defining acceptable U.S. citizens, based on an Anglo-American heritage and white, middle class norms of behavior.

With university enrollments increasing, the 1920s marked a period of tremendous nationwide expansion for sororities and fraternities.⁸ As sororities moved to establish chapters at colleges in the South during the first quarter of the twentieth century, the organizations would need to make the case for their existence on college campuses. Critics argued that Greek-letter groups exacerbated socioeconomic divisions among college students, and some deans of women and other university administrators saw sororities' elitism and practices for choosing new members as harmful to the well-being of individual female students as well the overall camaraderie of the student body. Generally, however, sororities caused fewer headaches for administrators than did men's fraternities, whose pranks and parties often drew the ire of residents in various college towns as well as the concern of some parents and alumni. In addition to providing housing for female students, national sororities publicized their specialized social training, designed to add social polish and create graceful ladies. This message held particular significance for coeducational universities where sororities played on public fears that female

⁸ Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1977), 124.

students would fail to receive the same level of gender-specific, socializing influence available to students in women's only colleges.

In Chapter Three, I discuss how sororities' definition of a "social education" fit into popular ideas about "appropriate" behaviors for white women in the first three quarters of the twentieth century. As additions to universities' curricular offerings, sororities' lessons stood to aid deans of women by providing ready-made social programs for women students. Many deans and campus administrators "bought" the programs "sold" by sororities, as these programs offered a useful method to instill *and* police normative behaviors among female students on their campuses. Focusing on the ways that deans of women and leaders of national sororities could see their respective efforts on the part of female students as a collaborative endeavor, I show how the sororities used these relationships to position themselves as the premier women's organizations on many campuses by the mid-twentieth century. As deans of women pointed to sororities as the exemplars for women's behavior on campus, the groups' standards helped shape those for all white, middle class women over this period.

In Chapter Four I examine guidebooks for sorority members and social programming suggested by the national sororities to establish the behavioral standards required by the groups. The standards of behavior and appearance that sororities required of their members were designed to create the image of an overall attractive group membership to attract the attention of popular male students, and fraternity men in particular. The enforcement of these group standards also served to *reinforce* the unequal balance of power in relationships between female and male students. In order to gain or maintain popularity on campus, sorority chapters relied on the approval of fraternity men. Thus, sorority women primarily sought validation from their male counterparts based on their own superficial, physical appearances instead of friendship potential or shared intellectual interests.

Picking up a thread from Chapter One, I return to a discussion of the ways that activities required by sororities in the pursuit of campus social status, such as dances and mixers, served as spaces to enforce members' heteronormativity. The members' attendance at these activities was integral to maintaining or increasing a sorority chapter's popularity on campus and was generally required by their chapter. The frequently held, alcohol-soaked, fraternity parties stood to place sorority women in situations where they might encounter unwanted sexual advances from fraternity men. Sororities, however, often overlooked the dangers for the women involved in these spaces. While sorority women could jeopardize their reputations by attending these events (whether any sexual activity took place or not), failing to attend parties or comply with the desires of popular fraternity men would damage the image of a sorority chapter.⁹ In a distressing turn of events from the days when sorority women supported one another in the male-centered space of the early coeducational campus, sorority members increasingly found their chapters participating in activities that reinforced male supremacy, sometimes at the expense of women's physical and emotional well being. The fact that the Greek-letter world condoned (and one can argue, continues to condone) these behaviors by members within their ranks stood in opposition to the image of these organizations as shapers of upstanding, social leaders. Again, as a cover for critiques of systemic flaws, sororities and fraternities played up the positive aspects of their image by restating that they were in the business of molding good citizens.

The preparation of women for good citizenship was a primary aspect of national sororities' social educational programming and a goal of their behavioral guidelines. Continuing their implicit project of defining rightful U.S. citizens, the national sororities moved through World War II and into the postwar period arguing that the nation needed sororities more than

⁹ Nicholas L. Syrett discusses the dangers posed to female students by fraternity men and fraternity parties. Syrett's work focuses on white men's Greek-letter fraternities and the groups' roles in defining and enforcing heterosexually based notions of masculinity. By the 1920s, he explains, sorority women increasingly became the sexual "proving ground," so to speak, for fraternity men seeking to display their masculinity. See Syrett, *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), Chapter Five.

ever. Sororities and fraternities, their national leaders held, provided social stability and citizenship training that would guard against the threat of communism by teaching members to champion “all-American” values of freedom and democracy. It was in this same period, however, that Greek-letter organizations encountered their greatest challenge to date from critics in regard to the groups’ membership selection processes.

Sorority rush, the system by which local chapters of each sorority selected their new members each year, had long been a source of problems for the organizations’ public images. In Chapter Five I examine the rush process and show the extent to which both college alumnae members went to influence membership decisions. National sororities had a lengthy history of discrimination in their membership selection. To maintain the pretense that they were elite organizations, sorority chapters “selected” their members instead of allowing in every woman who wished to join. The sororities chose women based on subjective standards in categories such as physical appearance, personability, family and financial background, and scholarship. Women who did not receive a “bid” (or invitation for membership) from the sorority of their choice or from any sorority during rush, likely suffered hurt feelings.

Deans of women were well versed in consoling female students saddened by rush outcomes. Deans and advisors often requested that sororities take measures to ensure that rush was as pleasant an experience as possible for all involved. In fact, many deans believed that bringing *more* sorority chapters to their campuses (so that there were enough spaces for all women students interested in pledging a sorority) would solve this issue. Rush was such a contentious subject that, in 1902, a number of national sororities held a meeting primarily for the purpose of standardizing rules for rushing at schools with chapters of national sororities. This group became the Inter-Sorority Conference (later the National Panhellenic Conference) and

functioned as an umbrella organization for the national sororities¹⁰ Cognizant of the negative publicity resulting from rush, National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sororities worked to counter public impressions of the groups as elitist and hurtful In this chapter I consider sororities' interest in starting and promoting philanthropic projects as means to run "damage control" against the groups' critics By promoting the notion that sorority women helped their local communities and contributed to a nationwide philanthropy, national sororities could add weight to their claims that Greek-letter organizations shaped good citizens, reaffirming to university administrators the positive energy their chapters brought to their respective campuses

In the post-World War II period, racial discrimination in sorority membership selection would take precedent in public discussions of sorority membership discrimination On a Cold War mission to subvert communism and ensure the preservation of "American democracy" around the globe, United States leaders had inadvertently trained a spotlight on the racial injustices persisting within the country's own borders¹¹ For many years, racial discrimination had been a conventional and unquestioned practice of membership selection in Greek-letter organizations Yet, the very visible issue of racial discrimination, which dominated national discourse at this time, focused attention on the activities of private membership organizations, including sororities and fraternities In turn, this focus on racial discrimination opened a space for the discussion of a variety of implicit discriminatory practices that had long existed within sororities In Chapter Six I discuss the ways in which the elevated anticommunist rhetoric and the increased attention to civil rights in the U S became intertwined in the policy decisions of the

¹⁰ *NPC An Historical Record of Achievement* (c 1957), NPC Archives, Publications, 1938-2002 (41/82/800), Box 1, Student Life and Culture Archives, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, hereafter, SLA See also Fn 10 below

¹¹ Mary L Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ Princeton University Press, 2000), 6-11

NPC sororities and how, in turn, these issues influenced the educational programming of these groups¹²

Over the course of their existence, national sororities had presented a publicly apolitical stance even as they cleaved to conservative understandings of American identity and citizenship based on an Anglo-American heritage¹³ In sororities' postwar era battles against communism and the critics of their discriminatory membership practices, the groups aligned themselves with other conservative organizations Together, this conservative network launched efforts to defeat the "liberals" whom they believed sought to undermine America's democratic values by denying individuals the "right of freedom of association" Fighting for exclusion in the name of freedom, the NPC and national sorority leaders began a crusade against communism that masked their true intent of maintaining the right to discriminate in choosing new members In effect, through their educational programs and membership policies, the groups defined acceptable U S citizenry as white, Protestant Christians from the middle and upper class By inserting messages of anticommunism and antiliberalism, national sororities imbued their membership education programs with a conservative ideology This ideology rearticulated the desires held by national sororities' leaders since the turn of the twentieth century, as their education programs and restrictive membership served to affirm the position of sorority members atop a rigid social hierarchy of American citizens

Even as national sororities sought to indoctrinate their members against "liberal" thought and railed against the "liberal" critics of sororities' restrictive membership policies, the organizations often found themselves up against the wall in regard to membership discrimination

¹² The National Panhellenic Conference is an umbrella group that oversees national, white, Greek-letter sororities The organization formed in 1902 as the Inter-Sorority Conference and included delegates from each of the participating national sororities In 1908 the group changed their name to the National Panhellenic Congress, later changing it again to the National Panhellenic Conference The position of NPC chairperson rotates among the member groups See *NPC An Historical Record of Achievement* (c 1957), *Bound by a Mighty Vow*, 182, Fn 111

¹³ Diana Turk discusses national sororities public political neutrality around the turn of the twentieth century See Turk, *Bound by a Mighty Vow*, 110-112

First at universities in the non-South, which were desegregated or had never been racially exclusive, and by the late 1950s and early 1960s at southern universities, which desegregated under court order, universities forced Greek-letter organizations to comply with new university policies of non-discrimination, or face penalty of removal from campus.¹⁴ Sororities attempted to divert the attention of both the public and university administrators from issues of race in membership selection. Instead national sorority leaders pointed to the fact that the organizations' very character rested on the ability to choose their social group peers and did not signify a pernicious attempt to deny membership based on an individual's race or religion. In some cases, national sororities chose to allow university administrators to shut down chapters instead of permitting the national or local leaders to sign statements of non-discrimination compliance.

In the changing campus environments of the 1950s and 1960s, where Greek-letter groups increasingly had to answer their critics (who now comprised greater portions of campus populations), national sororities began to redefine their positions vis à vis university administrations. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, as national sororities expanded their organizations and regularly established new chapters, sorority leaders found that fostering good working relationships with deans aided their efforts at growth. Over the first half of the twentieth century, sororities had frequently cooperated with deans of women and other campus administrators to gain their acceptance if not their trust. By the post-World War II period, however, sorority leaders sought to disassociate themselves from the control of the university administrators who headed the charge to regulate Greek-letter groups' membership policies. An about-face from their earlier approach, national sororities began to envision themselves as separate from the university and therefore no longer subject to the institutions'

¹⁴ Anthony James, "The Defenders of Tradition: College Social Fraternities, Race, and Gender, 1945-1980," (Ph.D. diss., University of Mississippi, 1998), 96; Alfred McClung Lee, *Fraternities Without Brotherhood, A Study of Prejudice on the American Campus* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1955), 62-68.

rules and regulations. Sororities still wanted to be the premier social organizations on college campuses but they did not want to abide by the rules that governed campus activities.

Another aspect that hastened the declining relations between national sorority leaders and university administrators in these years was the “generational gap” between the national leadership and the college members. While not always the case, the college members were more likely to take more “liberal” positions on amending membership policies than the alumnae leadership. When deans and other university administrators intervened in disagreements between local chapters and their national organizations, the national sorority leaders did not always welcome this “help.” In Chapter Seven I consider the increasing disjoin between the worldview of the national sorority leaders and their college members in the post-World War II era. Although some college sorority women remained dutifully bound to their alumnae chapter advisors and other national officers, others questioned the groups’ educational programs, rush systems, and membership policies. Influenced by feelings that they should be connecting their campus experiences to events in the larger world, these sorority women joined other students on campus in criticizing the Greek-letter system from the late 1940s to the 1970s. I examine specific cases of students at sorority chapters at universities in the South who rebelled against the ideal of the serene, southern “lady” by speaking out against their sorority elders in opposition to national sorority decrees. While these instances of dissent took place at sorority chapters in the non-South as well, the examples from the southern chapters illustrate the way that differences in opinion had begun to break along generational, not regional lines.

National leaders were dismayed that some college members moved toward what the leaders saw as a “liberal” position on the sociopolitical spectrum during these years. This identification with a “liberal” political ideology, the national leaders believed, was anathema to their *imagined* ideal of politically neutral national sororities. While the NPC and the national groups had managed to keep from endorsing candidates from specific political parties or backing

legislation, the national leaders espoused a conservative agenda even as they rejected the right of some college members to express competing interests. Sororities had always drawn members from a variety of ideological backgrounds (including many members with no ideological or political allegiances), but the groups' skillfully executed marriage of social activities and social principles helped fashion a meeting place and teaching space for a new generation of white conservatives by the last quarter of the twentieth century. By examining national sororities' abilities to resist forces of change on university campuses and in society during the twentieth century, I show how the groups have navigated outside challenges to their systems of organization and standards of behavior. Without actually altering their common worldview or their understanding of "appropriate" behaviors for women, the groups managed the *appearance* of transformation as a means of maintaining their organizational viability in these spaces.

CHAPTER ONE: FROM GIRLHOOD TO LADYHOOD: SORORITIES AND “WOMEN’S CULTURE” AT COEDUCATIONAL UNIVERSITIES IN THE SOUTH

Women’s Higher Education in the South Prior to 1920

At the beginning of the twentieth century, higher education for white women in the southern United States lagged behind that for white women in the Northeast, the Midwest, and the western parts of the country. Although Christie Anne Farnham has shown that some private women’s seminaries and academies in the antebellum South offered rigorous academic coursework, the majority of white, southern women’s families before the Civil War could not afford to give daughters an education.¹ Southerners’ economic hardships intensified with the Civil War and Reconstruction. While the region worked to diversify its economy in the years after the Civil War, it remained agriculturally-based, largely relying on physical rather than mental labor.² For that reason white southern leaders did not deem higher education a necessity for the majority of the region’s population. As a result the South continued to fall further behind the rest of the nation as it moved into the twentieth century.³

The region’s inadequate educational system slowly started to change when southern Progressives began advocating education as the key to the South’s economic development and social progress.⁴ Up until this point, Glenda Gilmore has noted, higher education for African American women in North Carolina outpaced that available for lower and middle class white women in late nineteenth century. In the post-emancipation South, Gilmore explains, African

¹ Christie Anne Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1994), 3.

² Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, The Lost Cause and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987), 79-80.

³ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 177, 319-320. For a discussion of difficulties faced by southern farmers, see Woodward, *Origins*, Chapter 7.

⁴ Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women’s Higher Education in the Twentieth Century American South* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 18-22.

Americans saw education as “nothing less than sacred” as it “represented the key to class mobility.” By proving their intellectual ability, and demonstrating command of middle class “matters and morals,” African Americans in the South could take the first step in lobbying for rights of citizenship.⁵ Black colleges in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century focused on the mission of “race progress,” but institutional opinions varied on how best to achieve this goal – through a classical, liberal arts education, identical to that found at white colleges, or through vocational training that would enable students to earn a living in the limited fields of employment open to African Americans at the time. Out of white fears that black southerners would demand citizenship rights and contend for political power, white educational leaders sought to limit the educational curricula available in the region’s public, black colleges to purely vocational training. Even at private colleges for African Americans in the South, the struggle over whether to give primacy to a classical or vocational curriculum occurred.⁶

While elite white women from wealthy backgrounds could afford education at private women’s colleges in the region, progressive educational reform enabled white, women from families of lesser means also to receive a college education.⁷ Efforts by progressive educators and legislators secured funding for public, white, women’s colleges designed to train teachers for the region’s primary schools. Generally farmer’s daughters, the women attending these normal and industrial colleges represented the hopes of the growing southern white middle class. Furthermore, these women, reformers argued, would transmit knowledge to their own children, thereby doubly insuring an educated future South.⁸

⁵ Glenda Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 36-37, 14. For more on African American higher education in the American South, see also Chapter Three.

⁶ Henry N. Drewry, Humphrey Doermann, and Susan H. Anderson, *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 60-61; McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 71.

⁷ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 32.

⁸ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 28. For description of state higher education for women in North Carolina, see Dean, “Covert Curriculum: Class, Gender, and Student Culture at a New South Woman’s

Yet, as historian Amy Thompson McCandless explains, women's colleges in the South were often "colleges in name only." Without standards for institutions of higher education in the South, women's, coeducational, and men's colleges alike suffered from lack of regulation. In 1895, in an attempt to remedy this situation, a group of eight southern universities formed the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States. The association created a list of criteria to assess institutions of higher learning, only admitting approved schools for membership. In 1917, just five southern women's colleges (Agnes Scott, Converse, Florida State, Goucher, and Randolph-Macon) and two coordinate colleges (Sophie Newcomb and Westhampton) met, at least, the minimum requirements for accreditation. Of those accredited women's colleges, only Florida State College for Women was a public school.⁹ All of the schools served white pupils only.

In order to receive a quality education, comparable to that offered at women's colleges in the Northeast, white women in the South had few affordable choices. As a result, families that sought a superior education for their daughters turned to coeducational colleges. A student from the College of William and Mary's class of 1926 remembered that she was sent to the public, coeducational college because it was the cheapest state college other than the teachers' colleges.¹⁰ Even with a pronounced need for improved educational opportunities for women in the South, the introduction of coeducation at public universities in the region was a slow and graduated process. Women's matriculation at southern coeducational colleges did not occur in significant numbers until World War I, when male students became scarce. The trend continued during the 1920s when postwar prosperity and changing public attitudes about women's education, including an emphasis on the benefits of educating future housewives and mothers, led to overall increases in

College, 1892-1910," 22, 89, 103-104, and James L. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1800-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 73-106.

⁹ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 33-35.

¹⁰ Alumnae Questionnaires, Class of 1925-1926, Laura Parrish Papers, 1982, 00/05/UA 5.036, SCRC, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

white women's college attendance. At the College of William and Mary, for example, women's enrollment in 1919-1920 was thirty-two percent of the total enrollment of 333. This had doubled from the previous year. Women made up forty-five percent of the total enrollment by 1929. Alabama Polytechnic Institute (later Auburn University), enrolled ten women a year from 1892 to 1921 when the number jumped to seventeen, then to thirty-two in 1922, and 115 in 1924. The University of Alabama enrolled ninety-one women in 1915-1916 and 293 by 1920-1921. At the University of North Carolina, women's enrollment increased from thirty-two in 1917-1918 to 169 by 1929-1930. The number of female students at the University of South Carolina grew from roughly eleven percent of the student population in 1916 to more than a fourth by 1924.¹¹

Even so, the majority of white southern women attending college during the period 1920 to 1940 went to women's colleges instead of coeducational colleges.¹² Many parents saw the women's-only college campus as a more appropriate atmosphere for their daughters. Women who hoped to complete a four-year course at the coeducational state university sometimes were turned away because of their gender or were disappointed by the limitations on curriculum for women. Some universities only allowed women to enroll as juniors and seniors or if their family were residents of the town. Others only admitted women to graduate programs. In some cases, when colleges admitted women as four-year undergraduates, they limited them to curricula that

¹¹ Parrish, "When Mary Entered With Her Brother William: Women Students at the College of William and Mary, 1918-1945," 11-12, 20; Robbie Smith Sparks, "A Handbook of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute" (M.S. Thesis: Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1935), 228-229; Helen Delpar, "Coeds and the 'Lords of Creation': Women Students at The University of Alabama, 1893-1930," *Alabama Review* 42 (1989): 294, 303; Clara S. Lingle, "Annual Report, 1918," UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Annual Reports, 1917-1929; Inez Koonce Stacy, "Annual Report, 1929," UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Annual Reports, 1917-1929; Daniel Walker Hollis, *University of South Carolina, Vol. II College to University* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1956), 309, 311.

¹² Amy Thompson McCandless, "Preserving the Pedestal: Restrictions on Social Life at Southern Colleges for Women, 1920-1940," *History of Higher Education Annual* 7 (1987): 45-46.

administrators defined as “feminine,” such as home economics, education, and fine arts¹³
Educational policies followed the dictates of regional tradition

The Southern Lady as Regional Symbol

Public disapproval of coeducation at state universities was a result of the persisting antebellum, elite, white social structure in the South. The structure itself rested upon the ideal of the white southern lady, the symbol of a society where white men of the upper class ruled over African Americans, white women, and working class white men. A product of the white southern male’s tenuous social hegemony as well as his sexual insecurities, the pedestaled image of the southern lady – supposedly submissive, chaste, and pious – stood as a visible reminder of the antebellum South. Perpetuating her exalted position, in turn, preserved the patriarchal society.¹⁴

Unnerved by the radical upheaval of society following the Civil War, white southerners sought to recreate the antebellum social order where everyone knew his or her place. The political and social threat posed by blacks and by working class whites led elite whites to disfranchise voters and codify white racial supremacy.¹⁵ From 1898 to 1907 southern states

¹³ Women’s enrollment at the University of North Carolina was limited to junior and senior transfers while women could only enroll in graduate courses. See McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 83, 90-91, 93

¹⁴ I am using Anne Firor Scott’s character description of the southern lady. Others have built upon this definition, explaining how the lady ideal became synonymous with southern identity while also, as Anne Goodwyn Jones argues, holding “tremendous power to define actual roles for southern (perhaps all American) women of the white middle and upper classes.” Jones presents a helpful overview of the various scholarly arguments on the foundation of the southern lady myth in *Tomorrow is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South* (see Chapter 1). See Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Jones, *Tomorrow is Another Day* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), quote p. 9. However, I would add that the image also influenced the roles for women of the white lower class and for black women in the South. Furthermore, as Tara McPherson shows, southern images of white and black femininity are mutually constitutive. See Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 72; Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 11, 25, 53-60, 64; Scott, Jones, W. J. Cash, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, and Lillian Smith, among others, have discussed the interrelation between the idealized image of the southern lady and racial supremacy. See Scott 4-21, Jones, 3-12, 15; Cash, *The Mind of the South* (1941, reprint, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1991), 84, 115-117; Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jesse Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 145-152, 155; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 61-89, 117-118; Smith, *Killers of the Dream*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 1961), 121-124.

¹⁵ Jones, *Tomorrow is Another Day*, 15-19; John C. Ruoff, “Southern Womanhood, 1865-1920: An Intellectual and Cultural Study (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1976), 107-111

enacted Jim Crow laws to segregate public facilities by race and forcibly remind blacks of their inferior status in southern society¹⁶ The image of the fragile and virtuous, white, southern lady loomed large in this environment, playing against the white southern male's construction of the black man as a sexual threat Controlling sexual access to white, southern women by "protecting" them from the imagined threat of black male sexuality enabled white male supremacy in the post-Civil War South¹⁷

For this "protection," white women were expected to pay deference to their supposedly chivalrous, white male protectors By remaining quietly in her place as dutiful wife and mother, the southern lady would uphold her part of the bargain in the system of white supremacy¹⁸ White women's price for venerated southern womanhood was a limited social role While they found greater freedom to enter the public sphere in the years following the Civil War, white women ultimately, Tara McPherson explains, were "unwilling to question white privilege, buying into a return to the pedestal on which southern femininity was properly situated" The lingering image of the white southern lady continued to shape social expectations for white, southern women well into the twentieth century¹⁹ As such, it should come as no surprise that white men of the early twentieth century were inhospitable to the notion of higher education for their southern ladies Taking women outside of their conventional place in the home to learn new ideas, and perhaps, to challenge the gendered and raced relations of power, higher education for women, or for blacks in the South, posed a serious threat to elite, white men's power

On the process of disfranchisement and dates of adoption in southern states, see C Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York, NY Oxford University Press, 1955, 2002), 84-85

¹⁶ The first segregation laws concerned railway cars and street cars and then extended to steamboats Further discriminatory laws continued to proliferate in "city ordinances and local regulations and rules enforced without the formality of laws" See Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 97-109, quote p 98

¹⁷ Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry*, 151

¹⁸ Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 17, 21

¹⁹ McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 19-20, quote p 19 McPherson bases her understanding of elite white women's return to the pedestal on the work of Drew Gilpin Faust See Faust, *Mothers of Invention Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 253-254 In *Reconstructing Dixie* McPherson repeatedly demonstrates the continuing influence of the image of the southern lady on southern womanhood

As concessions to the ideal of white southern womanhood guided the curricula at the region's women's colleges during the early twentieth century, the mythical ideal was also utilized to discourage state universities from commencing coeducation.²⁰ Whereas arguments against women's higher education in the 1870s and 1880s were based on fears that mental strain would damage women's physical and reproductive health, by the 1900s, objections to coeducation centered on psychological consequences of educating women and men together.²¹ In the minds of its opponents, coeducation threatened to feminize the *men's* university, while defeminizing its women graduates. When women were given the choice to enroll at the region's coeducational universities and began to do so, university administrators worried about the future of the region's gender and racial hierarchies.

White southern men saw the state university as the province of the white aristocratic male. At a number of universities, male students and alumni were vehemently opposed to the admittance of women. Frequently, the men showed open hostility to their new classmates, barring them from campus activities and ignoring them in class. Male university administrators and professors were similarly unwelcoming of women students. Few faculty women were available to serve as mentors for the female students. During this period, southern universities hired only a small number of women to their faculties. Most of these women held a bachelor's or master's degree in their field, while a few held doctorates. Often employed as instructors, many taught "feminine" subjects, such as women's physical education or home economics, or in "feminine" majors, including English, fine arts, music, and education.²² Aside from the campuses' uncongenial atmosphere for female scholarship, many women in these early years

²⁰ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 55, 85.

²¹ Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985) 60-61.

²² The University of Alabama hired, Louesa J. Keyes as its first female faculty member in 1917. Keyes held a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois and served as an instructor in the home economics department. At William and Mary, the percentage of female faculty increased over the 1920s from thirteen to thirty-two percent. See Delpar, "Coeds and the 'Lords of Creation,'" 303.

were discouraged by a chronic lack of suitable housing on campus. A number of states, including Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia were slow to supply funding for women's dormitories at state universities.²³

Nevertheless, young women continued to register at public universities. Nationally, by 1920, white women made up 43.7 percent of American college students; 81.3 percent of these women students attended coeducational institutions.²⁴ In the South, matriculation rates at state universities steadily increased during the 1920s as women took advantage of the new enrollment policies.²⁵ Wishing to ignore, but unable to dismiss, the persistent presence of the women students, university administrators sought to hire women's advisers or deans of women to provide guidance and a feminizing influence, and to oversee necessary disciplinary matters. If white southern girls would continue to seek education at coeducational universities, then the universities would see to it that they became proper southern ladies while in their care.

A Campus Women's Culture

University administrators and deans of women first faced the task of ensuring the parents of southern women that the university campus was a wholesome environment for their daughters. The absence of young women from homes, where moral instruction and family supervision generally framed their lives, raised concerns about the lack of moral guidance. While white southern parents increasingly saw higher education for women as an integral step between girlhood and ladyhood, in the view of some white southerners, college could pose a *misstep* in preparation for ladyhood.

In a 1922 speech on coeducation, David C. Barrow, president of the University of Georgia, acknowledged that some of his "older friends" had "been afraid that co-education would

²³ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 87-91; Mary E. Whitney, "Women and the University," (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia, 1969), 89.

²⁴ Mabel Newcomer, *A Century of Higher Education for American Women* (1959; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Zenger Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), 46, 49.

²⁵ See increasing enrollment statistics, page 2-3.

‘take the bloom from the peach.’” Barrow assured his audience, however, that the university’s women students maintained their femininity, stressing the “gentl[e] courtesy” they extended to their elders. He concluded that “co-education ha[d] a tendency to do away with a certain shyness” in women, but that it did not “affect modesty.”²⁶ While Barrow confidently proclaimed that higher education rendered only positive effects on women students, southern universities and their administrations would have to offer proof that women were welcome on their campuses and would be cared for, (or sheltered) in a manner culturally acceptable to the southern populace. Accordingly, under the watchful eye of deans of women and with the grudging support of most university administrators, a women’s culture began to take shape on coeducational campuses.

Segregated from male students, largely ignored by male administrators, many living away from home for the first time, female students sought out a community in the coeducational university. Together with other young women, most hailing from the South, they could rely upon themselves and upon each other to carve out a niche of belonging. Banding together for support, these women saw each other as compatriots. Identifying their commonality, they might begin to find ways to challenge the oppressive southern culture that hemmed them in as white, southern ladies.

Greek-letter social sororities were just one piece of the structure composing white women’s cultural spaces on coeducational campuses, but they would become one of the most, if not *the* most, important aspect of women’s student life on campus between 1920 and 1970. In the early years of coeducation at southern colleges, sororities joined other popular gender-segregated activities, including women’s student government associations, the campus Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), and women’s athletics. Working and playing in these organizations and living with one another in dormitories, local boarding houses, and sorority

²⁶ David C. Barrow, “Co-Education at the University; an address before the Georgia Federation of Women’s Clubs, at the twenty-sixth annual convention,” (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, 1922), 9.

houses, women students self-identified as “others” on the majority-male campuses, but gained strength in their difference.

Yet, scholars of women’s history have paid notice to the “double edge” of such “group consciousness.” While pointing to women’s group consciousness as a necessary first step in the organization for women’s rights, historians note that it could also serve to delineate “boundaries of feminine propriety.”²⁷ For southerners anxious about women’s enrollment at coeducational colleges, the existence of a specialized, and controlled, women’s culture on campus helped allay fears that the learning environment would defeminize, or otherwise damage, their prospective southern ladies. As a protected space for women students, separate, but within, the university campus, a women’s culture at southern schools was dedicated to molding young ladies into models of idealized, white, southern womanhood.

Traditionally, Americans expected girls to receive training for womanhood within the space of the family home where parents or older siblings and relatives would instill basic values of right and wrong, of moral rectitude, and of behavior befitting a lady. To replicate this domestic learning environment, universities had to re-create the image of the campus community as a family and the campus itself as a home for the women students. Several aspects of college life helped cement the campus space as an appropriate home away from home for girls to learn the ways of womanhood. The increasing enrollment of white women at the region’s coeducational universities forced the school’s administrators to address issues of women’s advising, housing, organized extracurricular activities, and rules of behavior. Each of these elements fed into the “homelike” atmosphere the universities aimed to generate. Likewise, they all were directly influenced by the presence of sororities on campus.

²⁷ Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835* Second edition, with a new preface (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), xxv.

A Mothering Influence

Most importantly, university officials contended that girls needed to have the guidance and support of a mother figure during the school year while separated from their biological mothers or female caretakers. During the 1910s and 1920s, schools in the South hired their first deans of women (also called women's advisers or social directors) to watch over the increasing number of women students.²⁸ The position of the dean of women had only recently become a recognized profession and the duties of the office varied by school.²⁹ Deans and advisers became multi-taskers, acting as mother figures, serving as liaisons between the women students and the university administrations, advocating for women's facilities and women's faculty appointments, and maintaining a link between their universities and groups such as the National Association of Deans of Women (NADW) and the Southern Association of College Women and its successor, the American Association of University Women (AAUW).³⁰ Reporting on her first year as adviser to women at UNC, Clara S. Lingle, "start[ed] out with the double purpose of relieving the administration of some of the details incident to the presence of a number of young women among the students, and of cooperating with the young women themselves in their activities." She quickly realized that the most demanding and influential efforts resulted from her direct work

²⁸ Alabama Polytechnic Institute (API) hired Minnie Fisher in 1921. Marie Hale Losey became the first dean of women at the University of Alabama in 1913. The University of Georgia appointed Mary Lyndon as dean in 1919. Clara Lingle became advisor to women at UNC in 1917, while the University of South Carolina hired Irene Dillard as dean in 1924. Sparks, "A Handbook of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute," 227; Delpar, "Coeds and the 'Lords of Creation,'" 298; "Program from Mary Lyndon Day, 1964," Mary Lyndon Dean of Women Papers, 1915-1964 (UGA 97-105 153), Folder 1, RG 6, Student Affairs, Dean of Women, "Annual Report, 1918," UNC Records of the Office of Dean of Women, Series 1, Box, 1, Annual Reports, 1917-1929, Elizabeth Cassidy West, *The University of South Carolina* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 43.

²⁹ The professional organization the National Association of Deans of Women was formed in 1916. Jana Nidiffer considers 1911-1918 as the period of professionalization for deans of women, as the first training courses for deans were taught at the University of Wisconsin and Teachers College, Columbia University, and Wisconsin's dean of women, Lois K. Mathews published the first book on the subject, *The Dean of Women* (1915). See Nidiffer, *Pioneering Deans of Women: More Than Wise and Pious Matrons* (New York, NY: Teachers' College Press, 2000), 14; Mathews, *The Dean of Women* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1915).

³⁰ The Southern Association of College Women merged with the American Association of Collegiate women in 1921 to form the AAUW. See Carolyn Terry Bashaw, *Stalwart Women: A Historical Analysis of Deans of Women in the South* (New York, NY: Teacher's College Press, 1999), 4.

with the students. This included innumerable visits, letters written, and interviews held during “daily office hours,” to establish a rapport between herself and the students³¹

The academic credentials of these advisers varied, as did their approaches to student guidance. Clara Lingle (Mrs. Thomas W.) was the president of the North Carolina Federation of Women’s Clubs and in 1917 was selected by UNC president Edward Kidder Graham to lead the university’s new women’s division, a collaborative educational extension program in the state³². Both Lingle’s successor, Inez Koonce Stacy, as well as the first dean of women at the University of Alabama, Marie Hale Losey (1913-1916), were hired as advisers because of their husbands’ positions at the college. Losey was also president of the Tuscaloosa Equal Suffrage Association. While Losey’s academic background is unknown, Stacy received a bachelor’s degree at the North Carolina State Normal and Industrial College³³.

Other advisers and deans of women typified the increasingly common model of the highly educated, woman academic administrator. As historian Carolyn Terry Bashaw explains, these women generally were “competent scholars – albeit in feminized fields.”³⁴ Irene Dillard Elliot, first dean of women at the University of South Carolina (1924-1935) held a Ph.D. in English and was one of the first women awarded the degree at the UNC³⁵. Caroline Tupper and Grace Warren Landrum, deans of women at the College of William and Mary (1918-1919, and 1927-1945, respectively) both held doctorates from Radcliffe College and served as members of

³¹ “Annual Report, 1917-1918,” November 25, 1918, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women

³² William D. Snider, *Light on the Hill: A History of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 163

³³ Losey’s husband was a member of the department of English. See Delpar, “Coeds and the ‘Lords of Creation,’” 298; Mary Parsons, “Residence Problem Proves Biggest Headache For UNC Dean of Women,” *Greensboro Daily News*, June 2, 1945. Stacy’s husband, Marvin Hendrix Stacy served as dean of the faculty and as acting president (1918-1919) until his death from pneumonia. Afterward, the university administration invited Inez Stacy to stay on at Chapel Hill as the new advisor to women.

³⁴ Carolyn Terry Bashaw, *Stalwart Women: A Historical Analysis of Deans of Women in the South* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1999), 2

³⁵ West, *The University of South Carolina*, 43

the English department faculty in addition to their administrative positions.³⁶ Alice Mary Baldwin, who became the first dean of the new Woman's College of Duke University in 1926, was already a veteran women's administrator. Born in Lewiston, Maine in 1879, Baldwin was an accomplished scholar who attended Bates College, graduated from Cornell University with a B.A. and M.A. and received a Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago in 1926. She was also a seasoned educator, serving as dean of women at Fargo College in Fargo, North Dakota for a short time before joining the history department at the Baldwin School in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Baldwin held the latter post for fifteen years before beginning her doctoral studies. She accepted the job as dean of women at Duke's Woman's College when her adviser at Chicago, Professor Andrew C. McLaughlin, informed her that, against his own wishes, the University of Chicago's history department, would never hire her as a full time faculty member.³⁷

Unlike Stacy and Elliott, who were natives of and educated in the South, Tupper, Landrum, and Baldwin brought non-southern educational and social perspectives to their positions. Tupper, a native of Charleston, South Carolina, and Landrum, who grew up in Georgia, Virginia, and Kentucky, left the South to receive their undergraduate and graduate educations. As a result, they may have found the scholarly rigor at William and Mary in this period less than that to which they were accustomed. Their cultural background as southerners, however, would have prepared them to understand and work within the boundaries of regional propriety for governing young, white southern ladies of the middle and upper classes. Baldwin, on the other hand, whose first experience as an administrator and faculty member in the South was at the Woman's College of Duke University, may have found the social expectations for

³⁶ Parrish, "When Mary Entered With Her Brother William," 11; "Grace Warren Landrum, 1876-1951," Grace Warren Landrum Papers, 1907-1954, UA 6.013, SCRC. Landrum was also the first woman from the South to receive the B.A. from Radcliffe.

³⁷ Baldwin became dean of women at Trinity College in 1924. That year, Trinity College changed its name to Duke University. In 1926, Baldwin's title became Dean of the Woman's College. She retired in 1947. See "Biographical Note," in Alice Mary Baldwin Papers, 1863-1961, <http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/rbmscl/uabaldwin/inv/>, website accessed, January 12, 2010.

white women in the South disconcerting. At a meeting with Duke president William Preston Few several weeks after starting her duties, she was shocked when he asked whether she could “take disappointment and criticism without weeping.” Some of Baldwin’s failed, early attempts to change student behaviors at Duke had ended with some students telling her that she “was a northerner and did not understand southern ways.”³⁸ No matter their regional background, however, these deans of women acted as guardians of and advocates for the female students on their campuses.

As college alumnae, deans and advisors may also have been alumnae of Greek-letter sororities. Their Greek-letter experiences made some deans eager to establish sororities, including new chapters of their own sorority, to benefit women students on their campuses. For example, Irene Dillard Elliott had been a member of the Nu Chapter of Alpha Delta Pi sorority at Randolph-Macon Women’s College.³⁹ Following the repeal of a nearly thirty year ban on Greek-letter organizations at public universities in the state in 1927, Alpha Delta Pi was the first sorority granted a charter at the University of South Carolina.⁴⁰ As an alumnae advisor, Elliott maintained a close relationship with the Beta Epsilon Chapter at South Carolina.⁴¹

Even deans and advisors, like Inez Koonce Stacy, who were not members of national sororities, could view the organizations favorably, as they grasped the importance of activities for women on campuses that held few such enticements. Although some women administrators cautioned against the groups’ tendency to destroy loyalties to class and school, others were

³⁸ Alice Mary Baldwin, “The Woman’s College as I Remember It,” [undated], Alice Mary Baldwin Papers, 1863-1961, Box 24, Duke University Archives, Duke University, 4, 9.

³⁹ Linda Welch Abland, *Sisters: Celebrating Alpha Delta Pi Sisterhood* (Atlanta, GA: Alpha Delta Pi Sorority, 2001), 169.

⁴⁰ Hollis, *The University of South Carolina*, 316; Mary Fitch, charter member of Alpha Delta Pi’s Beta Epsilon chapter at the University of South Carolina, remembered that they were going to be the first group installed on campus but were beat out by Chi Omega. “Chi Omega officials came down the first day of the week of our installation. They got the Chi Omega girls out of class and installed the chapter. So they were the first ones on campus.” See Mary Fitch Oral History, University of South Carolina University Archives, South Caroliniana Library.

⁴¹ “Beta Epsilon Chapter of Alpha Delta Pi Chapter Report, 1931-1932,” Chapter Reports, Alpha Delta Pi Archives, Alpha Delta Pi Memorial Headquarters, Atlanta, GA. The report refers to Dean Dillard as “our best friend and advisor.”

willing to work with sororities in the hopes that the organizations would have a positive influence on student conduct.⁴² No doubt, deans at southern universities, like their northern counterparts, saw the opportunity to use sororities to encourage proper modes of behavior.

The most important aspect of the dean's job, in the eyes of the university and of the public, was the policing of the women students at her school. Universities' acted *in loco parentis*, literally meaning "instead of parent," to regulate behavior of the students on their campuses. Rules of *in loco parentis*, however, were much more restrictive for female students than for males. Employing a dean of women since 1913, the University of Alabama boasted that, "the social life of young women at the University is carefully guarded."⁴³ During the first year of coeducation, women at the College of William and Mary recalled that, "discipline for girls was very restrictive."⁴⁴ Social director, Bessie Porter Taylor, "ruled with an iron stick."⁴⁵ Girls could not go driving in cars, smoke in public, drink, or have dates except on weekends.⁴⁶ Leaving town, walking with men, "automobiling" with men, visiting men's fraternity houses, spending the night in town, going on long hikes, going to hotels, restaurants, or tea rooms, having visitors spend the night in dormitories, or gaining late permission for social functions *all* required the special permission from Miss Taylor.⁴⁷

As McCandless notes, "purity" was one of the "most cherished" characteristics of the image of the white, southern lady. "The strict regulation of heterosocial contacts by southern

⁴² Turk, *Bound by a Mighty Vow*, 121-122. In 1905, deans of women invited members of the Inter-sorority Conference to their conference to discuss their common goals in working with collegiate sorority women. The National Association of Deans of Women regularly held a joint session with women from the National Panhellenic Conference (the successor to the Inter-Sorority) at meetings of their professional association. See "Report on the Joint Meeting of the Deans and Advisors of Women in State Universities and Representatives of the Inter-Sorority Conference," 1905, NPC Archives, Committee File (41/82/50), Box 1, NPC-NADWAC Historical File, 1905-1941; NPC Proceedings, 1935, (41/82/10), Box 1, 1902-1949, 11-15.

⁴³ Gordon D. Palmer, "The Higher Education of Young Women," *University of Alabama Index* 7, no. 8 (June, 1924).

⁴⁴ Alumnae Questionnaires, Class of 1921-1924, Laura Parrish Papers, SCRC.

⁴⁵ Alumnae Questionnaires, Class of 1925-1926, Laura Parrish Papers, SCRC.

⁴⁶ Alumnae Questionnaires, Class of 1939, Laura Parrish Papers, SCRC.

⁴⁷ *Women's Student Government Handbook, 1931-1932*, Frances Cosby Nettles Papers, 1931-1935, 00/05/UA 5.012, SCRC, 27.

women's colleges," she explained, "reflected this concern for virtuous behavior."⁴⁸ Women and men living on the same campus and attending classes together heightened these concerns, resulting in an ever-broadening set of rules designed to separate the sexes. The rules of behavior for women students increased in relation to women's enrollment numbers.⁴⁹

At the same time, male students faced few, if any, such regulations. A female graduate of William and Mary did not remember any rules for the men other than that they "stay on campus on Saturday night" to reduce fights between students and non-collegiate men in town for the weekend.⁵⁰ In 1930, the University of North Carolina's *Carolina Handbook* listed traditions of behavior for Carolina men and made "general suggestions" for new students, such as they "attend church at least once every Sunday" and "don't week-end, or trip home, more than once a month," but none of these involved specific rules or required an administrator's permission.⁵¹ The strict social rules and dorm closing hours portrayed women students as naïve girls in need of protection, but it also provided a clear example of the controlled women's environment to reassure skeptical parents.

A Home Away From Home

Deans and advisers of women often played primary roles in securing new campus housing for women students. Having allowed women to matriculate, southern coeducational universities were slow to make room for women to live on campus. As increasing numbers of

⁴⁸ McCandless, "Preserving the Pedestal: Restrictions on Social Life at Southern Colleges for Women, 1920-1940" *History of Higher Education Manual* 7 (1987): 47.

⁴⁹ For example the 1924-1925 *Handbook for Women Students at the University of North Carolina* lists just six rules for women, three established by the dean of women and three by the students themselves. In sharp contrast, the 1958-1959 *Handbook* includes six pages of rules, including social rules, regulations for coed organizations, house regulations, dismissal from the university, graduate rules, and an entire section of regulations specific to freshman. See *Handbook for Women Students at the University of North Carolina, 1924-1925*, NCC, 7; *Women's Handbook, 1958-1959*, NCC, 32-37; Pamela Dean, "Women on the Hill: A History of Women at the University of North Carolina," (UNC-CH, Division of Student Affairs, 1987), 11, Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Backseat: A History of Courtship in Twentieth Century America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 84-85.

⁵⁰ Alumnae Questionnaires, Class of 1921-1924, Laura Parrish Papers, SCRC.

⁵¹ *The Carolina Handbook, 1930-1931*, 7-10, North Carolina Collection (hereafter NCC), Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

women students enrolled, the universities had to find them adequate housing. In some cases the women were already residents of the college town; in other cases, they lived in boarding houses near the colleges.⁵² Yet, this arrangement posed problems for deans and advisers of women working to create a cohesive community of female students at their schools. Deans of women pushed their university administrations to consider building appropriations designed to meet the needs for women's facilities, while making do with extra space in boarding houses and increasingly in sorority houses.⁵³

Inez Koonce Stacy heralded the completion of plans for the new women's building at UNC in 1924. She noted how the architect "made possible both comfort and privacy for the student," providing them a building "not of the cold institutional type, but one which embodies ideals of simplicity and homelike beauty."⁵⁴ To convey the impression of a "proper" home, the living space itself needed to promote a familial arrangement. In 1925 Stacy's annual report to UNC President Harry Woodburn Chase complained that the living rooms of the women's

⁵² Prior to the building of women's dormitories, women students were housed in makeshift residences. In the 1910s, the University of Alabama used three houses as women's residences, while a small number of girls lived with families in Tuscaloosa. Similarly, UNC provided two houses for women students in 1921. Starting in 1914, the University of South Carolina also rented houses adjacent to campus as a way to accommodate the women. See Delpar, "Coeds and the 'Lords of Creation'," 295; Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, 309; Dean, "Women on the Hill," 6; Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 179.

⁵³ In the 1920's the University of Alabama built a coordinate campus for women that included sorority houses in its plan for women's residences. The school actively encouraged sorority house construction through the 1920's and 1930's. The College of William and Mary began constructing sorority houses in 1925, four years after sororities first appeared on campus. Over the next several years, the college built Sorority Court, centrally locating all campus sorority houses adjacent to the campus. At UNC the Pi Beta Phi sorority procured a house during the 1929 school year. By 1931, Inez Stacy indicated that Chi Omega sorority also had its own house. However the small group was not able to fund the venture and had to give up the house in 1933. The first sororities at the University of Georgia, Phi Mu and Chi Omega, obtained houses in 1925 and 1924, respectively. See Suzanne Rau Wolf, *The University of Alabama, A Pictorial History* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1983), 155; "Annual Report, 1929," "Annual Report, 1931," "Annual Report, 1933," UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Annual Reports, 1917-1929, Annual Reports, 1930-1936; Susan Godson, et. al., *The College of William and Mary A History, Vol II* (Williamsburg, VA: King and Queen Press, 1993), 556; Christelle Ferguson, et al., *A History of Chi Omega in Three Volumes*, Vol. I (Cincinnati, OH: Chi Omega, 1928), 238, Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu Fraternity*, 275.

⁵⁴ Stacy became adviser to women at UNC in 1918 and was given the title of dean of women in 1942 She retired in 1945. For quotations, see Inez Koonce Stacy, "Annual Report, 1924," UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Annual Reports, 1917-1929.

building had “hardly the bare necessities in the way of furnishings”⁵⁵ In their respective works, Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz and Amy Thompson McCandless, have described the special attention to detail and layout of women’s college living spaces. Constructed with the students’ social development in mind, the dormitories also contained parlors for receiving guests and kitchenettes that enabled women to practice domesticity. The concentration of student socializing in the downstairs common rooms of the dormitory enabled the policing of social interactions and of sexuality, both between women and their male dates and between the women students themselves.⁵⁶ As McCandless argues, for the “administrators of southern women’s colleges in the 1920s and 1930s, a wholesome social environment was even more important than a stimulating intellectual atmosphere.”⁵⁷ At southern coeducational colleges, national sororities foresaw the possibilities of providing a wholesome social environment that would suggest the cloistered femininity and exclusivity of women’s colleges. Scholarly deans of women at coeducational universities may have placed more emphasis on women’s erudition than the administrators of women’s colleges, yet, they too, expected the students to abide by the behavior expected by their families.

The dorm living situation resembled a family, with many sisters and at least one mother, in the form of the dean or another woman serving as housemother. According to University of Alabama president, George Denny, “the dean of women, the assistant dean, the dietician, women

⁵⁵ “Annual Report, 1925,” Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, (#40125), Series 1, Box, 1, Annual Reports, 1917-1929, 12. Pamela Dean notes that the process of redecorating a series of temporary living and socializing spaces for women led Inez Stacy, and her successor, Dean Carmichael, to use a professional decorator. See Dean, “Women on the Hill,” 9.

⁵⁶ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women’s Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 308-314, McCandless, “Preserving the Pedestal,” 21. Horowitz specifically discusses the attempts by women’s colleges in the northeast to construct women’s dormitories that separated the living spaces of women students and forced their socializing to take place in downstairs living rooms and parlors where their behavior could be more easily monitored. “Female friendship,” she argues, “was what the women’s colleges, under attack for race suicide, feared the most.” The lack of private, intimate space was designed to discourage intimate relationships between women students. This, in turn, was supposed to preserve the white race by urging women, instead, toward heteronormative relationships, marriage, and children after graduation.

⁵⁷ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 138.

members of the faculty, and the officers of the woman's council [made] their home" at one of the two women's dormitories along with other students.⁵⁸ This arrangement would afford student supervision as well as healthy eating and living habits while building close, familial relationships among the women on campus. The guiding hand of the dean of women, the watchful eye of housemothers, and an overall "homelike" atmosphere combined to suggest a carefully controlled student living space that would mirror that of the woman's family.

Even with the construction of a women's building or a dormitory or two for women students, southern state universities could not keep up with the demand for accommodations.⁵⁹ As a result, women frequently roomed off-campus in reputable boarding houses or in sorority houses. Also overseen by housemothers, the administrators considered these living spaces to be as carefully controlled as the residence halls. The women living at Russell Inn, a boarding house for UNC students, during the 1922-1923 school year even created their own house rules and gave them to Mrs. Stacy:

1. As requested by the University, we will not visit frat houses except under chaperonage and with the permission of Mrs. Stacy.
2. We will not ride in the evening unless a chaperone is with us.
3. We will give no parties except on Friday and Saturday nights.
4. All guests will be requested to leave the house an 10:30 in the evening except on Friday and Saturday when the visiting hour is extended to eleven.
5. Quiet hour for study in the afternoon from three to five o'clock in the evening beginning at eight o'clock for the remainder of the night.⁶⁰

Their self-regulations were less strict than the rules women faced at William and Mary, but during the 1920s Stacy seemed to view the women at UNC as serious and honorable students, capable of behaving themselves and respecting the conventions of southern ladyhood, noting in

⁵⁸ George H. Denny, "The University of Alabama Makes Provision for Women Students," *University of Alabama Index* 12, no. 4 (March 1, 1929).

⁵⁹ At UNC finding dormitory space for women was a problem throughout the 1950's and 1960s as well. See, Dean, "Women on the Hill," 10; Katherine Carmichael, "Speech on Housing," 1970, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.2, Box 4, Speech 80.

⁶⁰ "Regulations Adopted By Girls at Russell Inn for Year 1922-1923," UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Annual Reports, 1917-1929.

her report for the 1920-1921 school year that “the attitude of the women students continues very wholesome.”⁶¹

In cases when sororities and fraternities rented or purchased houses near campus, they provided additional living space that relieved the cramped university housing. This gave deans of women another reason to look favorably on the groups. The deans of women probably would not have gone as far as to agree with Ida Shaw Martin, author of *The Sorority Handbook*, however, who argued that the standard of living in a sorority house far exceeded that of a dormitory.⁶² Yet, for the simple fact that they touted domesticity and family, sororities satisfied the image of refined living and protective space that southern universities proffered to the parents of prospective women students.

As Martin described it, the sororities would “benefit society itself.” By providing a girl with “family affiliations and with the essential elements of home,” she reasoned, sororities would shore up the family, the “corner stone of the social structure.” Martin, an 1889 graduate of Boston University and a founder of Delta Delta Delta sorority, warned that dormitory living could “destroy right ideals of home life,” leaving “in their stead a belief in the freedom that comes from community living.” For Martin, home life was about taking responsibility not about finding freedom from responsibility. Martin advocated for living situated within the architectural structure of a single-family home, thereby differentiating sorority living from community living. She supported campus sorority houses and applauded women’s colleges that had instituted cottage homes instead of dormitories. Martin recognized the importance of transitioning girls into young women in a space where they were “weaned from home and friends, from ties of blood and kindred.”

⁶¹ Inez Koonce Stacy, “Annual Report 1920-1921,” December 10, 1921, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Annual Reports, 1917-1929.

⁶² Ida Shaw Martin, *The Sorority Handbook*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: Ida Shaw Martin, 1923), 54.

She saw the sorority as the essential mediator between girlhood and womanhood. When girls faced the “critical time” of transition where they would return to private home life, but in the role of wife and mother instead of daughter and sister, Martin believed that the years of sorority living would leave them best prepared for their new lives.⁶³ Described in her terms, deans of women could see the crucial connections between sorority house living and the early twentieth-century ideal of the educated, yet domestically-inclined, white, southern woman. Yet, despite the assistance of the national organizations, all sorority chapters could not finance homes. Even fewer universities were willing to help by offering land and financial backing for the building of new residential spaces. The acquisition of a house for each sorority chapter was a goal set by the sororities’ national leadership, however, and deans of women seemed to support this endeavor.⁶⁴

The Coordinate Campus Ideal

Even as some proponents of coeducation suggested that the presence of women on campus would be a positive influence on the scholarship and behavior of male students, the university functioned to keep the women physically cordoned off in women’s spaces, women’s courses, and women’s activities.⁶⁵ In addition to segregating the few, early women’s social activities on campus, universities in the South actually labored to create entirely separate women’s campuses. McCandless notes the irony in financially-strapped southern universities attempting to provide separate white women’s and men’s schools, while already struggling to fund distinct state institutions for both black and white students.⁶⁶ And yet, the continuing opposition to coeducation led university administrators to attempt to placate those on both sides of the issue.

⁶³ Margaret Paddock Haller, ed., *History of Delta Delta Delta 1888-1988* (Dallas, TX: Delta Delta Delta, 1988), 3; Martin, *The Sorority Handbook* 53-55.

⁶⁴ Martin, *The Sorority Handbook*, 33-34; Heller, *History of Delta Delta Delta*, 423; Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu*, 177-178; Morse, *A History of Kappa Delta Sorority*, 462-463.

⁶⁵ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 57.

⁶⁶ The states’ schools for black students were coeducational and were significantly underfunded in comparison with the states’ white universities. McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 40-43, 105.

The compromise resulted in the increasing popularity of the women's coordinate college ideal. Coordinate colleges, separate women's campuses of men's colleges, already existed at southern private schools like Tulane (Sophie Newcomb) and the University of Richmond (Westhampton).⁶⁷ In 1924, the endowment of tobacco industrialist, James Buchanan Duke, paved the way for Trinity College to become Duke University. Trinity had been coeducational since 1892, but plans for the new university provided for a women's coordinate campus.⁶⁸ Likewise, southern public universities, facing increasing enrollment of women students, turned to the coordinate plan as a means of drawing an official line between the social space of men and women students.

University of Alabama President, George, H. Denny, typified the contradictory aims of southern university administrators with regards to coeducation. While Denny was a proponent of practical women's education at the state university, he also pushed for the construction of a "woman's campus," and oversaw the introduction of courses for women, such as home economics, music, and art, that public opinion, and apparently Denny himself, deemed more appropriate for their gender. As a part of the coordinate campus ideal initiated at Alabama during the 1920s, courses specifically geared toward women would take place in facilities on the segregated women's campus. The University of Alabama might have seemed more welcoming to women students than other southern state universities that stalled in building adequate women's facilities, but the administration and trustees held a limited vision of their place at the "men's university" that segregated their experience both socially and educationally. The coordinate campus ideal laid the groundwork for continuing gender separation on campus. Throughout the

⁶⁷ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 34.

⁶⁸ Robert F. Durden, *The Launching of Duke University, 1924-1949* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 26, 253.

1920s and 1930s women were concentrated in arts and sciences, home economics, and education, while men filled, for the most part, the departments of chemistry, commerce, and engineering ⁶⁹

More drastically, the University of Georgia only admitted women in 1918 as undergraduates in either home economics or education ⁷⁰ Georgia enacted the coordinate plan in 1932, as part of a depression-era money-saving effort to consolidate state-supported colleges. The closing of the Georgia State Teacher's College, also in Athens, opened the campus for use by the freshmen and sophomore women students of the University of Georgia ⁷¹ Referred to as the Junior College, the coordinate campus was also designed to ease the transition from home and high school, it acted as an added buffer for "girls" seen as ill prepared to assume the role of college student on a coeducational campus ⁷² A memo on the proposed coordinate college, most likely written by the dean of the coordinate campus, Richard Holmes Powell, lauded the new campus as a space that would enhance the leadership abilities of the younger college girls. On the main campus, he noted, the young women in student government were so "bedeviled by criticism and suggestions (usually well meant) by University men and Senior college women" that they were "confused and ineffective" as a result of the "interferences." Even more alarming, he commented, the social life of the younger girls bordered on inappropriate. "Socially, the young girls draw the upper class men to a disproportionate degree bad (in college) for the young girls, for the older girls, for the boys, and bad for general relations" ⁷³ Administrators presented the issue of young female students on campus in a couple of different ways. On one hand, the perceived "problems of leadership" among younger women translated to a situation where

⁶⁹ Delpar, "Coeds and the 'Lords of Creation,'" 302-311

⁷⁰ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 91

⁷¹ Thomas Walter Reed, *History of the University of Georgia* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, c 1949), 3413

⁷² The University of South Carolina, which had heartily opposed coeducation, found in the coordinate plan a new way to remove the women students from campus. In 1933, the university also relocated their freshman and sophomores to a separate campus. See McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 91

⁷³ [Richard Holmes Powell?], "Supplementary Memo on Location of Buildings for the Coordinate College," n.d., Richard Holmes Powell Papers, Folder 5, UGA 97-104 44, UGA 97-105 52, RG 6 Student Affairs, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia. Powell was the dean of the coordinate college at the University of Georgia.

administrators saw these students as naïve and unable to make sound judgments for themselves. Administrators wished to separate from the men the supposedly innocent young women who, they feared, might be led astray into sexual relationships and their reputations ruined. Yet, by commenting that, “the young girls draw the upper class men,” Powell’s language also suggests that the women presented a sexual danger, that they *lured* sexually moral men into illicit sexual liaisons that would damage the men’s characters. To male administrators, it seemed, the female student encapsulated both an individual to protect and of whom to be wary.

In a similar move, UNC also used the state legislature’s 1931 consolidation of its state-supported schools to create a coordinate college for women starting in the fall of 1935.⁷⁴ Unlike the coordinate colleges at the University of Georgia, or the University of South Carolina, however, UNC’s coordinate college was located in Greensboro, over fifty miles west of Chapel Hill, at the former North Carolina College for Women. Inez Stacy reported “much agitation” by students and townspeople over the fact that women who were local residents of Chapel Hill had to relocate to the Woman’s College for their first two years. She expressed “regret that such steps had to be taken,” and felt that a “four year resident group” would “improve student life,” as the women had already “proven an asset in every program made for women students.”⁷⁵ Twenty years later, UNC’s second dean of women, Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, wrote that it “certainly...seems morally right that women should ultimately be admitted as freshman to this University.” She remained cautious, however, doubting in 1958, “whether such a course [was] expedient.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Snider, *Light on the Hill*, 212-216.

⁷⁵ Inez Koonce Stacy, “Annual Report 1936,” UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box, 1, Annual Reports, 1930-1936, 3.

⁷⁶ Katherine Carmichael to Fred Weaver, Feb. 1, 1958, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.1, Box 2, Annual Reports, 1957-1958.

Student Activities: Forming New Identities as College Women

While the deans and advisors to women labored to make life in the sorority houses, women's dormitories, and boarding houses approximate that which students left behind at their real homes, the students, themselves, found new ways to negotiate kinship ties outside of their blood relations. The departure from their families of origin and the inclusion into the college family structure became a rite of passage for young women, and the campus became what Leslie Paris has termed a "transformative ritual space." In Paris's discussion of girls' summer camps, she depicts these sites as spaces where girls formed new identities and familial ties. Like summer camp, the liminal space of college, often seemingly divorced from the reality of the girls' home-life, became a "space of age- and gender- bound transition." The "temporal liminality, as much as their chronological age," Paris argued, "allowed young women to shape playful, sometimes transgressive, communities," the effects of which would carry over into their "real" lives.⁷⁷ From the attaching of nicknames to the roles played in student activities, southern women's college years, although hampered by cultural limitations, allowed for a remaking of self.

Student activities for women operated in a space shielded from contemporary southern standards for women's public behavior. These work and play spaces offered women new ways to explore their personal interests and to express themselves in ways not permitted by the contemporary standards. That is not to say that the colleges or the women themselves flouted the rules of propriety, but to acknowledge that activities such as organized sports or holding office in a women's government were not possible for these women before the "temporal liminality" of a university setting.

Mainstays of the segregated women's student culture during the first quarter of the twentieth century were: women's student government, women's athletics, the campus YWCA, and sororities or other secret societies. All activities but sororities and secret societies were open

⁷⁷ Leslie Paris, "The Adventures of Peanut and Bo: Summer Camps and Early-Twentieth-Century American Girlhood," *Journal of Women's History* 12, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 61.

to all women students. Perhaps in contrast to the social activities that were more democratic in scope and membership, women students began to form secret societies and localized Greek-letter sororities with limited, invitation-only membership. In seeking to parallel the male student's secret societies and Greek-letter social organizations, these women's clubs frequently petitioned to become members of nationally known sororities. Janet Coleman Kimbrough, a 1921 graduate of William and Mary, recalled that, "the men had fraternities, so we wanted them too – just for the fun of it – for sociability."⁷⁸ Sororities also helped to establish socioeconomic class markers among the female students. By affiliating with the nationally recognized organizations, which carried the pretense of an upper class background, and which required dues and other fees for membership and activities, aspiring sorority women hoped to set themselves apart from other clubs and societies on college campuses. Greek-letter groups served to reconstitute class stratification that had seemed to disappear within the more democratic environment of the campus.

Sociability was a key attribute of all the women's activities. McCandless argues that most student government associations at southern women's colleges "were designed for social rather than political purposes."⁷⁹ Nonetheless, teaching responsibility and cooperation, while bringing together women students in a common group, women's government associations (often the successors of the women's student associations or "coed" associations) marked the beginnings of a visible "women's culture" on campus. Although these organizations functioned differently at different schools, these groups allowed women students the possibility of self-regulation and autonomy. Holding power of government over other female students probably gave the women of the executive branch a level of authority and importance that they had never before experienced.

⁷⁸ Janet Coleman Kimbrough Oral History, University Archives Oral History Collection, UA 43, SCRC, 36.

⁷⁹ McCandless, "Preserving the Pedestal," 54.

Organized athletics also became an integral part of women's activities. In her history of college women and body image, Margaret Lowe suggests, "college officials and women's education advocates recommended regular physical exercise to relieve the stress of sedentary academic work and also to build up the body."⁸⁰ Tennis, a popular and acceptable sport for women, found its way to the University of Alabama in 1908 and the University of South Carolina by 1922. There was sufficient interest in the game at UNC in the 1920s to warrant Inez Stacy's request for outdoor tennis courts in addition to an "adequate gymnasium floor for indoor work and games."⁸¹ Often a predecessor of women's physical education departments, the "coed" athletic associations fostered intramural team play. Dormitories and sororities frequently formed intramural teams and developed healthy rivalries in a variety of sports.⁸²

Women's student activities also reflected the South's pervasive Evangelical religious culture and women's longstanding role within that culture. The ideal white, southern woman brought piety and morality into the domestic realm.⁸³ Thus, missionary societies and organizations like the YWCA seemed a natural and appropriate extension of southern womanhood. A sufficient student interest in religious education and moral work led to the formation of campus chapters of the YWCA. The women at the University of Alabama formed a YWCA group in 1900. In 1920, only two years after the admission of women at the College of William and Mary, the school had its own YWCA. The YW at the University of South Carolina began in 1921 and grew along with women's enrollment to become, by 1930, a group that (in its

⁸⁰ Margaret A. Lowe, *Looking Good: College Women and Body Image 1875-1930* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 47.

⁸¹ Delpar, "Coeds and the 'Lords of Creation,'" 305, *University Catalog, 1922-1923*, University of South Carolina, 64; Inez Koonce Stacy, "Annual Report, 1925," UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Annual Reports, 1920-1929.

⁸² At the College of William and Mary and the University of Georgia the sorority and dormitory teams did not play against each other in intramurals. The sororities competed against sororities and dormitories against dormitories. See Betty Borenstein, "Skirts in Sports," *The Flat Hat*, Jan. 14, 1947, "All the Dope on Women's Sports," *The Flat Hat*, Feb. 20, 1940, "Intramurals," *The Flat Hat*, Feb. 18, 1947, "Alpha Gams Win Volleyball Tourney, KAT's Runner-Up," *Red and Black*, Dec. 10, 1943.

⁸³ Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 110-112.

leaders' words), "definitely filled a place of service on the campus and in the city."⁸⁴ In her study of southern women's colleges in the Progressive Era, Deborah Hall described students feeling "peer pressure" that "almost dictated that [they] join the organization." Yet the YWCA also provided students with meaningful contact with the world outside the campus. In addition to Bible study and prayer meetings, the YWCA also included missionary work, social work and, as the twentieth century continued, opportunities for interracial work.⁸⁵ In the 1910s-1930s students might be involved in all four of the student activities discussed, among others specific to their individual campuses. In the post-WWII era, however, the YWCA and sororities would find themselves at odds over issues of students' volunteer service and of racial discrimination.⁸⁶

Sororities in the Creation of Fictive Kinship Networks

Sororities, more than any of the other women's activities on coeducational campuses, came to facilitate a space where girls formed kinship ties outside of the traditional family. In her sociological study of sororities at the State University of New York-Stony Brook in the 1990s, Lisa Handler identifies sorority friendships as imbued with the "language of fictive kinship."⁸⁷ Calling each other "sister" and acknowledging a blood-bond among all sorority members gave

⁸⁴ Delpar, "Coeds and the 'Lords of Creation'," 298; YWCA historical note, Swem SCRC Database, <http://scrc.swem.wm.edu/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=7675&q=ywca>; *Garnet and Black*, 1930, 361.

⁸⁵ Deborah A. Hall, "'Coming of Age' in the Progressive Era: The Role of Southern Women's Higher Education Between 1900-1917" (Ed.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1991), 144-149; Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 106.

⁸⁶ Paula Fass notes that 1920s college men did not support the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) because they characterized Y members as "overly earnest, uncomfortably committed, and self-righteous." This might have been the reason that the William and Mary's student newspaper reported in October of 1939 that the YMCA was "composed largely of men students who needed an activity credit to graduate," and "did nothing of importance last year." However, it said the YW remained a useful organization. Fass further suggests that the YM and YW groups were more popular with freshmen and sophomore students because they were easy ways to become involved. However, once the students became involved in "more prestigious" activities they no longer needed the Y as a social outlet. In her study of the YWCA, Nancy Roberston found that the number of campus YWCA's declined in the 1920s, and by the late 1930s students only composed 4 percent of the YWCA membership. See Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 141, 190-191; Godson, et al., *History of the College*, 728, n74; Nancy Marie Roberston, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-1946* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 227n15.

⁸⁷ Lisa Handler, "In the Fraternal Sisterhood: Sororities as Gender Strategy" *Gender & Society* 9.2 (April 1995): 240.

their relationships with one another greater weight than those carried on with women outside the sorority. This eternal bond of sisterhood extended the family beyond the women's college years. Many sorority women maintained their involvement by becoming active alumnae members or simply by staying close with the sisters from their chapter.

Sorority membership at southern universities affected young women in a number of ways. Winnie Evans Byrd, who joined Delta Delta Delta sorority (Tri-Delta) in 1942, during her first year at Louisiana State University (LSU), felt that her sorority "formed the basis of [her] social life."⁸⁸ A member of the College of William and Mary's class of 1944 said that her sorority was "very important in providing a home away from home," during her college years.⁸⁹ A 1929 graduate remembered that Pi [Beta] Phi gave her a "source of belonging" as she "had no mother and no real home at that time."⁹⁰ Others recalled the lasting significance of their sorority affiliation. A member of William and Mary's class of 1943 gratefully acknowledged her sorority membership as an "important experience in personal growth," that "provid[ed] support and encouragement for a then-shy young woman."⁹¹ Marion Ferguson, who joined Zeta Tau Alpha at Centenary College in Shreveport, Louisiana in 1939, explained that members "form lasting friendships that endure as long as you're all possibly able to keep in touch with one another."⁹²

The lasting friendships and the intensity of the kinship ties encouraged sorority members to continue their relationships beyond their college years. In many instances, their connection to the sorority, its ideals, and expectations – like their own families – tied them to the organization as alumnae. Elizabeth Breazeale, a Kappa Kappa Gamma at LSU in the early 1940s, became an active alumna in the 1950s. She served as president of her chapter in college, and having enjoyed

⁸⁸ Winnie Evans Byrd Oral History Interview, 4700.0302, University History Series, Sororities, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, LSU Special Collections, 14.

⁸⁹ Alumnae Questionnaires, Class of 1944, Laura Parrish Papers, SCRC.

⁹⁰ Alumnae Questionnaires, Class of 1929, Laura Parrish Papers, SCRC.

⁹¹ Alumnae Questionnaires, Class of 1943, Laura Parrish Papers, SCRC.

⁹² Marion Covington Ferguson, Oral History Interview, 4700.0236, University History Series, Sororities, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, 14. At the time of Ferguson's attendance, Centenary College was a women's-only college.

volunteering and participation in activities, she went on to be president of the alumnae group and president of the sorority house board. She felt it was “just the thing to do.”⁹³ Jane Porter Middleton, a Tri-Delta at LSU, joined the alumni group after graduation because it was World War II and without husbands around “all the girls...wanted to be together.”⁹⁴ The sorority, along with other wartime voluntary organizations, provided a support network and a welcome outlet for the women’s energy. A member of Phi Mu sorority at Sophie Newcomb College in New Orleans, Adele Williamson became an active alumna the year following her graduation in 1945. She moved to Baton Rouge and became active with LSU’s Phi Mu chapter “the minute” she arrived because the sorority had been so meaningful to her.⁹⁵ Carolyn Simpson, a 1953 graduate of the University of Texas and a Kappa Alpha Theta explained the importance of her sorority connections in meeting new people. After pledging Theta, Simpson’s parents had said, “now any place you move...you will always have [the Thetas] as a contact.” Although LSU did not have a Kappa Alpha Theta chapter at the time, she found a number of Theta alumnae when she relocated to Baton Rouge directly after college. The women soon formed an alumnae group.⁹⁶ The bond of sisterhood helped these white, southern women extend their kinship network, creating new identities as alumnae, which, in turn, sustained the women’s culture beyond the confines of their university campuses.

Elevating the White, Southern Lady: Sororities as Classifiers

The campus women’s culture created by the first groups of women students at coeducational universities in the South differed, however, from that fostered by sororities.

Historian Diana Turk notes an important distinction in the women’s culture of sororities. “As

⁹³ Elizabeth Gauger Breazeale, Oral History Interview, 4700.0304, University History Series, Sororities, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, 4, 19-21.

⁹⁴ Jane Porter Middleton, Oral History Interview, 4700.0300, University History Series, Sororities, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, 25.

⁹⁵ Adele Williamson, Oral History Interview, 4700.0224, University History Series, Sororities, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, 14-15.

⁹⁶ Carolyn Simpson, Oral History Interview, 4700.0303, University History Series, Sororities, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, 11-12.

both creators and products of female-only space, they both shaped and reinforced the norm of sex-specific groups.” “Yet,” she argues, “unlike other clubs and organizations that erected boundaries along gender lines, women’s fraternities also set women off from women.”⁹⁷

Exclusivity was part of the allure of the social organization.

Like higher education itself, sorority membership could be a ticket to social status.⁹⁸ Even during the first decade of women’s enrollment at William and Mary in the 1920s, some students remembered that sorority and fraternity members were considered “somewhat wealthier, somewhat more exclusive, and somewhat more socially concerned than the remainder of the student body.”⁹⁹ Although the women at William and Mary started the local secret societies of their own volition, they were “quite selective,” right from the beginning.¹⁰⁰ To perpetuate the groups’ elite status, sororities worked to ensure that the behavior of their members met the highest standards of propriety. The ability to monitor and control behavior of the young women would prove a useful tool in the South, where social changes such as woman suffrage, higher education for women, and the presence of women in the workplace, stood to challenge the ideal of the white, southern lady. Promoting refined womanhood, sororities offered an organized system to contain white, southern women’s independence while encouraging conventional behaviors.

Nationally, Turk finds, sororities promoted conformity in their members’ behavior as an effort to combat the anti-fraternity sentiment pervasive in the country during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Even as students joined the organizations in increasing numbers, “growing groups of students, administrators, and wealthy alumni” attacked what they deemed the

⁹⁷ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 46.

⁹⁸ Paula Fass explains how sororities and fraternities became the campus filters for popularity at coeducational universities in the 1920’s. As enrollment grew at institutions of higher education, Greek letter societies helped restrict the standards of social acceptability among a more diverse group of students. See Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 145-149.

⁹⁹ Wilfred J. Lambert Oral History, University Archives Oral History Collection, UA 43, SCRC, 23.

¹⁰⁰ Janet Coleman Kimbrough Oral History, 36.

“elitist selectivity, antidemocratic nature, and anti-intellectualism” of Greek letter societies.¹⁰¹ Turk notes that sororities countered by “placing curbs on socializing, mandating scholarship requirements, putting alumnae in greater charge of fraternity matters, and stressing the importance of smooth relations with administrators.” Against the charge that they were antidemocratic, however, sororities had little recourse. They failed to confront the matter, instead focusing on perfecting the attributes of their members. By pledging gracious, well-behaved women who upheld dominant cultural ideals of womanhood, the sororities could point to their high caliber of membership, hoping to deflect criticisms that they chose women solely for their campus popularity or wealthy background.¹⁰² As a result, I would argue, sororities began to fashion a national consensus for model womanhood and southern white women contributed elements of their own cultural upbringing to this mold.

The foundation of model womanhood rested upon fraternity education. During the 1910s, all National Panhellenic Congress (NPC) member sororities instituted formal education programs designed to unite members of every chapter under the same ideals of sisterhood.¹⁰³ Kappa Alpha Theta’s Committee on Education “detailed which aspects of fraternity history the collegians should study, what elements of Greek life should be held up as exemplary,” and, perhaps most importantly, “what characteristics and traits the sisters should strive to embody.”¹⁰⁴ The certification of specific behaviors, appearances, and personality types molded sorority women to fit a white, elite status the groups strove to portray. This emphasis on “characteristics

¹⁰¹ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 113.

¹⁰² Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 122-123.

¹⁰³ The National Panhellenic Congress, later renamed the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), is an inter-sorority organization formed in 1902 as an annual meeting of delegates from each of the national sororities. First convened to make national regulations for the processes of sorority rushing and pledging, the group expanded over the years to include discussions on all aspects of the sorority movement. The organization met biennially after 1914. See *NPC An Historical Record of Achievement* (1957), SLA, NPC Archives, Publications, 1938-2000 (41/82/200), Box 1.

¹⁰⁴ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 137.

and traits” became increasingly significant to national *and* local sorority chapters and was accordingly policed by college and alumnae sorority women throughout the twentieth century

In addition to fraternity education programs, the national model of womanhood also relied upon the communication of standards by the sorority alumnae. By 1920, Turk explains, very few changes in fraternity work or policy were taken without the direction of sorority national officers and alumnae advisors.¹⁰⁵ Although sorority chapters at southern universities were in their early years at that point, the precedent for alumnae involvement had already been set. The continuing contact with alumnae, coupled with the guidance of deans and advisors of women, established sororities as prime campus venues for the reconstitution of the white, southern lady ideal.

While “ladylike” conduct was an expectation of national sorority womanhood, sorority chapters at southern universities shaped women specifically to be *southern* “ladies.” Sorority members on coeducational campuses held the potential to become twentieth century incarnations of the “southern belle.”¹⁰⁶ Unlike the figure’s non-southern context, the role of the lady in the South fulfilled a specific function in the maintenance of the region’s gender, racial, and class hierarchies. As self-policing groups, sororities helped inculcate the behavior that reproduced the white, southern lady ideal and reinforced the hegemony of elite and middle class whites in the South. Although national sororities shaped class delineations for college women and alumnae all over the United States, the groups’ southern chapters unofficially assumed the added duty of producing the symbol that had become synonymous with the region itself.

¹⁰⁵ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 138

¹⁰⁶ The southern belle is described as the younger counterpart of the southern lady. She was charming, vivacious, and “fascinating,” attracting numerous suitors. Christie Anne Farnham argues that for young women in the antebellum South, enacting the belle image was a means of attaining power in a society where marriage was a woman’s highest aspiration. “By constructing the image of the sought-after woman who left a trail of broken hearts, women enhanced their value” within the courtship ritual. Susan Cahn finds the belle figure translated for the mid-twentieth century South as “the winsome debutante and popular prom queen.” See Farnham, *Education of the Southern Belle*, 4-5, 127, Susan K. Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings: Southern Girls in a Troubling Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 307, McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 149-154.

National sorority guidelines for member behavior closely corresponded with the ideal conduct of the mythical, white, southern lady. The *Kappa Alpha Theta College Chapter Handbook* (1930) list of chapter standards included proper courtesies when entertaining guests, suitable dress for members, and a reminder that members did not “indulge in campus politics.”¹⁰⁷ In the sheltered space of the sorority, with the assistance from alumnae, white southern women could instruct one another on the all-important life-lessons of ladyhood. Particularly at coeducational universities, which many southerners considered dangerously unfeminine settings for female students, the sorority’s lessons in comportment were tantamount to finishing school courses. Sorority membership restored the patina of femininity to highly educated, white, southern women.

Popular representations of sorority women in the first quarter of the twentieth century, such as those found in novels about college life, portrayed women beset by fears of maintaining their femininity and desirability as dates on coeducational campuses. In her study of fictional accounts of women at college, Shirley Marchalonis catalogues a number of sorority-themed stories between 1870 and 1930. She notes that the protagonist often arrived at school “wanting nothing so much as to be chosen by a sorority.” While acknowledging that the societies “gave women identity and power,” Marchalonis also observes that those features were “defined by a male elite and depend[ed] upon the exclusion and rejection” typical of “oppressed groups who strengthen themselves by diminishing others.”¹⁰⁸ To guard their status on campus – a position that depended upon the favor of the male students – sororities maintained highly selective membership criteria. And in order to draw the attention of men, each sorority attempted to pledge the most popular, attractive, and ladylike women students.

¹⁰⁷ *Kappa Alpha Theta College Chapter Handbook*, 1930, Stewart Howe Collection (26/20/30), Kappa Alpha Theta Publications, 87-90.

¹⁰⁸ Shirley Marchalonis, *College Girls: A Century in Fiction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 115-127, quotations, 119.

To attain popular status, women needed to possess the proper accoutrements, including fashionable clothing, a pleasing personality, an upstanding family, and money. Sometimes deficiency in one or two of these qualities could be overlooked, but generally they remained the criteria for selection. Inviting too many girls who did not measure up to the sorority's social standard on campus could mean a decline in reputation for the entire group. A satirical piece in the *Aglaia* journal of Phi Mu from January 1925 characterizes the tough scrutiny women faced during rush.¹⁰⁹ A fictitious sorority chapter discusses prospective member "Mary McBeam," weighing her positive and negative attributes:

I don't think we want her. Don't you think she's -- well, awfully -- well, not homely, but rather common?

Ordinary is the word you want, Betty, darling.

Well -- she's not pretty but she is intelligent looking and has beautiful eyes, and I understand she's quite a literary light in English. She's carrying sophomore English too, and is already writing items for the *Argus*.

Her clothes are certainly -- well not of this year's vintage, and I can't stand the way she fixes her hair, slicked back so.

And, do you know she takes care of children afternoons, and tutors Saturdays? I know because of my Aunt --

I know, but I understand that there's a large family, and her folks are not immensely wealthy so she's making her own way partly --

Yes, and where you find these huge families its mostly quantity --

Oh, I don't think that follows. Look at some of us. Her manners are certainly charming and she's clever. Why at the luncheon she kept us in a gale of fun.

And she's captain of the freshman basketball team -- don't forget that, and class secretary.

Yes, but girls, we've got to have looks, and class and money, and a girl that dates, and has got pretty clothes.

And, d'you know, at the freshman-soph dance she stepped all over Harry -- She simply can't dance!¹¹⁰

With these final, damning comments, the group sighed and moved on to critique the next rushee. The piece asked readers, "Does this hit home?" suggesting the prevalence of valuing attractiveness, social grace, and wealth in a rushee over intelligence, wit, and involvement in

¹⁰⁹ Rush was the one to two week period, typically at the beginning of the fall semester (or the spring semester at some schools), when sororities chose their new members. Those students going through rush were called "rushees," until they accepted a "bid" from a sorority at the end of the rush period, when they were termed "pledges." Rush has been renamed new member "recruitment" in recent years as sororities try to disassociate themselves from the oft-criticized rush process.

¹¹⁰ *Aglaia* Vol. 19, no. 2 (January 1925), 29.

campus activities like athletics or student government. The sorority sisters speak with wonder, and some trepidation, at Mary's scholastic achievements and her published writings. Their concern shows that the ideal sorority woman, like the ideal southern lady, should not be scholarly or participating in conventionally male activities. Additionally, they equate family wealth with quality of person, thus seeing Mary's family's lack of finances as a sign of poor pedigree. While the story was intended to caution sororities against focusing on superficial traits of rushees, it also reaffirmed the practice as typical.

The attempt to uphold the status quo of members' physical appearance as well as their family backgrounds helped sororities to be understood increasingly as conservative campus organizations. They relied on constancy in such outwardly visible characteristics as members' physical attractiveness and fashionable wardrobes to retain their position as the standard-bearers of elite campus society. Elegance and refinement never went out of style, the prestige and the "upper class look" would entice the daughters of other socially influential families. By attracting girls from prominent families to their ranks, sororities helped reaffirm the South's social order. As they elevated the next crop of "southern belles" to ladydom, sororities sorted women by class and provided another site through which southern families could display their heritage.¹¹¹ On the other hand, some young women (and their families) hoped that they might rise in status by pledging a popular sorority. For those in the growing southern middle class of the twentieth

¹¹¹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown documents the attention paid by white southerners to ancestry and family names. W. J. Cash also observed the white, southern preoccupation with heritage and in particular, the imagining of aristocratic forbearers. In her memoir, *The Making of a Southerner*, Katherine Du Pre Lumpkin comments on the importance of "name" and "background" in the early twentieth century South. "One knew without being told that social position depended upon 'family', that 'family' strictly determined what children we could play with and those we must avoid, though, the times being what they were, it often took careful guidance to help us make our selection." Economic hardships in the wake of the Civil War left many from "good" families without the possessions that would signify their status. Instead, as Lumpkin explains, "the absence of material signs made for confusion." In this environment, a self-publicized genealogical history became the marker of social standing. See Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1982), 120-121; Cash, *The Mind of the South*, 124-126; Lumpkin, *The Making of a Southerner* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 101-105.

century, sorority membership would provide the stamp of approval and denote social grace, assuring at least one lifelong social connection while offering the possibility of upward mobility.

Shifting Social Norms for White Women of the Middle and Upper Class: 1900s-1930s

Over the course of the twentieth century, American women shaped, adapted to, and in some cases rebelled against, changing public expectations for their behavior. Public opinion gradually became more permissive on such issues as women's higher education, women's suitability for the workplace, and the propriety of women's sexual expression and freedom. This was a marked change from the preceding Victorian era when convention guided that women exist in spaces largely separated from men's lives and should not exhibit any form of sexual desire. Even as public sentiment shifted, however, in the eyes of most men, women remained second-class citizens who should remain subordinate to male prerogatives.

The inclusion of women in higher education also opened doors for women in historically male professions, including law, medicine, and academia, and helped prepare them for emerging careers in "feminized" fields such as social work, dietetics, nursing, library science, teaching, and secretarial work by the 1910s and 1920s. The continuing movement of white women into the workplace and other formerly male-only spaces was a growing source of anxiety for white men. The presence of white women in public, exhibiting autonomy and unescorted by men, had created a sense of unease among white men since the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, increasing industrialization began to entice young, working class, single women into urban areas in search of employment. As a result, the image of a woman on her own in the city, without the guidance of family, fueled Americans' fears of unchecked women's sexuality. Whether pictured by white middle and upper class reformers as virtuous women, unknowingly lured into sexual service, or as dangerous prostitutes out to entrap supposedly morally upstanding white men, the control of sexuality among these working class women became a primary task for middle class female and male reformers as well as law

enforcement groups in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century ¹¹² Reformers saw prostitutes, and by association, working class single women, as probable carriers of venereal disease (VD) and thus as direct threats to the health of white men and, indirectly, to their wives and children and to the overall health of the white race ¹¹³

While these social hygiene reformers saw the largely immigrant, working class populations as the primary targets of their efforts to define and control public standards of morality (throughout this work, taken to mean, conventional standards for sexual behavior), they also acted out of fears that white middle class Americans would follow the working class down this ostensible road to moral decay ¹¹⁴ Historian Jeffery Moran explains that the public's "anxiety over sexual behavior" and attempts at moral reform in the early decades of the twentieth century was "fueled by middle-class fear of a changing moral and social order" ¹¹⁵ Men and women of the white middle and upper class feared more than just the "crisis of cultural authority," which I further describe in Chapter Two, ¹¹⁶ they also worried over the possible deterioration of Americans' moral standards

As white middle and upper class youth of the 1920s appeared to adopt habits of dress and frequent the forms of commercial entertainment popular among youth of the working class, reformers, educators, and parents feared that middle class sexual behavior might also mimic the perceived patterns of working class sexuality ¹¹⁷ Particularly alarming for these observers was

¹¹² On women as sexual innocents, see Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift Independent Wage Earners in Chicago 1830-1930* (Chicago, IL University of Chicago Press, 1988), 43-68 On women using promise of sexual favors to obtain money or other necessities, see Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, 93, 101-116, Elizabeth Alice Clement, *Love for Sale Courting Treating and Prostitution in New York City 1900-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 45

¹¹³ Jeffrey P Moran, *Teaching Sex The Shaping of Adolescence in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA Harvard University Press, 2000), 27-29, Clement, *Love for Sale*, 116-117, Allen M Brandt, *No Magic Bullet A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880*, rev ed (New York, NY Oxford University Press, 1987), 31-40

¹¹⁴ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 30

¹¹⁵ Moran, *Teaching Sex* 29

¹¹⁶ T J Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* (New York, NY Pantheon Books, 1981), 4-5

¹¹⁷ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 79-81

the desire for and exhibition of sexual freedom among white women of the middle and upper classes. Sorority alumnae, included in the observers, made clear that they did not approve of the new “freedoms” associated with the image of the youthful flapper. In an essay first appearing in the *Crescent* of Gamma Phi Beta and reprinted in the *Adelphian* of Alpha Delta Pi in 1927, sorority alumnae caution against offering membership to young moderns whose behavior might suggest “the cheapening of one’s personality, the lowering of one’s standards, and the forgetfulness of one’s breeding.” While some modern girls, the author noted, succeed in being “fran[k],” “fearless[s],” and “fre[e],” without compromising their “dignity,...refinement, and ... respect,” she warned chapters to guard against rushees who exhibited narcissistic behavior, scorned rules of the sorority house and college, and made open displays of sexuality.¹¹⁸

Sexual activity among white middle and upper class youth in the 1920s was not, as historians John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman note, promiscuous by today’s standards. Yet, the increased acceptance of “petting” and “necking” as a routine part of the heterosexual dating culture, and a doubling of the rate of premarital sexual intercourse among young white women who were born after 1900, as compared with that of women born between 1890 and 1900, pointed to a shift in accepted norms of sexual behavior. College women and men, brought together as campus peers and isolated from the constant monitoring by their parents and conventional families, appeared particularly susceptible to a relaxing of their behavioral standards. These changes in sexual behavior had significance for both women and men, D’Emilio and Freedman argue, as men began to turn to women of their own class for sexual gratification instead of seeking out working class women or prostitutes.¹¹⁹

In this light, the heterosocial activities that dominated the 1920s peer culture take on a somewhat sinister cast. Historian Nicholas Syrett has discussed how white college fraternity men

¹¹⁸ “The Modern Girl – As Rushee,” *Adelphian* Vol. 19, no. 4 (January 1927), 43.

¹¹⁹ John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, rev. ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 257-258.

in this era interpreted the shift in standards of behavior to justify their sexual exploitation of coeds, who often happened to be sorority women¹²⁰ The heterosocial commercial amusements of the college student, including dinner, dancing or movie dates, as well as weekend football games, were important ways for female and male students, Greek-letter group member or not, to prove their popularity on campus Participation in the heterosocial culture, and the heterosexual dating culture in particular, often placed women in the subordinate position of “owing” their male date for his expenditure on entertainment or other activities This process of “treating,” as discussed by historians Beth Bailey, Elizabeth Clement, Joanne Meyerowitz, and Cathy Peiss, reinforced the subordinate role of women in heterosexual dating relationships Treating cast dating as a consumer exercise where women would be expected to “repay” their dates’ expenditures with sexual favors¹²¹ However, since the women willing to engage in sexual activity (ranging from necking to intercourse) were now the racial and social peers of the middle and upper class white men, the American public sanctioned the men’s sexual exploits, while continuing to condemn women’s overt sexuality

Administrators and deans and advisors of women busied themselves with the control of heterosexual contacts among college students Dating, while highly policed, was seen as a natural part of a woman’s college experience Although a 1922 female graduate of William and Mary recalled that there was little dating between the men and women students, because the new “coeds” were still “intruders,” by 1929 dating was so prevalent at the college that the Women Student Cooperative Government Association even printed a “black list” of men that women “should be careful” to avoid as dates¹²² While protecting themselves, some female students also

¹²⁰ Syrett, *The Company He Keeps* 218-219

¹²¹ Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 18, Clement, *Love for Sale*, 45-48, Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, 93, Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia, PA Temple University Press, 1986), 54-55, 108-114

¹²² Alumnae Questionnaires, Post-1945, Laura Parrish Papers, SCRC, William and Mary Women Students’ Cooperative Government Association Minutes, Sept 23, 1929, Women Students’ Cooperative Government Association Records, UA 86, Box 1, SCRC

aided deans and administrators in governing the sexuality of other women. The deans of women, however, had the final word on campus heterosocializing. The deans' common practice of limiting dates for women students with poor grades suggests the importance of dating as a campus social activity. At the University of South Carolina in 1927, women with an "A" average could have dates every night of the week, while a "B" average garnered four date nights, a "C" two, and a "D" none except Sunday night.¹²³ Clearly, dating had the potential to fill much of women's time at the university; if well organized, administrators and parents alike could see it as time well spent.

Even as more women would go on to hold jobs or continue in graduate programs after college, university officials, professors, and parents of students assumed that they would marry and raise families at some point in the future.¹²⁴ For this reason, college dating became like another lesson, preparing women for mature relationships and the goal of marriage. In the 1920s, the only place where women were allowed to express pleasure in, or passion for, sexual activity was safely within the confines of a heterosexual marriage – and that acceptance of female sexuality was a recent development in itself. The increasing access to, and education about, birth control among white women of the middle class enabled the realization of the "companionate marriage" ideal. In a companionate marriage, women and men would be equal partners in a mutually nurturing relationship.¹²⁵ Birth control was key in this equation, as it removed the pressure of pregnancy from sexual relations and allowed a couple to decide when they wished to

¹²³ It is not clear whether the "dates" referred to in *The Gamecock* notice might also refer to meetings with women friends or with social groups. However, based on Paula Fass's descriptions of the faddishness of heterosexual dating among American youth in the 1920s, I am reading these rules as referring primarily to dates between women and men. See Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 262-263; *The Gamecock*, Nov. 26, 1927.

¹²⁴ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 172-177.

¹²⁵ Judge Ben B. Linsley of Denver, Colorado coined the term "companionate marriage" in 1926. Like other "marriage revisionists," Lindsey hoped that the companionate marriage ideal would help remake the institution of marriage so that it fit with modern American understandings of sexually expressivity and women's sexuality in particular. In the new marriage model, the use of birth control would enable young newlywed couples to solidify their own relationship before adding the pressures of parenthood. See Christina Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 106-108.

start a family and how large a family it would be. The potential for family planning (preventing or spacing out pregnancies) also offered the possibility for married, white, college-educated women of the 1920s and 1930s to delay motherhood and remain in the workplace for longer than they might otherwise have been able.¹²⁶

As part of their continued roles as guardians to students *in loco parentis*, the universities also sought to prepare young men and women for dating and marriage by offering courses designed to demystify these social conventions. Advocated by social hygiene experts since the early decades of the twentieth century, sex education for students had become a reality with the passage of the Chamberlain-Kahn Act in 1918. The importance of educating youth about sexuality and sexual activity had become clear to many during World War I, when the United States Army medical department issued the shocking claim that five of every six soldiers found infected with VD had entered the service already carrying their disease.¹²⁷ The Chamberlain-Kahn Act created the Venereal Disease Division of the United States Public Health Service and the United States Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board (the latter, an organization to coordinate work within government), and most importantly, set aside funds to pay for a large-scale program of sex education in schools. During the 1920s and 1930s, sex educators had attempted to inject the message of “positive sexuality” into their lessons to correspond with shifting mores and greater public acceptance of the companionate marriage ideal, yet they were not ready to condone premarital sexuality.¹²⁸

At the same time, Moran notes, the “mental hygiene” (a precursor to the term “mental health”) movement of the 1920s opened the door for a new medical lexicon to categorize many of the sexual “misbehaviors,” including masturbation, promiscuity, and same-sex relationships, that had been viewed by social hygiene reformers, doctors, and laypeople as “immoral.” Under the

¹²⁶ Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern*, 112.

¹²⁷ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 73; Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 115.

¹²⁸ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 73-74; 89.

new mental hygiene rubric, which would stand until the mid to late 1960s, not *all* sexual expression was not bad – just instances of sex that occurred outside of the confines of the conventional heterosexual marriage. Psychiatry now gave name to “unacceptable” behaviors as instances of mental and emotional “maladjustment.” Using the parlance of psychiatry, reformers sought to influence the “adjustment” of individuals.¹²⁹ One sex educator, Moran explains, referred to the idea of adjustment as “the best obtainable moving balance between the individual and his human surroundings.” By a “moving balance,” Moran further clarifies, the educator meant, “that a well-adjusted individual heeded public opinion and conformed to social norms.”¹³⁰

The ability of these social hygiene, sex education, or “marriage and family” courses to demystify dating, marriage, and perhaps sex, depended on the instructors and their chosen course matter. By the late 1930s, Duke University and the University of North Carolina offered a course, available to both female and male students, called “Marriage and the Family.” Requested by senior classmen at UNC in 1924, the course was open to men only for the first decade; senior women were allowed to take the class beginning in 1934.¹³¹ Described by its teacher, sociology professor Ernest T. Groves, a leading scholar in the field of marriage and the family, the class was not “a course in sex, in sex education, or in social hygiene,” but a course “designed to prepare [students] for future marriage and to interpret the social significance of marriage.” Also, while not intended “to solve the problems of campus life,” Groves’s lessons included discussions of college dating as part of “courtship,” a practice he defined as “the American way of mating.”¹³²

¹²⁹ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 94.

¹³⁰ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 95.

¹³¹ Inez Koonce Stacy, “Speech at a Meeting of the National Association of Deans of Women,” 1937, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Speeches, 1-2; “Students Discuss Marriage: Course Started Here in 1924,” 1942, n.p., UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Marriage and the Family Course.

¹³² Ernest R. Groves, “Sociology 62,” n.d., UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Marriage and the Family Course. In his syllabus, Groves expressed his belief in the “monogamic marriage,” and criticized any type of “trial,” or, companionate marriage. He also cited “premarriage [sexual] experience” as the “chief cause of marriage maladjustment.” Groves’s teachings aimed to combat the perceived causes of the failure of marriage and the family, reinforcing social conventions concerning premarital sex.

Although a practical aspect of discussions about dating and marriage, Groves's class managed to omit sex education, perhaps making the material appear less controversial and more acceptable to the public.

Sororities and Heterosocial Campus Culture

Although southern colleges and universities constructed and maintained a campus culture that kept women and men students separated as much as possible, the practice of heterosexual dating became increasingly important on campuses. While offering women an education, universities also provided a place for them to meet potential suitors. Access to the campus's male social world was another social connection sororities presented to members. By and large, southern women in the first quarter of the twentieth century attended universities to become educated and to prepare for careers, not to meet husbands.¹³³ Yet, social life on campus increasingly centered on dating and other forms of "heterosocializing," however, and many students participated. I use the term heterosocializing throughout this study to describe the increasingly popular mixed-sex socializing that took place on college campuses in the twentieth century. At these heterosocial events, male and female students could meet, get to know one another, form friendships, and possibly form heterosexual dating relationships. While many students, obviously not just members of Greek-letter groups, participated in heterosocializing, I focus on the fact that sororities and fraternities placed a premium on the mixed-sex social event, typically preferring it to a women's-only or men's-only activity.

For middle and upper class, white, southerners who fully expected their daughters to marry and raise families (whether after graduation or by leaving college to do so), the available, yet rigidly controlled, dating scene held the promise of a successful marriage. Although the physical layout of southern campuses and their sex-segregated curriculum and activities would present a challenge to heterosocial mixing, sororities would come to play a central role in

¹³³ Parrish, "When Mary Entered With Her Brother William," 82.

overcoming these difficulties. Fueling the campus culture of romance, sororities instructed their members to dispense guidance to pledges for dating the “right” men during a time when dating was increasingly viewed as necessary practice for choosing a mate and as preparation for a woman’s future marriage.¹³⁴

Dating and courtship, as well as the innocuous, heterosocial activities that brought female and male students together, were primary preoccupations of sororities. Sororities formed a bridge from the segregated women’s campus culture to the world of men’s activities. Regularly pairing with fraternities for social events called “mixers,” or for formal dances, members were poised, even forced, to meet numerous possible dates. By 1953 a study of courtship and marriage by Ernest W. Burgess, Paul Wallin, and Gladys Denny Shultz proclaimed dating to be “the center of social life in coeducational colleges.” The study also observed that sororities and fraternities “play[ed] a lead role in dating, and that the “events sponsored by [those] organizations encourage[d], or even require[d] it.”¹³⁵ For example, at UNC in the late 1940s, sorority advisors voiced concerns about compulsory parties, particularly during the week prior to examinations. These concerns did not eliminate the issue, however. In 1953 Dean Katherine Carmichael questioned student leaders at the Tri-Delta house after receiving a complaint that “too many parties were compulsory.”¹³⁶ John R.L. Johnson, Jr., a 1928 graduate of William and Mary, recalled that, “fraternities pretty much controlled the social life” at the college. “They organized the dances in such a way that every girl had a card and if she didn’t have a boy for every dance she was not popular.”¹³⁷

¹³⁴ *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book* (1927), SLA. Stewart Howe Collection (26/20/30), Kappa Alpha Theta Publications, 14-15.

¹³⁵ Ernest W. Burgess, Paul Wallin, and Gladys Denny Shultz, *Courtship, Engagement, and Marriage* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1954), 26.

¹³⁶ “Minutes on the Advisory Committee on Sororities,” 1948, Records of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (#40124), Series 12, Box 1, Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, 1950-1955; Katherine Carmichael to Tri-Delta member, Dec. 4, 1953, Records of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (#40124), Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 1, Correspondence, 1937-1957.

¹³⁷ John R.L. Johnson Oral History, University Archives Oral History Collection, UA 43, Swem SCRC, 6.

To make sure that their members would have a boy for every dance, sororities carefully selected women who would be socially accepted and would uphold, or enhance, their campus stature. As I have argued earlier in this chapter, sororities often chose members based on superficial characteristics – ones that would garner notice from fraternity men, the top-tier of male students, in the fast-paced, social whirl of campus parties and dances. Dating men from the popular campus fraternities became a way for sororities (and their individual members) to gain standing on campus.

The pervasive campus dating culture also had a negative effect on women students' relationships with one another. The frequent heterosocial events of Greek-letter groups meant that sorority women met socially with each other, and with independent women, less often. Like the Midwestern and Northeastern sorority women of the 1890s through the 1910s, who, Diana Turk observed, “centered much of their energies on setting themselves and their fraternities” apart from their less socially adept female peers, sorority women at southern universities also used their membership to separate themselves from independent women, while at the same time solidifying their status as the most dateable women on campus.¹³⁸ The rift between sorority and non-sorority women appeared most distinctly in matters of campus socializing, which centered, increasingly, within a heterosexual matrix. “Our problem,” explained the president of the University of Alabama Women’s Student Government Association in 1938, “is entertainment for the dormitory girls who are non-sorority. We have not solved this problem successfully yet.” She then proceeded to document the major women’s campus social events, most of which were held by the sororities. Both categories of events, the “pledge exchanges” and the “open houses,” revolved around pairings with fraternities.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 48.

¹³⁹ Wilella Burns to Helen Douglas, March 5, 1938, Agnes Ellen Harris Collection, Folder 1064, W. S. Hoole Special Collections Library.

As sorority women spearheaded the move toward mixed-sex socializing, non-sorority women also participated in the dating culture that had become the premiere aspect of student life on coeducational campuses by the . Yet, framing heterosexual dating as the norm and as an integral, even mandatory, part of college life channeled all women (whether they chose to participate in the dating culture or not) into an environment where male students were the arbiters of their intrinsic value. Fueled by the Greek letter social scene, heterosocial socializing gained strength at the expense of the campus women's culture. While the boundaries of a separate women's culture still existed on coeducational campuses in the South – as evidenced by the coordinate campus ideal, the constant rules of women's conduct, and the omnipresent myth of the southern lady – the women's culture no longer worked to support women in a male-friendly environment. Instead, the women's culture functioned in support of, and ancillary to, the university men's culture of masculinity as women understood their social value in terms of their relation to men.

CHAPTER TWO: “HELLENIC CULTURE AND CHRISTIAN IDEALS”: SORORITIES, CLASSICISM AND CIVILIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES

“I survived initiation last night,” Randolph-Macon Women’s College student, Eleanor Gwathmey Powell (later Dewey), wrote in a letter to her parents in September of 1927. “You really should see me sporting an ΑΘΠ [Alpha Omicron Pi] pin around,” she proudly proclaimed. Powell frequently included comments about rush and sororities in her letters home and felt compelled to share the details of, and her feelings about, these experiences. Her initiation into the Kappa Chapter of Alpha Omicron Pi (“ΑΟΠι”) sorority had taken place at 8:30 p.m. the previous night. “We wore all white down there. The rituals were really very beautiful and impressive. In other words, [t]here is a wonderful inspiration in becoming and being an ΑΘΠ.” In addition, of the ceremony she admitted, “I have never been so scared in all my life.”¹

Powell expressed an appreciation of the importance of her sorority’s ritual practices, as well as a certain level of fear during the proceedings. Sororities intended their initiations and rituals to solidify the bonds of sisterhood, impart wisdom to younger members, and inspire the awe of the pledges. While some of Powell’s fear certainly arose from the secrecy surrounding the initiation practices, she also may have experienced confusion at the performance of the ritual itself. Ceremonies that included songs and chants in Greek (a language understood by fewer and fewer members, as Greek and Latin were phased out as requirements in secondary schools and universities²), special attire for sisters and initiates, candlelight, and binding pledges of loyalty to

¹ Eleanor Gwathmey Powell Dewey to Mary Lewis Gwathmey Powell, September 1927, Eleanor Gwathmey Powell Dewey Papers, Mss1 D5154b, Folder 8, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia. Founded in 1891, Randolph-Macon Woman’s College became coeducational and changed its name to Randolph University in 2007. The school is located in Lynchburg, Virginia. See “Our Heritage as Randolph-Macon Woman’s College,” <http://www.randolphcollege.edu/x44.xml>, website accessed November 2, 2009.

² Although Caroline Winterer finds that the study of Latin and particularly Greek, was on the decline at American colleges by 1905 and in high schools after 1910, she notes that of those students studying the ancient languages in high school in these years, more were women. Winterer attributes this to the fact that Latin was an important skill for women going into a teaching career. See Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910* (Baltimore, MD: Johns

fraternity, imparted a solemn and other-worldly aura to the proceedings. After her initial anxiety subsided, Powell offered praise of the ceremony as beautiful and meaningful, and saw her inauguration into the sisterhood as an important step in her college career, if not her life overall.

Aside from the Greek-letter names of sororities and fraternities, the groups linked themselves to a “culture of classicism” through their secret rituals.³ “Purely Grecian is the ritual of the fraternity, in its temple music, its robes, its equipment and its classical mysteries,” claimed *The History of Alpha Chi Omega* (1948).⁴ Sororities adopted Greek patronesses, mottoes, and produced Greek plays, all in efforts to extol the virtues of ancient Greece. Yet, to the “non-Greek,” or unaffiliated campus observer, thoughts of “sorority life” probably would not evoke images of ancient Grecian-themed traditions. Instead, a sorority’s social events, including teas, dances, and rush parties shaped its public image. Since most college students probably did not join a sorority or fraternity because of an interest in learning Grecian-themed rituals, we must ask what, then, was the continuing significance of the groups’ identification with ancient Greece and the veneration of a classical past among these Greek-letter college students of the twentieth century? This chapter discusses the uses of classicism by Greek-letter groups and connects their emphasis on classicism to larger currents in American society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It also uncovers the relationship among sororities, classicism, and a white, southern, regional identity by examining the special meanings of neoclassicism in the American South and the particular interpretations of these meanings that white sororities conveyed to their members.

Hopkins University Press, 2002), 101-103, 119-120, Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu*, 225, Eleanor Gwathmey Powell to Mary Gwathmey Powell, Apr. 1, 1927, Folder 6, Eleanor Gwathmey Powell Dewey Papers, MSS1 D5154b, Turk, *Bound by a Mighty Vow*, 35-36.

³ Caroline Winterer uses the phrase “culture of classicism” to describe eighteenth and nineteenth century Americans’ preoccupation with ancient Greek and Roman culture. See Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*.

⁴ Dalgleish, *The History of Alpha Chi Omega*, 147.

Prior to the overwhelming popularity of Greek-letter societies, Greek and Roman *names* prevailed among men's literary and debating societies. During the nineteenth century up to the period of the Civil War, literary societies were more popular at American universities. Historian James McLachlan lists thirty-eight literary societies existing at American colleges from 1750 to 1814. Twenty of the clubs used Greek or Roman inspired names, like the Cliosophic Society (1765) at Princeton, the Demosthenian Society (1801) at the University of Georgia, or the Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies (1795) at the University of North Carolina.⁵ Literary and debating societies trained male students' in oratory, a necessary skill for acceptance by whites of the gentlemanly class in eighteenth and nineteenth century society. In addition they often provided extensive libraries for use by their members. By the 1840s and 1850s, however, the increasing presence of Greek-letter fraternities led to the weakening of the literary societies. Fraternity members vied for offices in literary societies as a means of elevating their respective group's reputation on campus, consequently, the literary societies lost much of their previous influence.⁶ Historian Nicholas Syrett has argued that a combination of other factors in the post-Civil War years also contributed to the weakening of literary societies. Typically each college had two literary societies and students belonged to one or the other. With increasing numbers of students attending college, he notes, these societies were becoming overcrowded. In addition, universities began to provide some of the benefits that were previously offered by literary societies, such as adding courses in debating and current events and maintaining well-stocked libraries. New and varied student activities diverted potential members. In particular, Syrett has noted the increasing emphasis on "athletic prowess" at the expense of "academic achievement"

⁵ James McLachlan, "The Choice of Hercules: American Student Societies in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *The University in Society*, ed. Lawrence Stone, vol. 2, *Europe, Scotland, and the United States from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 486-487.

⁶ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 26-27; Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 36-37.

during the period and suggests that this change may have duly influenced the students' choice in activities.⁷

As men's fraternities gained popularity on college campuses in the post-Civil War era, collegiate women started their own Greek-letter societies. Frequently, as with the men's literary societies, women's secret societies also preceded women's Greek-letter groups on campuses. While in many cases, local clubs and secret societies continued to flourish, even coexisting with sororities on campus, some women's secret societies sought the Greek-letter affiliation.⁸ Most notably the Adelphean and Philomathean societies at the Georgia Wesleyan Female College, which began in 1851 and 1852, respectively, and I.C. Sorosis, founded at Monmouth College in 1867, became Greek-letter sororities as they expanded to different schools and the members realized that the change was necessary to stay competitive with the growing, national, Greek-letter organizations.⁹ Although the literary societies bearing Greek names were, themselves, often secretive in their proceedings, they did not claim to enact rituals of the ancient Greeks, which became an increasingly important distinction among these societies in the years following the Civil War. To understand the basis for this devotion to classical forms requires an understanding of the national attachment to Greek and Roman thought in American education and, more broadly, in the nation's cultural and political interactions.

America's "Culture of Classicism"

"Next to Christianity, the central intellectual project in America before the late nineteenth century was classicism," explains historian Caroline Winterer. Winterer's *The Culture of*

⁷ Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 134-135.

⁸ In 1930 *Baird's Manual* listed eight pages of local sororities found on university campuses throughout the United States. See Shepardson, ed., *Baird's Manual, American College Fraternities*, 703-710.

⁹ I.C. Sorosis became Pi Beta Phi in 1883. The Adelphean and Philomathean societies, which began their programs of national expansion at later date, became Alpha Delta Phi and Phi Mu in 1905 and 1904, respectively. In 1913, Alpha Delta Phi changed their name to Alpha Delta Pi since there was already a fraternity by the same name. See Shepardson, ed., *Baird's Manual*, 289, 340, 345; Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu, Pi Beta Phi*, 32-33; *A Century of Friendship in Pi Beta Phi, 1867-1967* (St. Louis, MO: Pi Beta Phi, 1968), 78.

Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910 studies the transformation of Americans' relationship with classicism over the long nineteenth century and serves as a key text for understanding the reasons for a spike in interest in Greek-themed social groups and cultural events. Tracing the American infatuation with Greek and Roman thought through the lens of American higher education during this period, Winterer draws a picture of an American intellectual culture that based its self-concept, first, on these ancient predecessors and, eventually, on the cultural lessons of classical scholars aiming to maintain the popularity of classical studies.¹⁰ Educated, white Americans of the eighteenth century looked with reverence to republican Rome as a society structured much like their own which stressed "virtues of independence and self-reliance." By the first half of the nineteenth century, she argues, the lessons of ancient Greece superseded Rome, "mark[ing] a change in American concepts of self and citizen" as "democracy itself became more palatable in the new nation."¹¹

Winterer attributes the major shift to Greek affinity in American higher education to the influence of the German New Humanists. By the first half of the nineteenth century, these German scholars stressed the importance of studying Greek art, literature, and philosophy to "revive a Greek 'spirit' in modern Germany."¹² In America, the influence of the New Humanists raised the study of ancient Greek art and drama to a quasi-religious experience. Winterer characterizes this American philhellenism (love of Greek culture) as a form of "romantic nationalism," that allowed white, educated, American males of the upper class to "seek new forms of self-identification."¹³

Americans' infatuation with classicism withstood the Civil War to emerge as a method of escape from, or an alternative to, modernity, symbolized in this period by the increasing industrialization of society. Americans' inclination toward ancient Greece, argues Winterer, also

¹⁰ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 1-5.

¹¹ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 22, 4.

¹² Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 51.

¹³ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 53-54, 63.

manifested as an “antidote to economic and scientific materialism.”¹⁴ A bulwark of antimodernism, classicism became a possible corrector for problems in the modernized, industrialized United States.

Historian T.J. Jackson Lears has addressed the feeling of “dissatisfaction with modern culture” among America’s educated bourgeoisie in the decades surrounding turn of the twentieth century. Lears holds that this group sought a deeper, spiritual meaning and an authentic lived experience, desiring a “‘real life’ in all its intensity,” as a way to recreate a “solid sense of self.”¹⁵ While Lears traces some of this desire for authenticity to concerns of “overcivilization” in American society, he also roots the source of antimodernism in a “crisis of cultural authority,” among the educated bourgeoisie.¹⁶ For these men, and increasingly, for educated, white, middle and upper class women, the immersion into an “authentic” past offered by a classical education in the liberal arts college, could help to alleviate feelings of spiritual “weightlessness” resulting from the modern, materialistic, American lifestyle.¹⁷ In his discussion of liberal culture and higher education in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, historian Laurence Veysey points to the belief among “the academic purveyor[s] of culture” that a liberal education, would invigorate a population which, seemed, to them, “largely uncivilized.”¹⁸ These male – and few female – academics believed that the classical curriculum would provide a common cultural foundation for and add polish to an increasingly heterogeneous and roughly hewn American population.

The heterogeneity of American culture was a primary source of the “crisis of cultural authority” perceived by white, Anglo-Americans throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The growing immigrant population, from the Irish

¹⁴ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 76.

¹⁵ Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 5-6.

¹⁶ Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 4-5.

¹⁷ Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 41-47.

¹⁸ Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 213.

Catholics, beginning in the 1840s, to the Eastern Europeans, starting in the 1880s, struck fear into the heart of Americans of Anglo-Saxon descent who felt that their hold political, religious, and social power in the United States could be threatened.¹⁹ As historians have argued, the designation of immigrants as “civilized” or “barbarous” became increasingly dependent upon racial characteristics.²⁰ During the first half of the nineteenth century, existing American citizens generally classed European immigrants as “white,” and seen as “fit for self-government.”²¹ Yet, the great waves of European immigrants to the United States between 1840 and 1920 resulted in unease among Anglo-Saxon Americans and led to what historian Matthew Frye Jacobson argues, was a “new perception of some Europeans’ *unfitness* for self-government” or American citizenship based on their race. In this unfolding understanding of race, a new “series of subcategorical white groupings – Celt, Slav, Hebrew, Iberic, [and] Mediterranean” set these whites apart as “Others” from the “supreme Anglo-Saxondom.”²² Through the process of assimilation into American culture, however, Anglo-Saxon Americans believed that some immigrant populations – those who were not racially “different” – could, over time, be successfully incorporated into American society. Of course, this process of assimilation also led to Anglo-Saxon American fears over the ability to recognize the “true,” civilized, Americans – whom they judged to be like themselves – as opposed to the assimilated, yet not fully civilized, “new” Americans – who would always be “Othered” by comparison, but who could also appear as “white.” As Americans of Anglo-Saxon descent came (much to their chagrin) to view the United States as a melting pot of different races or national backgrounds, they increasingly came

¹⁹ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 69.

²⁰ In addition to Matthew Frye Jacobson, other historians examining “civilization” and its racially-charged meanings include, Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender, and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), and Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). See also Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2000).

²¹ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 42.

²² Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 42.

to see the necessity of cultural refinement and education – the markers of civilization – that were required to set them apart from the assimilated, but still less civilized, “new” Americans.

European immigrants could, over time, blend into the image of “white” America. Yet, Anglo-Saxon Americans saw African, Asian, Latino, and Native American peoples, whose physical characteristics appeared markedly different from theirs, as nonwhite and unassimilable, and thus unfit for American citizenship. The “difference” between whites and nonwhites in this period, Jacobson holds, was typically reflected in the juxtaposition of white “civilization” versus nonwhite “barbarism” or “savagery.”²³ By categorizing nonwhite immigrants, as well as recently emancipated African Americans, as “*uncivilized*,” white Americans – themselves a category, which by the mid-1920s, Jacobson argues, had become more inclusive as scientists no longer used race to classify differences in nationality²⁴ – could effectively bar members of the population from full rights of United States citizenship.

Historian Gail Bederman has also discussed white, middle and upper class Americans’ demarcation of “civilized,” white manhood and womanhood as separate from and superior to nonwhite races in the Victorian era. As Bederman argues, “middle and upper class white men effectively mobilized ‘civilization’ in order to maintain their class, gender, and racial authority.”²⁵ The Victorian “discourse of civilization,” as she puts forth, hinged on “race, gender, and millennial assumptions about human evolutionary progress.”²⁶ The labeling of nonwhites, by scientists and educated whites during this period, as less highly evolved in their biology and culture, enabled members of the Anglo-Saxon “race” to perceive of themselves as the most “civilized” peoples who were fit for rule over those races understood to be less advanced in their evolution.²⁷ Educated whites of the Victorian era also believed that the more advanced

²³ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 145.

²⁴ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 92.

²⁵ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 23.

²⁶ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 25.

²⁷ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 25-29.

civilizations had evolved to exhibit distinct “sexual differentiation.” In this view, Bederman explains, “civilized women were womanly – delicate, spiritual, dedicated to the home,” while civilized men were “the most manly ever evolved – firm of character; self-controlled; protectors of women and children.”²⁸ Scientists and educated whites of the time pointed to evidence of the evolutionary progress of the white race, including “civilized” racial traits and clearly defined gender differences.

The discourse of civilization, Bederman holds, also played a key role in mediating the seemingly conflicting viewpoints of Darwinist evolutionary theory and Christian millennialism. American Protestants of the Victorian period who remained firm in their belief in the power of a Christian God over the universe, but who also accepted Darwinism as truth, could speak of the progress toward perfect human evolution as the “advancement of civilization.”²⁹ As such, the drive toward religious perfectionism became a clear path on which the white, Protestant, “civilized” Americans saw themselves rising above nonwhite, non-Protestant, “savages.” Middle and upper class, white Americans “could depict [their] own preferences and styles as biologically determined, superior racial traits,” particularly vis à vis the tastes and customs of “uncivilized,” immigrant populations, who largely composed the American working class.³⁰ Through the knowledge and practice of “civilized” characteristics then, newly middle class Americans, or those aspiring to move into the upper social class, could solidify their claims to class status.

Colleges and universities were key sites where men and women could gain this cultural knowledge.³¹ This was also the case for middle and upper class African Americans, but the stakes of their claims were much higher. For blacks in the South, historian Glenda Elizabeth

²⁸ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 25.

²⁹ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 25-26.

³⁰ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 30.

³¹ David O. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 115-123; Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*, 265-266.

Gilmore explains, “education represented the key to class mobility.”³² And, for a period of time from the 1880s to 1900, she notes, African American education, like that of whites, followed the classical model. The swift change to vocational training as the basis of education for southern blacks came at the expense of classical coursework. While some African Americans felt that this change would offer practical training for available jobs, others of the race were disappointed that the utilitarian emphasis stifled options for intellectual stimulation.³³ To many white southerners, the limitation of a classical education for African Americans represented a victory in their efforts to control recently emancipated black southerners. The denial of a classical education was a means of keeping African Americans in what whites saw as “their place” and out of positions of cultural or political authority. Even as these trends in black education left most African Americans without access to the classical curriculum, the middle and upper class blacks continued to prize “civilized” behaviors just as did their white counterparts as a means of publicly establishing their social and educational status.³⁴

Classical scholars, who, by the mid-nineteenth century, feared their discipline would be lost amid the clamor for rational, scientific modes of study, had begun to promote the study of the classics as a way for students to attain culture, as well as cultural status. In the post-Civil War era, the classicists’ ideal took hold as the precursor of the modern, college of liberal arts, teaching students to *be* cultured. This approach to classical study formed the “humanities,” a “kind of elevating, holistic study of literature, music, and art” that became the mainstay of the liberal arts college in the post-Civil War era. Striving to better oneself, or become “cultured,” through the study of the humanities, was a goal to which both white male and female students could aspire.

³² Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 14.

³³ Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 24-25, 33.

³⁴ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham explains that the “politics of ‘respectability’” advocated by middle and upper class African Americans in the name of “race work” or “racial uplift” “equated normality with conformity to white middle-class models of gender roles and sexuality.” In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century “many black women linked mainstream domestic duties, codes of dress, sexual conduct, and public etiquette with both individual success and group progress.” See Higginbotham, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” *Signs* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1992), 271-272.

Thus, Winterer argues, the transition to the humanities curriculum also helped facilitate women's entrance into classical learning³⁵

In the pre-Civil War South, where oratory skill and classical knowledge were markers of the white, gentleman class, adherence to the neoclassical tradition helped reinforce the boundaries of the white, planter elite. As tensions mounted between the North and the slaveholding South, elite white southerners looked to create a regional form of classicism to validate their existence as a slave society. Southern nationalists pointed to geographical similarities between the South and ancient Greece to draw parallels between the "landed, cultivated leisure class of statesman," who in Greek and Roman times also benefited from slave labor³⁶. Proslavery supporters used the writings of Greek philosophers to bolster their arguments that slavery was a natural and beneficial state of order within a society³⁷. Furthermore, Winterer notes that women of the South "self-identif[ied]" with the image of the Roman matron longer than women of the North because their proslavery stance rendered her "elitism – and implicit slaveholding – most rhetorically necessary"³⁸

As Winterer argues, these changes in the ways students learned the classics and how they used their classical knowledge over the course of the nineteenth century had important and lasting effects on American society. The "civically oriented" classicism of the antebellum period, that trained young men for public life, lost significance as Americans came to focus on self-improvement via classical study³⁹. No longer did college professors or their students actively engage with the nation's public culture. Instead, Winterer holds, they turned their attentions

³⁵ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 117-119

³⁶ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 21, 74

³⁷ Edwin A. Miles, "The Old South and the Classical World," *North Carolina Historical Review* 48 (1971), 267; Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 75. On the relationship of Romanticism and the cult of Greece in the southern and northern United States, see Harvey Wish, "Aristotle, Plato, and the Mason-Dixon Line," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10, no. 2 (Apr., 1949), 254-266.

³⁸ Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition 1790-1900* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 167.

³⁹ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 142.

inward, striving to perfect themselves. Student participation in intercollegiate athletics, and Greek-letter fraternities and sororities, dominated the new, insular, campus culture.⁴⁰

In this new, self-centered, approach to classical study, the use of Greek letters and themes by sororities and fraternities would have seemed appropriate to educated members of the middle and upper classes as natural extensions of the college of liberal culture. During this period, as the study of the liberal arts became an avenue for self-culture, Greek-letter societies also fashioned themselves as avenues for self-development.⁴¹ Like the study of classical art and literature, and the Greek plays increasingly performed on college campuses, Greek-letter organizations facilitated a supposed “immersion in the authenticity of the ancient past,” that allowed students to transcend modernity and “[be] Greek.”⁴² For those emotionally apathetic, white males of the American middle and upper class described by Lears, the influence of a classical education and the experiential opportunity offered by Greek-letter fraternities, could bring a new level of vitality to their lives, which they felt were void of meaning. The Greek-letter organization aided in the acculturation of these young men, imparting lessons in civilized attitudes and behaviors that would prepare them to be the white, middle and upper class leaders of their generation.⁴³ Greek-letter groups then, functioned to help white, Americans of the middle and upper class, to fulfill their ideal of progress toward a perfected and highly civilized society.

Sororities and Classical Antiquity

In April 1891, white sorority women demonstrated their interest in and support for the contemporary trend toward celebrations of progress and civilization. During the first “Inter-Sorority” conference (the predecessor of the National Panhellenic Conference), held that month

⁴⁰ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 148, Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*, 282-283, 292-294.

⁴¹ On the liberal arts curriculum, or “liberal culture,” as a means of student enculturation, see Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*, 184-221.

⁴² Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 148, 150.

⁴³ For a discussion of the role of fraternities in facilitating social connections and prestige of their members, see Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 56-57, 125, 129-133.

in Boston at the invitation of alumnae from Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority, delegates made a calculated decision to hold their next meeting in Chicago in 1893. The second conference would run concurrently with the planned events of the World's Columbian Exposition. The minutes of the first conference do not state who was responsible for the idea of the Chicago meeting, but do show that social activist Julia Ward Howe, also an honorary member of Boston University's Phi Chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma, was present.⁴⁴ Howe had directed the Woman's Department at the New Orleans World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial in 1884, and may have been influential in the Inter-Sorority's decision to establish a presence at the Columbian Exposition.⁴⁵

At the Boston meeting, the women formed a Committee on the World's Fair, which was headed by Carrie Jones, an alumna of the Alpha Chapter of Alpha Phi at Syracuse University. Jones delivered the report of the committee, which made four recommendations regarding the role of Greek-letter groups at the upcoming exposition:

- 1 That the fraternities represented in Northwestern University, together with a committee from Delta Delta Delta and Pi Beta Phi, be considered a standing committee to have charge of Panhellenism at the World's Fair in 1893
- 2 That if practicable a certain date be fixed at which time a fraternity excursion be arranged,
- 3 That the committee be empowered to provide a reception, banquet, or to call a convention,
- 4 That a place or registration be secured if possible in the Woman's Building, where fraternity women may register their names.⁴⁶

The committee's report shows that the sorority women saw the exposition as a great opportunity to publicize their contributions to the advancement of white civilization for all to see. As Gail Bederman has explained in her account of the Columbian Exposition, the members of the exposition's Board of Lady Managers planned to erect a Woman's Building as well as place exhibits by women throughout the classically-inspired structures of the "White City" as a way to ensure that the overall exhibition "did not depict civilization as intrinsically male."⁴⁷ Emma

⁴⁴ "National Panhellenic Conference: An Historical Record of Achievement," 1957, SLA, NPC Archives, Publications, 1938-2002 (41/82/800), Box 1, 3-5

⁴⁵ Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women* (Chicago, IL: Academy Chicago, 1981), 51

⁴⁶ "National Panhellenic Conference: An Historical Record of Achievement," 5

⁴⁷ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 33

Harper Turner, who served as secretary at the 1891 Inter-Sorority Conference, noted that the group “could but feel 1893 represented an opportunity not to be lightly set aside.”⁴⁸ The committee’s recommendations suggest that the sorority women viewed themselves as the guardians and purveyors of Panhellenism and felt that it was natural that they be on hand to promote their allegiance to the classical past as a bridge to a modern and civilized future.

It is unclear whether or not the women of the Inter-Sorority Conference were able to produce the Panhellenic tribute in Chicago that they had begun to envision at their meeting two years before. Although Jeanne Madeline Weimann’s study of the Woman’s Building at the World’s Columbian Exposition does not mention the contributions of the Panhellenic organization or any exhibit space given to such a group, the National Panhellenic Conference’s (NPC) brief account of the Chicago meeting describes a successful endeavor on the part of the Inter-Sorority group. According to their description, July 19th and 20th, 1893 saw the “Congress of college fraternities” at the exposition. Men’s fraternities also joined the sorority women in joint sessions on the morning of the first day of the congress. Editors of fraternity journals met in an afternoon session. In the evening, the Inter-Sorority women gave a “Panhellenic banquet,” with the chapters from Northwestern University and the Knox College chapters of Tri-Delta and Pi Beta Phi serving as sponsors. The afternoon of the 20th was “‘fraternity day’ at the Fair.” The NPC lacked a record of who attended the Fraternity Congress or what topics the attendees might have discussed at the events.⁴⁹ The historian of the Sigma Chi men’s fraternity, however, recorded that the congress “was held for discussion of fraternity problems,” and that the groups, “maintained [an exhibit] in the educational section of the fair.”⁵⁰ According to the Sigma Chi records, men’s fraternities were active participants in the meetings at the Columbian Exposition. It is uncertain, however, whether the women’s or the men’s groups took the initiative in

⁴⁸ “National Panhellenic Conference: An Historical Record of Achievement,” 5.

⁴⁹ “National Panhellenic Conference: An Historical Record of Achievement,” 7.

⁵⁰ Robson, ed. *Baird's*, 28.

organizing the two-day event. What *is* clear from the scant notes of the 1891 Inter-Sorority Conference is the importance of the exposition in the minds of the sorority women. As educated, white women from Greek-letter organizations, the sorority women likely envisioned their participation in the World's Columbian Exposition as a duty and a privilege. While partaking of the excitement of the sights and sounds of the World's Fair, the sorority women would also be modern symbols of Panhellenism, leading the White City's neoclassical interpretation of Anglo-Saxon civilization's progress.

During the nineteenth century, American scholars and the educated public in general looked to the civilization of ancient Greece as the model for a perfect society and harmonious living. The founders of Greek-letter fraternities and sororities sought to honor the ancient Greeks, the supposed forbearers of modern, western civilization, by reaffirming the perceived perfection of their world, and by striving to reach that same level of perfection themselves. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the nascent Greek-letter sororities, like the men's fraternities before them, desired to be seen as cultured and intelligent.

Female college students also wanted the benefit of membership in Greek-letter groups that was available to their male peers. Before founding Kappa Alpha Theta at Indiana's Asbury University (later DePauw University) in 1870, Bettie Locke, was chosen as a "champion" of Phi Gamma Delta men's fraternity. As a "champion," she would show her loyalty to the men's organization by wearing the fraternity's pin. Locke, however, refused to wear the pin unless she could be initiated as a full member of the fraternity. Since this was not allowed, Locke's father, a member of Beta Theta Pi fraternity, suggested that she begin her own group.⁵¹

Women students regularly took cues from men's Greek-letter fraternities to establish their secret meanings and rituals. Locke and three of her friends conferred with her father and with the historian of Phi Gamma Delta men's fraternity as they designed their own secret

⁵¹ Dodge, Estelle Riddle, *Sixty Years in Kappa Alpha Theta, 1870-1929* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing Company, 1929), 17-19.

organization Similarly, the beginnings of Kappa Kappa Gamma (1870), also at Monmouth College in Illinois, Alpha Phi (1872) and Gamma Phi Beta (1874) at Syracuse University, Alpha Chi Omega (1885) at Indiana Asbury, Alpha Xi Delta (1893) at Lombard College in Illinois, Chi Omega (1895) at the University of Arkansas, Kappa Delta (1897), Sigma Sigma Sigma (1898), and Zeta Tau Alpha (1898) at the Virginia Normal School, Delta Zeta (1902) at Miami University relied on the advice of brothers and fathers who were fraternity men, or the campuses' Greek scholars in devising their rituals, mottoes, badges, and constitutions⁵² Alternately, in the case of Delta Delta Delta (1888), founding member, Sarah Ida Shaw Martin at Boston University, was, herself, a scholar of Greek As a result, Martin composed much of the ritual, the badges and emblems, and the constitution of the sorority herself and then conferred with her compatriots to make the final decisions⁵³

Like the Greek-letters of their name, these other Greek letters and mottos that appeared on publicly visible sorority emblems marked the women as elite and part of an in-group, adding a tangible thread to their bonds of sisterhood Designed by the members and fashioned by jewelers, sororities' pins (or badges) were made of precious metals and, over time, some members began to have theirs set with jewels that represented the sorority's colors Many national sororities standardized the design and size of the badges and the type of jewels permitted during the 1900s

⁵² Dodge, *Sixty Years in Kappa Alpha Theta*, 22, Florence Edna Burton Roth, *The History of Kappa Kappa Gamma Fraternity 1870-1930* (Columbus, OH Kappa Kappa Gamma, 1932), 4-6, Alice Morgan Roedel, *History of the Alpha Phi Fraternity From the Founding in 1872 Through the Year 1951* (Alpha Phi International Fraternity Stanford University Press, 1951), 7, Lindsey Barbee, *The Story of Gamma Phi Beta* (Menasha, WI George Banta Publishing Co , 1921), 14-15, Dalglish, *History of Alpha Chi Omega*, 8-10, Helen Willis Lynn, *History of the Alpha Xi Delta Fraternity* (Menasha, WI George Banta Publishing Company, 1923), 4, Ferguson, ed , *History of Chi Omega*, 10, 12-15, Morse, *History of Kappa Delta*, 3,6, Susanne Stinson, *The Years Remembered of Sigma Sigma Sigma The First Fifty-Five Years 1898-1953* (Menasha, WI Sigma Sigma Sigma, 1956), 48-49, Strout, *History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 47, Nancy Brewer and Rochelle Mackey, *A Century of Sisterhood The Story of Delta Zeta Sorority 1902-1992* (Phoenix, AZ Heritage Publishers, Inc , 2002), 3-5,

⁵³ Haller, Margaret Paddock, *The History of Delta Delta Delta 1888-1988* (Arlington, TX Delta Delta Delta, 1988), 4

and 1910s.⁵⁴ Not just a marker of group membership, the pins, as elaborate pieces of jewelry, also signified the wearer's ability to afford such luxury. Both the secret and the open mottoes of sororities were written in Greek and sometimes appeared on the group's pin and their coat of arms. Delta Delta Delta's coat of arms featured the Greek language version of their open motto, "Let us steadfastly love one another," while Kappa Delta's was also emblazoned with the Greek translation of their open motto, "Let us strive for that which is honorable, beautiful, and highest."⁵⁵ By writing even these open mottoes in Greek, sorority members showed that they expected to be understood only by similarly educated members of society. Yet, as fewer colleges required students to take Greek and Latin, it is likely that, over time, even the sorority members could not read the mottoes.⁵⁶

The societies also made specific reference to Greek mythology in the selection of symbolic patronesses. Sororities routinely chose Greek goddesses who reflected ideals and character traits that they also desired in their members. For example, Kappa Kappa Gamma chose Athena, the goddess of wisdom, Chi Omega picked Demeter, goddess of the harvest, while Zeta Tau Alpha selected Themis, the goddess of justice.⁵⁷ Instead of choosing a preexisting god or goddess the members of Phi Mu created their own patron saint at their first national convention in 1907. "Cuju," the name formed from a combination of Cupid, the Roman god of love, and Juno, the Roman goddess of marriage and fertility, and the guardian of women, was, for reasons unclear, a short-lived mascot.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ "Chi Omega Badge," <http://nm.chiomega.com/symbols/default.aspx?item=Symbols/3-4%20Badge.xml&set=thumbs1&thumb=4>, website accessed October 21, 2009; Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu*, 228-229; Morse, *A History of Kappa Delta Sorority*, 67; Strout, *The History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 227-230.

⁵⁵ Haller, *The History of Delta Delta Delta*, 51; Morse, *A History of Kappa Delta Sorority*, 64, 73.

⁵⁶ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 101-103.

⁵⁷ Roth, *The History of Kappa Kappa Gamma*, 841; Ferguson, ed., *History of Chi Omega*, 35-36; Strout, *The History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 251.

⁵⁸ Lamb, *History of Phi Mu*, 234; Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome*, Updated ed. (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 287, 292, 307.

The choice of a hybrid patron in “Cuju” reflected the Phi Mu women’s understanding of the contemporary social milieu of the 1900s and 1910s. Cuju would serve as the women’s guardian through marriage and motherhood, while also speaking to the growing popular perception that marriage was, foremost, a partnership based on love – the “companionate” ideal.⁵⁹ In claiming the importance of love in their future, married life, the members demonstrated their knowledge, if not outright acceptance, of modern understandings of sexuality. While the Phi Mu historian at the time noted that “no real or historical personage was desired as a patron saint; merely a mysterious character whose name could be introduced into the songs, feasts, etc.,” some of the sorority’s members were displeased with the fantastical figure. Indeed, some of the women might have been uneasy with the modern take on womanhood suggested by the hybrid patron. Cuju had no historical connection to classical antiquity, but as an unknown entity would sound mysterious. The sorority referred to the figure by name during initiation ceremonies between 1908 and 1912; the patron saint likely earned the reverence of members initiated during that time. The fact that some Phi Mus hoped to end their affiliation with Cuju shows the level of import Greek-letter sororities attached to classical mythology as a marker of their cultured status. Some members suggested replacing the beleaguered patron saint with Vesta, Roman goddess of hearth and home, or Minerva, the Roman version of Athena (although Kappa Kappa Gamma already listed her as patroness), or Ceres, the Roman equivalent of Demeter (although Chi Omega already claimed her). Whereas the amalgamated name, “Cuju,” might suggest a less sophisticated understanding of classical traditions, and point to a less knowledgeable membership overall, the name of an identifiable Greek or Roman deity would prove the cultural mettle of the Phi Mu’s,

⁵⁹ “Marriage revisionist” Judge Ben B. Lindsey, of Denver, Colorado, popularized the ideal of “companionate marriage” in the mid- to late-1920s as a means of “preserving marriage by reforming it” to “accommodate new social realities.” Historian Christina Simmons describes the three main points of the marriage revisionists’ plan: ...they promoted sexual intimacy as the glue of marriage;...they valorized the freedom and privacy of young couples; and ...they demanded equality in marriage.” Still, Simmons explains, the revisionists “reaffirmed monogamous marriage, usually within the same race, religion, and ethnicity, as the proper goal of youth sexual development.” See Simmons, 106-108.

staving off group embarrassment. In the end Phi Mu simply abolished Cuju and did not adopt a new patron saint.⁶⁰

As a further display of their supposed ancient Greek cultural enlightenment, some sororities chose to organize special banquets, or performances to honor their selected deity. Chi Omega began to hold spring and fall Eleusinian festivals as ancient Greeks had held the Eleusinian mysteries to honor the myth of the goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone. According to the myth, Hades, god of the underworld, takes Persephone with him to be his wife. Demeter wanders the world, fasting and searching for her daughter. The god Zeus takes pity on Demeter and returns her daughter. Hades tricks Persephone, however, by tricking her into eating magical pomegranate seeds. As a result, she must return to the underworld for half of the year. The allegory represented the planting of grain seed and its harvest. The mysteries, or secrets, known only to the initiates of the cult of Eleusis, promised them happiness in the afterlife.⁶¹

The secret knowledge gained by Chi Omega initiates could be seen as a parallel to the journey toward the understanding of the mysterious rites made by the initiates of the cult of Eleusis. The *History of Chi Omega* (1928) stresses the sorority's interest in "the finer phases" of the mysteries, which reflected an attempt to distance themselves from portions of the ceremonies that might be seen as uncivilized.⁶² The ritual celebration of the ancient Greek Eleusinian mysteries began with each initiate bathing in the sea for purification and then sacrificing a piglet. Reenacting Demeter's search for Persephone, the fasting initiates would follow a fourteen-mile procession route to Eleusis, stopping at a certain point to shout obscenities. The group would end

⁶⁰ Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu*, 234-235.

⁶¹ Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Greece*, Updated ed. (New York: Facts on File, 2005), 352-353, 383-384; Jasper Griffin, "Greek Myth and Hesiod," in *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, eds. John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 80-81.

⁶² Ferguson, ed., *History of Chi Omega*, 35.

their fast with a drink of barley water. At the festival hall in Eleusis, a priest would show the secret, sacred objects to the initiates, revealing the mysteries.⁶³

At the national convention in 1912, the Chi Omegas first produced *Earth Mother*, a play telling the story of myth of Demeter and Persephone. Lettie Mae McRoberts, a Chi Omega alumna from the Sigma chapter at Randolph-Macon Women's College, wrote the play.⁶⁴ It is doubtful that the key pieces of the ancient ritual celebration would be incorporated, in their original form, into the twentieth century Chi Omega production. It is unclear what parts, if any, of the ancient mysteries were reproduced in the play. Instead, it featured a Greek chorus and focused on a dramatization of the myth. A witness to the "Greek program" at the Chi Omega biennial convention of 1920 explained that the production of *Earth Mother* helped the sisters come "to understand more fully [their] relation to the Greek world." She felt that the presentation of the play in an amphitheater "enhanced" its meaning, making the audience "feel as though [they] had realized more fully the aesthetic life of the Greeks."⁶⁵ Again, like students of classical studies, the sorority members, through their Greek-inspired pageantry, could feel that they were gaining specialized knowledge of the ancient Greeks. Since the Chi Omegas only performed the play at their convention, this supposedly authentic Greek experience was necessarily limited to the sorority's membership, adding to the belief that this cultural knowledge was off-limits to those not eligible for membership in the sorority. Sorority membership then, was an important way for many middle and upper class, white, American women to establish their status as "highly civilized."⁶⁶

Likewise, African American sororities served as a means of social stratification for women within the black community. In her history of Delta Sigma Theta sorority, writer and

⁶³ Adkins and Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Greece*, 384

⁶⁴ Ferguson, ed., *History of Chi Omega*, 36, "'Earth Mother' Presented at Convention," *The Eleusis of Chi Omega* 22, Issue 3 (1920), 303

⁶⁵ "'Earth Mother' Presented at Convention," *The Eleusis of Chi Omega* 22, no. 3 (1920), 304

⁶⁶ See my earlier discussion (p. 9-10) on "discourses of civilization" as put forth by Gail Bederman in *Manliness and Civilization*, 25-31

historian Paula Giddings notes that black sororities were among the “very few closed-membership organizations in the Black community, and the only ones that required a college education.”⁶⁷ These distinctions, Giddings explains, along with publicity primarily for the sororities’ social events, made the groups susceptible to criticism within the African American community, by creating the problematic image of a “less than serious bourgeoisie class that was insensitive to the needs of the less fortunate.”⁶⁸ In a similar fashion to white sorority members, then, African American women also used their status as sorority women to convey their desired images of civilized womanhood. Giddings notes that for African American students, the use of Greek names “were, in part, a defiant response to the notion that a ‘Negro would never learn to parse a Greek verb or to solve a problem in Euclid,’” as believed South Carolinian and former Vice-President John C. Calhoun.⁶⁹ Black Greek-letter societies were also designed to send a message to the proponents of “industrial, nonacademic education” for African Americans, such as Booker T. Washington, “who believed the study of classical subjects was of little practical use.”⁷⁰ African American sorority women certainly saw their Greek-letter affiliation as an important marker of their class – both within the black community and as a way of bridging the racial divide by exhibiting class solidarity with white sorority women. By portraying themselves as highly civilized women, middle and upper class black sorors hoped to have a positive influence on white public opinion of the entire African American community.

Like the Chi Omegas, the Kappa Alpha Thetas drew on the image of secrecy and classicism to enhance their appearance of exclusivity. The Thetas began opening their grand convention with the “Nike service” in 1913. In Greek mythology, the goddess Nike stood for “successful effort,” and in Theta, Nike represented the “successful establishment of each

⁶⁷ Paula Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood: Delta Sigma Theta and the Challenge of the Black Sorority Movement* (New York, NY: William Morrow Company, Inc., 1988), 144.

⁶⁸ Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood*, 144.

⁶⁹ Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood*, 19.

⁷⁰ Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood*, 19.

chapter.” In a 1928 convention report the Thetas described the service as a “lovely ritual based on a Greek idea.” During the event, each chapter’s delegate to the convention brought a link for the symbolic “national chain” of chapters. The delegate would attach her link and deliver a short speech on a distinctive deed in the record of her chapter. The ritual ended with the entire convention forming a “human chain,” accompanied by the speaking of the sorority Preamble and the “Chain Song” before the procession departed the hall.⁷¹ The lyrics of the “Chain Song” stressed the eternal bond of Theta sisterhood while acknowledging the increasing uprootedness of Americans in the early decades of the twentieth century:

Though years shall part us with relentless ‘morrrows
The mist of pain shall keep our ways apart;
But Theta love holds timeless through all sorrows the
chain that binds us, links us heart to heart.⁷²

As more and more Americans relocated geographically for such purposes as educational training, new job opportunities, or military service, conventional support networks of family and local community disappeared. The “Chain Song” spoke to these fears of isolation, as sorority sisters could very well find themselves living far from any other members of their chapter, from college friends, or from their families. It also reminded the Thetas that they would always have a bond with their sisters throughout the country – even those they had never before met. Again, like the selection of the patron or patroness, the enactment, or supposed *reenactment*, of rituals from classical antiquity demonstrated a level of sophisticated knowledge, supposedly marking the sorority women as members of America’s cultural elite.

While sororities busied themselves with finding ways to honor the “Grecian heritage of perfection, harmony, and balanced development of mind, body and soul,” the NPC suggested that

⁷¹ “Kappa Alpha Theta Twentieth Annual Report, 1928,” Stewart Howe Collection (26/20/30), Kappa Alpha Theta Publications.

⁷² “Founders Day Program,” January 27, 2008, Kappa Alpha Theta Alumnae of Austin, Texas, http://www.austinthetas.com/uploads/Founders_Day_program_final_2008.pdf, website accessed August 15, 2009.

member sororities place less public emphasis on their secret rituals⁷³ In 1914, the NPC had established a committee to study the value of secrecy and to decide if there should be standardization of what information would be kept secret within each group⁷⁴ The development of the NPC committee followed on the heels of the newly formed College Fraternity Bureau In May of 1913, representatives from fifty-five sororities and fraternities met in Chicago to discuss issues of national anti-fraternity sentiment Of particular concern to the Greek-letter organizations was the fact that many states had introduced anti-fraternity bills in their state legislatures during the winter of 1912 The groups realized the need to stay abreast of anti-fraternity campaigns and to cooperate in addressing public concerns about fraternities and sororities At the meeting, the representatives established the College Fraternity Bureau to compile a record of anti-fraternity legislation and to keep Greek-letter groups aware of negative publicity The bureau planned to launch “a campaign of publicity calculated to disseminate knowledge concerning fraternities among the American people ”⁷⁵ The representatives apparently believed that the American public often mistook high school fraternities for college fraternities Journalists’ accounts of high school sororities found that negative public opinion of the groups centered on the idea that they “exist[ed] merely for social purposes, and foster[ed] frivolity ”⁷⁶ The NPC did not clearly explain how college sororities differed from the high school societies in that regard But comments by a female administrator at a ladies’ school portrayed the high school groups as particularly nefarious for initiating young girls and exposing them to “the meaning of social striving, the ugliness of society competition, the unworthy satisfaction of having ‘made a sorority,’ and the bitterness of being left out” by age thirteen or

⁷³ Dalgliesh, *History of Alpha Chi Omega*, 147, NPC Archives, *National Panhellenic Review*, 1915, *National Panhellenic Review*, 1902-1937 (41/82/813)

⁷⁴ NPC Archives, *National Panhellenic Review*, 1914, *National Panhellenic Review*, 1902-1973 (41/82/813)

⁷⁵ Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu*, 65

⁷⁶ “To Combat School Sororities, George Washington University Societies to Aid Pan-Hellenic Movement,” *The Washington Post*, October 5, 1914, 7

fourteen.⁷⁷ For the preceding decade the NPC had tried to discourage high school fraternities. At a joint session of college deans of women and sorority alumnae at the Inter-Sorority Conference in 1905, sorority women voted against selecting as college sorority members women who had been in high school sororities. The sorority alumnae and deans of women hoped that this measure would decrease girls' interest in joining the groups in the high school setting.⁷⁸ The source of the negative opinions concerning Greek-letter groups, however, likely resulted from more than a mere public dislike of high school secret societies.

Some of the aversion to secrecy on the part of sororities and fraternities may have resulted from the American public's unease with secret organizations dating back to the anti-Masonic sentiment of the 1820s through 1850s. Some critics believed that groups like the Masons posed a threat to democracy. In her history of Freemasonry, Lynn Dumenil suggests that a significant number of Masons held positions of power or were members of the elite. Detractors perceived these men as being in a position to subvert the law to benefit the Masonic order.⁷⁹

By the first quarter of the twentieth century, this distrust of secrecy focused on the activities of suspected political radicals in America. The near fanatical demand for patriotism during World War I continued in its aftermath as Americans, fearful of a Bolshevik-led uprising on their own soil, exercised a distrust and intolerance for difference. The great "Red Scare" resulted from what historian Robert K. Murray has argued was an "exaggeration" and "misinterpretation of fact" by the press and some public officials concerning instances of radical activity in the United States.⁸⁰ Some Americans, Murray argues, "arous[ed] public feeling

⁷⁷ Grace Latimer Jones, "The Evils of Girls' Secret Societies," *The Ladies Home Journal* Vol. XXIX, no. 11 (October 1907), 26.

⁷⁸ "Report on the Joint Meeting of the Deans and Advisors of Women in State Universities and Representatives of the Inter-Sorority Conference," 1905, NPC Archives, Committee File (41/82/50), Box 1, NPC-NAWDAC Historical File, 1905-1941.

⁷⁹ Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 5-7.

⁸⁰ Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), 83.

against the foreigner, the liberal, the independent, or any nonconformist through associat[ion]... with the radical movement.”⁸¹ Interest groups were able to seize on the culture of fear to advance their own agendas. Those desiring to maintain white, Protestant supremacy pointed to African Americans, Catholics, and Jews as agents of the communists’ plot. Anti-union organizers saw incidents of increasing labor unrest in the United States as a sign of Bolshevik influence.⁸² Although largely composed of white, Protestant Americans from the middle and upper classes, Greek-letter organizations did not wish to be mistaken for radical secret societies. In such an environment, then, sororities continued to assess the amount of publicity given to the existence of their secret rituals.

In his first edition of *American College Fraternities* (1879) William Raimond Baird combated claims of fraternity secrecy, arguing that the secrecy was limited to the organizations’ meetings. He pointed to the variety of ways fraternity members announced their membership and publicized their groups, such as the wearing of badges and fraternity colors, the publishing of journals, the congregating of members on campus, and the building of houses or lodges. Unlike groups that would not disclose their membership, Baird contended that fraternities were hardly secret.⁸³

In the essay, Baird downplayed the ritual activity at the fraternity meetings, perhaps also in an effort to discourage the idea that fraternities operated as semi-religious, yet un-Christian organizations. In the early to mid eighteenth century, Evangelical Christians charged that the Masons, with their oaths and religious-based rituals, were a sacrilegious order.⁸⁴ Likewise, sororities’ and fraternities’ quasi-religious devotion to Greek gods, goddess, and, particularly, undisclosed rituals, also may have caused public disfavor. Young ladies in eighteenth century

⁸¹ Murray, *Red Scare*, 84.

⁸² Murray, *Red Scare*, 84.

⁸³ William Raimond Baird, “College Fraternities: Have They a Right to Live?” reprinted in Baird, ed., *American College Fraternities* (Menasha, WI: The George Banta Publishing Company, 1935), 29.

⁸⁴ Baird, “College Fraternities,” 29; Dumenil, *Freemasonry*, 7.

America read classical mythology and were even encouraged to read histories of ancient Greece and Rome, as some believed that they were “eminently compatible with the project of cultivating female godliness,” if not “explicitly conducive to forming Christian piety”⁸⁵ Yet a century or more later, sorority members and alumnae sought to balance their organizations’ reliance on pagan ritual with a healthy dose of Protestant Christianity

While honoring classical deities, some groups were openly Christian Chi Omega chose as its open declaration, “Hellenic Culture and Christian Ideals,” which demonstrated the melding of these two, seemingly disconnected, ideologies⁸⁶ Even as sorority women participated in rituals honoring their Greek patronesses, they needed to display their devotion to Protestantism above all Although scholars of the mid to late nineteenth century considered the study of the classics, and Greek dramas in particular, of benefit for the “self-culturing” of young Americans, there remained concerns about the morality of the ancients and the effect these distinct moral codes might have on the students⁸⁷ While in some cases fraternity men and Greek scholars helped in forming the ritual, the sorority sisters were left to reenact the ceremonies on their own The idea of unsupervised young women proceeding to undertake rituals of the ancient Greeks could seem troublesome, even dangerous, to American sensibilities

Simultaneously demonstrating allegiance to Christianity and downplaying the reliance on secret rituals would affirm the righteousness of sororities and the propriety of their members The creed of Phi Mu, advised members to “think of God as a protector and guide of us all,” and to “reverence God as our Maker, striving to serve Him in all things,” thereby announcing the sorority’s loyalty to one, Christian God over any other deities that they might choose to honor⁸⁸ Whereas in 1897, Tri-Delta referred to Poseidon, Greek god of the sea, as their “patron pagan,”

⁸⁵ Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, 26-28

⁸⁶ Ferguson, et al, *History of Chi Omega*, 328

⁸⁷ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 89-95

⁸⁸ Lamb, *History of Phi Mu*, v, The current Phi Mu national website displays the same creed See <http://www.phimu.org/aboutus/ourmissionandcreed>, website accessed June 25, 2011

they eventually altered that designation to “patron Greek deity”⁸⁹ The word “pagan” might suggest to Christians that the Tri-Delts were non-believers, by choosing “deity” instead of “god,” they further separated the image of their patron from their “true” God in the Christian sense This religious emphasis would become increasingly important in the twentieth century As they solidified their foundations in Christianity, Greek-letter groups showed their aversion to atheistic communism

The pursuit of high culture by means of classical knowledge and ritual practice actually blended well with the Protestant religious ethic in America As I discussed earlier in the chapter, Protestant ideology of the late nineteenth century stressed the quest for human perfection White sorority women, through their knowledge and emulation of the revered, ancient Greek civilization, then, demonstrated their pursuit of a highly cultured, highly civilized life, and by extension, an existence that they believed would move the white race closer to human perfection⁹⁰

While women of all Protestant denominations held membership in NPC sororities, Catholic women were not welcome in all of the groups⁹¹ Even the Protestant sororities that

⁸⁹ Haller, *History of Delta Delta Delta*, 50

⁹⁰ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 25-26

⁹¹ I am unable to find any statistics relating to the religious denominations of Protestant, Greek-letter sorority women I would assume that a woman’s denomination would not count one way or another in membership selection Some Protestant denominations in the South, such as the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians (who were, actually, far outnumbered by the Baptists and Methodists in the region), had gained the reputation for having a greater number of their membership derived from the white elite Edward Ayers notes that, “business and social leaders in the region tended to belong to some congregations far more than others, if North Carolina was at all typical” For instance, Ayers found that Episcopalians and Presbyterians were “disproportionately represented,” as they supplied 12 percent and 25 percent of the leadership in North Carolina, while only making up 1 percent and 6 percent of the state’s church membership, respectively Meanwhile, the Methodists, from which 28 percent of the leadership arose, were actually underrepresented as they accounted for 40 percent of churchgoers in the state The Baptists were the furthest off the mark, only 6 percent of the business leaders coming from their 45 percent statewide church membership As a result, some denominations may have been popularly perceived as more wealthy and perhaps more refined than the others For example, if a particular denomination supplied more of the elite in certain a section of the South, a sorority chapter in that area might claim more members of that denomination than another if the chapter had a reputation for selecting women from long-standing, elite families Thus, I am suggesting that the prospective member’s denomination within Protestantism would be secondary to the standing of her family in the sorority’s membership selection However, I am

admitted Catholic women often had a quota that limited the number of Catholics in the chapter at any given time. As her mother visits her at college, Liz, a freshman and the protagonist of Peggy Goodin's *Take Care of My Little Girl* (1950), apologizes ahead of time in case they are served fish for dinner on Friday night at the sorority house. Liz's mother, however, an alumna of the same sorority chapter, laughs and says of the fish dinner, "We always did on Fridays. Our three Catholics."⁹² A sorority rush discussion in Betty White's *I Lived This Story* (1930) illustrates another case of religious intolerance. As rush begins, members of the fictional Gamma Theta sorority at the fictional Colossus University fret over pledge, Marilyn Reilly, who appears to be a model rushee and an asset to the group.⁹³ Yet, the girls are hesitant to give Marilyn a bid because she is a Catholic. The Gamma Thetas have a rule that the chapter can only have four Catholic members at any time. Dorinda, the protagonist, calls the rule "silly," asking, "What difference does it make?" Jane, the chapter's president, responds

It makes a lot of difference. The Deltas in Chicago can't eat steak or wear red in Lent. It helps to keep 'em pure maybe. Look at the DO's at Wisconsin – they bury a rifle under the house every time they pledge someone. Let 'em get a toe hold, and they swamp you.⁹⁴

unable to state this as a fact. For discussion of Protestant religious denominations, their popularity, and composition in the South, see Samuel S. Hill, ed. *Religion in the Southern States: An Historical Study* (Mercer, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983). On Episcopalian and Presbyterian prestige in particular, see John R. Woodard, "North Carolina," 224, and Hill, "Historical Survey," 402. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 167. Some "Protestant" sororities accepted Catholic students, while others did not. See Marianne R. Sanua, *Going Greek: Jewish College Fraternities in the United States, 1895-1945* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 39.

⁹² Peggy Goodin, *Take Care of My Little Girl* (1950, reprint, New York, NY: Berkeley Medallion Books, 1960), 81.

⁹³ Betty White was a 1929 graduate of Northwestern University, whose "I Lived This Story" won a writing contest sponsored by Doubleday, Doran publishers and *College Humor* magazine. After serializing the story in the magazine, Doubleday published the book version. Northwestern is believed to be the model for Colossus University, which White describes as a Methodist-founded school set on the shores of Lake Michigan. Apparently, White was banned from her sorority for publishing the negative, "tell-all" book. At this point I have been unable to uncover the name of the sorority in which White was a member. While all the names of Greek-letter groups in her story are fictional, I believe it is likely that Kappa Kappa Gamma was the model for Gamma Theta. In her account, White replicates portions of secret ceremonies and songs from Kappa Kappa Gamma word for word. See "Current Magazines," *New York Times*, May 25, 1930, 70; "'Not Without Laughter' and Other Recent Fiction," *New York Times*, August 3, 1930, 56; and R. Grantham, "Pipe and Pen," *The Ubysey*, (student newspaper of the University of British Columbia) January 5, 1932, 2.

⁹⁴ Betty White, *I Lived This Story* (New York, NY: A. L. Burt Company, 1930), 140.

Jane suggests that if the chapter is “swamp[ed]” by Catholics, it will gain a school-wide, even region-wide, negative reputation. The girls believed that they would be hampering their image as an elite and highly civilized organization by inviting Catholics, or other non-Protestant members into Gamma Theta. One of the members blackballs Marilyn (or, votes in opposition to her membership) during the final round of selections. When another sister exposes the probable culprit, several existing Catholic members of Gamma Theta realize that Marilyn has been blackballed because of her religion. As the sisters crowd around the accused blackballer

Lucy Roberts was suddenly dominating the rest. ‘Now I know why you’ve crowded me out of hash parties. Well, I’m a Catholic too. I can get out a leave you to your filthy—’ Mary Crane, another Catholic, began to scream hysterically, ‘If Lucy goes, I go too.’ She lay back and pounded the floor with her heels.⁹⁵

Jane and Marion, the rush chairman, try to quiet Lucy and Mary and calm the rest of the chapter with a sorority song, the meaning of which is made a mockery by the prior scene. The sisters join hands in a circle and sing

Once more dear sisters, ere we part
Let everyone within her heart
Pledge now herself to all anew
To stand by each her whole life through.⁹⁶

Just before the final verse, Dorinda “snatch[es]” her hands away from the circle signifying her disgust with the hypocrisy of the Gamma Thetas whose supposed close bonds of sisterhood she had once envied.⁹⁷

During the early decades of the 1900s, the increasing number of Catholic and Jewish women interested in sorority membership, but barred from joining the existing white, Protestant groups, led to the establishment of several sororities for Catholic and Jewish women, respectively.⁹⁸ Theta Phi Alpha, founded at the University of Michigan in 1912, and Pi Lambda

⁹⁵ White, *I Lived This Story*, 150-151

⁹⁶ White, *I Lived This Story*, 151

⁹⁷ White, *I Lived This Story*, 151

⁹⁸ Nicholas Syrett discusses the formation of “minority” fraternities for African American, Catholic, Chinese, and Jewish students in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. He astutely points

Sigma, founded at Boston University in 1921 were the two Catholic women's groups.⁹⁹ Iota Alpha Phi, the first sorority for Jewish women, began in 1903 at Hunter College in New York City; in 1909 Alpha Epsilon Phi formed at Barnard College; Phi Sigma Sigma formed in 1913, also at Hunter College; and Delta Phi Epsilon started at Cornell University in 1917.¹⁰⁰

Although Greek-letter organizations had shied away from publicity of their secret ceremonies for much of the twentieth century, by the 1950s, the groups were eager to demonstrate that a variety of noble, *American* traditions formed the basis of their rituals. An article by the NPC discussed the spiritual elements of fraternity rituals and explained where the "words" in the rituals originated. Most of the rituals and ceremonies, it stated, "are based on the philosophies of the ancients, the Bible and the Declaration of Independence."¹⁰¹ In the Cold War era fervor of the 1950s, Greek-letter groups, as well as other clubs and civic organizations labored to establish themselves as staunchly anti-communist. Readily accepted as guiding forces in American life, the Bible and the Declaration of Independence would lend legitimacy to the rituals of Greek-letter groups and would reaffirm the groups' "all-American-ness." The adherence to a strictly classical past no longer seemed prudent and publicity of rituals became important.

During the post-World War II era, *Fraternity Month*, a publication for Greek-letter groups and their members, stressed the historical import of their respective rituals. In light of public fears of communism these articles also helped reassure readers of the historical legitimacy of the rituals. Only by explaining and redefining the pedigree of the rituals could sororities and

out that while the organizations "claimed to celebrate" each group's "unique cultural, religious, or racial heritage," they "were not founded for the purpose of celebrating their differences; they were founded precisely because their differences had prevented their participation in the first place." See Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 165-169. For further discussion of discrimination against Jewish women during sorority rush, see Chapter Five.

⁹⁹ Pi Lambda Sigma merged with Theta Phi Alpha in 1952. As of the 18th edition of *Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities* (1968), Theta Phi Alpha accepted as members women from all "races, creeds, and nationalities." See Robson, ed. *Baird's Manual*, 460-461.

¹⁰⁰ Iota Alpha Phi, Sanua explains, "did not survive the upheavals of the late 1960s and...disbanded in 1971." See Sanua, *Going Greek*, 80-81.

¹⁰¹ *Adelphian* 47, no. 2 (March, 1953), 31.

fraternities assure non-members and prospective members that the groups were thoroughly American and not communist fronts.

In contrast to the NPC edicts from earlier in the century, producers of *Fraternity Month*, Leland F. Leland Publishers, ran articles in the magazine and published booklets that seemed designed to make the organizations' rituals appear as an accepted part of contemporary American life. The publication, *Fraternity Symbolism* (written sometime after 1946) paralleled contemporary fraternity rituals to ritual displays carried out in ancient civilizations, by explaining how both were based upon "the search for Truth."¹⁰² The study's author, Raymond F. Harris, a member of Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity who specialized in fraternity symbols and ritual, noted what he found, in all ancient rituals, to be the unmistakable:

Traces...of the unity and trinity of a creator, of the creation and fall of man, the promise of a Redeemer who shall expiate sin by voluntary death, [and] the eternal paradox of the existence of good and evil simultaneously, the exclusion from a place of heavenly delight corresponding to the Garden of Eden, the slaying of one brother by another, the flood, etc.¹⁰³

Ferris's discussion of mysterious ancient rites and, in his view, their obvious relation to popularly understood Protestant Christian imagery, would help support Greek-letter groups' reasoning that they were, at heart, spiritual organizations. In Americans' mid-twentieth century battle against communism and its adherents – those whom Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover referred to as "godless atheists" – Greek-letter organizations' self-portrayal as religiously inclined reinforced their position as patriotic organizations.¹⁰⁴

Articles about fraternity and sorority rituals also may have piqued the interests of non-members – which was almost certainly what they were designed to do. Linking the secret world of Greek-letter life with the study of classical culture and American tradition suggested that

¹⁰² Raymond F. Harris, "Fraternity Ritual is Based Upon Ancient Lore," *Fraternity Symbolism* (Leland Publishers, n.d. [after 1946]), 13.

¹⁰³ Harris, "Fraternity Ritual is Based Upon Ancient Lore," 13-14.

¹⁰⁴ Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), quote, 146.

members were white, highly cultured, patriotic, and possessing a level of sophistication not attainable by just any student in the ever-expanding population of college women and men.¹⁰⁵ Members of Greek-letter organizations wished to ensure that membership in their secret societies was seen as highly desirable by other white, highly cultured, patriotic Americans. Fraternity or sorority membership in the post-World War II era, then, came to represent a vision of perfected American citizenship. Among their ranks, fraternities and sororities would include those white, and for the most part Protestant, men and women that were fit for full citizenship in the eyes of the American public. As such, Greek-letter organizations positioned themselves as groups with a thoroughly refined, highly civilized, membership. The supposed civilizing effects of fraternity and sorority membership would, the organizations' leaders believed, establish their credentials as model American citizens.

Greek-letter Societies, Classicism, and Class Markers

Whether or not the daily activities, programs, and rituals of Greek-letter societies related to the lessons of Hellenism, historical or otherwise, the association of the societies and their members with the culture of classicism was the matter of import. The neoclassical aesthetic, perceived by educated whites as representative of high culture, stood as a marker of refined sensibilities. As historian Lawrence Levine has argued, by the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, "culture," as it pertained to aesthetic pursuits such as art, music, theater and the like was seen by elite, educated, whites, as appreciable only by a small portion of the American population. *The crisis of cultural authority among upper and middle class whites that I have described earlier in this chapter precipitated this separation between "high culture" for the elites and "low culture," a supposedly diluted art form (motion pictures, for example), appreciable*

¹⁰⁵ David O. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 189-190*; Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, "Table 2. Women Enrolled in Institutions of Higher Education, 1870-1980," 63.

by the masses.¹⁰⁶ To safeguard the perceived forms of high culture, typically those of European origin, from supposed denigration by an uneducated, mass audience, elite whites came to designate high culture as existing for and understandable by members of their own class.

As the white elite strove to create a cultural hierarchy in the United States, Levine points out that they were readily aided by the new middle classes who sought to solidify their own “cultural legitimacy.”¹⁰⁷ He makes clear that the “quest for cultural authority” ran parallel to the “quest for social authority” and desire for “political order.”¹⁰⁸ By following the lead of elite trendsetters in the veneration of high cultural forms, middle class whites could separate themselves from the working class, who were publicly understood as the audience for mass-produced, “low” cultural forms. Again, as I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, for those people who wished to *appear* as connoisseurs of high culture, higher education could help facilitate such an arrangement. While there was no dearth of classically influenced learning for interested students around the turn of the twentieth century, Greek-letter societies held the promise of a further specialized realm of cultural knowledge.

As an example of the university focus on all things classical, Winterer notes that “between 1881 and 1936, at least 349 Greek plays were performed on campuses across the country.”¹⁰⁹ In 1930, Chi Omega presented a Greek Theater as a gift to the University of Arkansas, the home of its mother chapter. The design, conceived by one of the sorority founders, Mary Love Collins, and Dr. Charles Richardson, and executed years later by the Saint Louis architectural firm of Jamieson and Spearl, was a replica of the 2,400 year-old Temple of Dionysus in Athens, Greece.¹¹⁰ The dedication tablet at the site reads: “Given to the University of Arkansas by Chi Omega as an expression of appreciation for its founding and as a symbol of

¹⁰⁶ Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 6-7, 232.

¹⁰⁷ Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 176.

¹⁰⁸ Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 228.

¹⁰⁹ Winter, *The Culture of Classicism*, 148.

¹¹⁰ “Chi Omega Greek Theater,” <http://campusmaps.uark.edu/502.php>, website accessed October 26, 2009.

its devotion to the human struggle for enlightenment.”¹¹¹ Current Chi Omega literature about the Greek Theater explains that the words, “KNOWLEDGE, INTEGRITY, COURAGE, CULTURE, AND INTELLIGENCE,” appear on the frieze above the theater’s columns to “interpret Chi Omega’s ideals and represent attributes found in the finest of mankind.”¹¹² All students could experience, even participate in, what Winterer identifies as the “aspirations to scholarly rigor, historical authenticity, and ennobling high culture” of the Greek plays.¹¹³ The inscription at Chi Omega’s Greek Theater speaks to this idea that *all* Americans could and should seek to elevate themselves through cultural education.

Yet, the guarded nature of Greek-letter groups suggested that only a select few could take the next step into the sanctified realm of the secret society, where they would learn self-perfection through the carefully guarded secrets of ancient Greece revealed by the groups’ rituals. Although some campuses were over fifty percent Greek by 1930, fraternities and sororities managed to continue the pretense that their membership constituted an American elite.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the groups were invitation-only, adding another level of cultural status for students to achieve.

During the first half of the twentieth century, argues historian David Levine, campus culture revolved around achievement of cultural status. In this era, Greek-letter organizations would become the cultural benchmark for young men and women the way classical learning had been for those in the previous century. Levine describes the “culture of aspiration” that fueled Americans’ desire for higher education between 1915 and 1940. Particularly for the growing segment of middle-class Americans and their children, a college education held the promise of “economic and social mobility.”¹¹⁵ As higher education became available to a wider cross-section of the American public the universities and colleges adjusted their curriculum to prepare

¹¹¹ “Chi Omega Greek Theater.”

¹¹² “Chi Omega Greek Theater.”

¹¹³ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 148.

¹¹⁴ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 144.

¹¹⁵ David Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration*, 21.

these men, and increasingly women, students to take their places as productive members of society. This shift furthered the curriculum changes that had begun in the previous century. Universities turned from a liberal arts based curriculum to one focused on the sciences and the new disciplines such as business, education and home economics. Education and home economics became increasingly popular majors for female students as they funneled women into socially “acceptable” career paths. In addition, for members of the public who were concerned that women’s higher education bred ill-prepared wives and mothers, the disciplines appeared well suited to train women for homemaking and child rearing.¹¹⁶ While, in actuality, home economics departments of the 1900s often included rigorous scientific courses, over time the public came to perceive the work as a feminized discipline.¹¹⁷ As opposed to the classicists’ esoteric realm of “mental discipline,” these new programs were designed to train and to impart practical, useful knowledge for a professional career or to equip a successful homemaker.¹¹⁸

Some educators lamented the denigration of the classical course of study, which they believed to be the foundation of a well-rounded education.¹¹⁹ Yet the new, vocationally driven coursework found support in the increasingly professionally oriented workforce.¹²⁰ For the growing numbers of middle-class male and female college students, a curriculum that would prepare them for a specific profession was highly desirable.¹²¹

Even as the classics retreated from the forefront of study in American universities, Greek-letter fraternities and sororities gained and maintained influential positions on campus.¹²² In the

¹¹⁶ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 85-87.

¹¹⁷ For further discussion on the “popularization” and “devaluation” of home economics in the twentieth century as it transitioned from a rigorous, scientific discipline to one that instructed (and appeared to limit) women to basic domestic skills such as cooking and sewing, see also Chapter Three and Sarah Stage, “Introduction,” in Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vinceti, eds., *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 1-13

¹¹⁸ D. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration*, 94-95

¹¹⁹ Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*, 190-198.

¹²⁰ D. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration*, 40-41.

¹²¹ D. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration*, 114-118; Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*, 265-267.

¹²² Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 145, 148.

absence of the classical, culturally enriching curriculum, Greek-letter societies situated themselves as the progeny of a highly cultured segment of society. Just as consumerism made “cultivation” an attainable characteristic for those with financial means, joining a Greek-letter group became students’ modern method of establishing cultural status. On different campuses, however, each group varied in popularity and influence. Levine notes, “collegiate culture only occasionally brought young people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds together in the same classes, activities, and fraternities.” Thus, fraternity and sorority membership placed men and women students in a distinguished group among students nationally, but did not always bring about the socioeconomic transformation desired by students and their families.¹²³

Ironically, as scholars had looked to the study of classicism to elevate students above what some saw as the “crass materialism” of modernizing American society, the culture of Greek-letter societies contributed significantly to the world of consumer excess. In the increasingly consumer-oriented society of the twentieth century, a sorority or fraternity chapter’s popularity increasingly depended on the members’ ability to purchase the necessary materials for the Greek-letter lifestyle. Fraternities and sororities expected their members to have fashionable clothing, to purchase their organization’s pin, and to contribute funds for refreshments and entertainment at their parties. In turn, the societies selected their new members based on their abilities to uphold the consumer-status that the chapters hoped to portray.¹²⁴

Of course, in addition to all of these extras, the sorority and fraternity member also had to be able to afford a pledge fee, an initiation fee and regular membership dues.¹²⁵ During the first

¹²³ D. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration*, 20. It is important to point out that Levine primarily focuses on male students in his study. Since there were so few women on campus during the early years of coeducation at southern universities women students of differing socioeconomic backgrounds participated in the same activities. However, in sororities as with fraternities, these differences eventually came to separate groups by socioeconomic status, driving wedges between the sorority and non-sorority women as well as the sorority women from different Greek-letter groups.

¹²⁴ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 154-155; Turk, *Bound by a Mighty Vow*, 69-73.

¹²⁵ Turk notes that by the turn of the twentieth century, sorority initiation fees for Kappa Alpha Theta typically ranged from \$7 to \$15 per person. See Turk, *Bound by a Mighty Vow* (58).

half of the 1930s, the Delta Beta Chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma and the Gamma Epsilon Chapter of Phi Mu, both at the Woman's College of Duke University, charged around \$4.50 a month per member for dues. Delta Beta Chapter also required a \$2.50 per month social tax and Gamma Epsilon Chapter reminded members of their additional \$8 per year for Phi Mu's national dues, to be paid by October 15th of each school year.¹²⁶ Thus, in 1931, a year when Americans' per capita expenditures on recreation and personal care were \$26.58 and \$8.05, respectively, a member of the Delta Beta Chapter would alone spend roughly \$63 over the course of the school year on sorority dues.¹²⁷ Many families' finances were stretched thin by the Depression. At a time when it became increasingly difficult to find tuition money to keep their daughters in college, extras like sorority membership seemed an unthinkable expense. In 1940, when the average annual income of Americans stood at \$1315, Gamma Epsilon Chapter voted to raise its initiation fee from \$50 to \$60. Duke's panhellenic handbook for the 1957-1958 school year listed the average pledge fee at \$21, the average initiation fee at \$58, and pledge and active member dues at \$3.50 and \$4.25 per month, respectively.¹²⁸ So during the first year of a woman's sorority membership at Duke in 1958, she (or her family) would pay around \$187.50 just for membership fees. By May of 1962, the Gamma Epsilon Chapter voted to establish monthly membership dues at \$10 for the following year.¹²⁹

A 1935 article in *Fraternity Month* looked back on the pre-Depression excesses where groups "imported orchestras" and "hired entertainers," for fancy parties at "swank country club

¹²⁶ April 8, 1931, Minutes 1930-1936, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Delta Beta Chapter Records, University Archives, Duke University (hereafter Delta Beta Chapter Records); November 14, 1935, Minutes, November 1934-December 1937, Phi Mu, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records (hereafter Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records), University Archives, Duke University.

¹²⁷ "Consumer Expenditures, 1930-1934," in Scott Derks, ed., *The Value of a Dollar: Prices and Incomes in the United States, 1860-1999* (Lakeville, CT: Grey House Publishing, 1999), 183; I calculated the Delta Beta member expenditures based on a nine month school year.

¹²⁸ "Income, Standard Jobs, 1940-1944," in Derks, ed. *The Value of a Dollar*, 230; November 11, 1940, Minutes, February 1938-April 1945, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records; *East Goes Greek*, 1957-1958, Duke University Panhellenic Council Records, 1938-1996, Box 3, Handbooks, 1948-1969, University Archives, Duke University, 16.

¹²⁹ May 3, 1962, Minutes, September 1960-January 1972, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

location[s].”¹³⁰ As we have seen, however, dues remained startlingly high during the years of the Depression. Judging by sororities’ continued expenditures for rush and social events, the attempt to reign in unnecessary spending continued only through the years of the Depression and World War II rationing. In 1946, Delta Beta Chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma changed their bylaws concerning distribution of dues. Each member would pay \$3.40 for dues and an additional \$1.40 as a “social tax” for the purpose of “hav[ing] more social functions.”¹³¹ The following year, spending for the Panhellenic Dance at Duke was so out of hand that Panhellenic was “\$1000 in the hole.” The President of Delta Beta Chapter asked that members support the dance. If it failed, she said, they “could have no more name bands at Duke.”¹³² Between 1940 and 1945, the United States’ gross national product had grown from \$100 billion to \$211 billion; the latter half of the 1940s and the 1950s saw increased consumer confidence and a rise in leisure spending.¹³³ Sororities could again afford to demand higher prices in exchange for the personal services they offered members.

Sorority members and rushees (often aided by their families) also began to spend more time and money on a wardrobe that would serve as an asset to their appearance. Gone were the days of the Depression when the Delta Beta Chapter asked that a member donate a relatively new evening gown for their delegate to wear at Kappa’s national convention. Afterward, the chapter would keep the dress, apparently to be used on future occasions when a member needed to appear well-dressed and might not have the financial means do to so.¹³⁴ By the post-WWII era, the need for sorority women to economize seemed to have all but disappeared. As soon as Liz Ericson, the main character of Peggy Goodin’s novel *Take Care of My Little Girl* (1950) graduates from high

¹³⁰ “College Greekletter Social Life – Is Clean, Wholesome, Sane and Sophisticated,” *Fraternity Month*, (December 1935), 18-19, 34, Stewart Howe Collection, 26/20/30, General Fraternity Journals 10.

¹³¹ April 29, 1946, Minutes, 1946-1951, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

¹³² April 21, 1947, Minutes, 1946-1951, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

¹³³ “1940-1959: World War II, Recovery, and the Cold War,” in Derks, ed., *The Value of a Dollar*, 223-224.

¹³⁴ May 10, 1932, Minutes, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

school, her mother, Olive, a sorority alumna, begins preparations for Liz's appearance in fall sorority rush. Olive's "to do" list includes shopping for luggage, having the "dressmaker begin [a] black suit [and] a white and blue two-piece jumper," and purchasing a "fur coat (possibly muskrat) as well as a collection of slips – four white, two pink, and one black." Olive also purchased tea dresses, velveteen, cashmere, hats and handbags for Liz's new rush wardrobe.¹³⁵ As intoxicating as the consumer-driven sophistication of sororities and fraternities may have seemed, the reality was that the members – or, more likely, their families – had to be in a financial position to support this materialistic lifestyle.

The Greeks Versus The Barbarians: Class Lines at Southern Universities

At state universities in the South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the Greek-letter groups' emphasis on elaborate parties and material consumption fed into the images of the schools as playgrounds of the wealthy. During this era, both the increasing availability of mass-produced consumer goods and the rise of advertisers, enthusiastically selling these items, ushered in a new, "consumer culture" that challenged the existing Victorian ideals of denial and personal restraint. Instead, consumer culture suggested that individual happiness and self-fulfillment could be achieved through the accumulation of consumer goods. The mass production of these goods suggested that Americans at all levels of society could take part in consumerism.¹³⁶

Along with new goods and forms of entertainment, the emerging consumer culture sold the promise of pleasure and excitement to consumers. Historians have shown how the increasing numbers of working class, young adults seeking employment in industrialized cities around the turn of the twentieth century led to the emergence of an urban youth culture.¹³⁷ In the cities, movie theaters, arcades, dance halls, and amusement parks provided venues for affordable

¹³⁵ Peggy Goodin, *Take Care of My Little Girl* (New York, NY: Berkley Publishing Corp., 1950), 8-9.

¹³⁶ William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York, NY: Vintage Press, 1993), 1-6.

¹³⁷ Clement, *Love for Sale*; Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*; Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*.

entertainment and unsupervised heterosocializing for young-adult wage earners.¹³⁸ In a like manner, the college campus offered a space for young men and women mostly from of the middle and upper classes to interact, enjoy entertainment, and participate in consumer culture. These new social and spatial arrangements helped to define the connection between material consumption, heterosocial interaction, and personal pleasure.

As primarily social clubs organized around private entertainments, Greek-letter groups easily fit into the model of consumer culture that prized expenditures and linked them with the attainment of pleasure and personal satisfaction. With their exclusive parties and fashionable appearance, however, fraternities and sororities also served as examples that consumerism was not as democratic as its proponents might have suggested. The ability of some students to afford entry into the consumer culture – with that admission being a first step toward membership in a Greek-letter organization – divided college students along socioeconomic lines.

In some southern state universities the animosity between fraternity members and independents, escalated to the point where university trustees and state legislatures found it necessary to address the situation.¹³⁹ Nicholas Syrett explains that fraternity men often referred to independents as “barbs,” short for “barbarians,” as a “reference to ancient Greeks’ characterization of those who spoke languages other than Greek.” He holds that while whites in the late nineteenth century were using “notions of ‘civilization’” to “assert their superiority” over non-whites and others deemed unfit for citizenship, “fraternity men used the same concept...to demonstrate the inferiority of their less-affluent classmates.”¹⁴⁰ In South Carolina and Mississippi around the turn of the twentieth century, sociopolitical movements supportive of the

¹³⁸ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 6.

¹³⁹ Walter B. Palmer, “Antagonism to Fraternities: A Review,” *Banta’s Greek Exchange* 8 (Dec., 1919), 2.

¹⁴⁰ Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 131.

white “common man” sought to eliminate perceived elitism from the states’ public universities¹⁴¹ In both states these movements gained strength at a time when southern white farmers faced economic hardship The upending of the southern racial hierarchy during Reconstruction had further aggravated whites’ dissatisfaction with their economic circumstances White men saw recently freed blacks as competition for labor and capital and feared African Americans’ striving for political power In Mississippi and South Carolina, as in other southern states, these men often sought to reestablish their authority and their manhood through campaigns of white supremacy¹⁴² South Carolina governor and later United States Senator, “Pitchfork” Ben Tillman, along with his supporters, explains historian Stephen Kantrowitz, cloaked their white supremacist aims by pointing to a southern white “aristocracy” as the primary threat to white farmers’ (or common men’s) “prosperity and independence” This so-called aristocracy, Kantrowitz notes, was composed of the state’s Democratic “Redeemer leadership and the rising mercantile and industrial class”¹⁴³ In this environment, the University of South Carolina, historically a school of the state’s white elite, became an easy target for Tillman and his brethren Fraternity men, who, as Nicholas Syrett has illustrated, “cultivated a reputation as a moneyed elite on college campuses,” took much of the heat¹⁴⁴

Antifraternity sentiment among students and lawmakers emboldened the state legislatures to order bans on Greek-letter social organizations¹⁴⁵ In 1896, although the majority of the

¹⁴¹ James Allen Cabaniss, *The University of Mississippi Its First Hundred Years*, 2nd ed (Hattiesburg, MS University and College Press of Mississippi, 1971), 119-120, Steven W Lynn, “A History of Greek-letter Social Fraternities at South Carolina College and University” (South Carolina N p , n d), 44

¹⁴² Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill, NC University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 2-7

¹⁴³ Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*, 110

¹⁴⁴ Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 126

¹⁴⁵ In 1901 state legislators in Arkansas also moved to ban fraternities, but the university did little to uphold the ban From 1912 to 1916 antifraternity agitation in the states of California, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Ohio, and Texas led to attempts at legislative interventions at state funded campuses None of the state legislatures, however, passed bans on the organizations Individual institutions such as the College of Wooster in Ohio, Oberlin College, Pembroke College (the women’s college of Brown University), Reed College, Virginia Military Institute, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute enacted bans on the Greek system at their schools For a discussion of anti-fraternity sentiment in the 1900s and 1910s see Turk, *Bound By a*

students at the University of South Carolina were not from wealthy backgrounds, almost all of the non-fraternity members signed a petition urging the trustees to abolish fraternities¹⁴⁶ They charged that fraternity members “considered themselves cultural and social superiors, that they conspired together to cheat and failed to report brothers who did cheat, and that they undermined the college spirit by pursuing fraternity interests instead of college interests”¹⁴⁷ While the university trustees considered the matter, a university alumnus in the state legislature introduced a bill outlawing Greek-letter fraternities in the state’s public universities The bill passed and the legislature banished Greek-letter groups from state schools in South Carolina in 1897 Several fraternities continued to function “sub-rosa” on campus after the ban This lent to continued animosity between non-fraternity men and the members of the sub-rosa fraternity chapters¹⁴⁸ Perhaps realizing the futility of the law against the groups, legislators lifted the ban on social fraternities in 1927 Wasting no time, thirteen fraternities and seven sororities placed chapters at the University of South Carolina by the end of the decade¹⁴⁹

Independent male students at the University of Mississippi also felt “social[ly] ostracized” by the fraternity men¹⁵⁰ They leveled criticisms similar to those of their peers in South Carolina The Mississippi state legislature banned secret societies in state schools in 1912 In 1915, University of Mississippi chancellor, Joseph Neely Powers, reported that the university was falling out of favor in the state, while the school’s governing board notified him that the “name of the University was declining,” most likely as the result of displeasure at the prohibition of fraternities¹⁵¹ In the economically challenged South, the presence of sororities and fraternities

Mighty Vow, 115, Shepardson, ed , *Baird s Manual*, 17, Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 106, 111, Palmer, “Agitation Against Fraternities,” 8-9

¹⁴⁶ Daniel W Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, 152, 184-185, Lynn, “A History of Greek-letter Social Fraternities,” 48-9, 52

¹⁴⁷ Lynn, “A History of Greek-letter Social Fraternities,” 52

¹⁴⁸ Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, 285

¹⁴⁹ Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, 316

¹⁵⁰ Cabaniss, *The University of Mississippi*, 118

¹⁵¹ Cabaniss, *The University of Mississippi*, 127, 130

announced privilege and could give state schools panache among non-southern state universities that had a large Greek presence. When the legislature repealed the ban in 1926, the faculty at the University of Mississippi guided the reestablishment of fraternities and sororities by making plans to prevent social ostracism of independent students and limiting the groups' "extravagance in expenditures."¹⁵² The return of Greek-letter societies to these campuses helped reinforce the preeminence of the state university as the flagship school for the sons, and increasingly the daughters, of the southern states' white, socioeconomic elite.

Classicism and the South's "Reimagined" Past¹⁵³

Southerners' long-standing relationship with neoclassicism provided fertile ground for their support of college Greek-letter societies in the twentieth century. White planters of the pre-Civil War South had envisioned their society as a replica of that established by the ancient Greeks and Romans and declared a "spiritual kinship with the "citizens of the 'southern slave states' of antiquity."¹⁵⁴ They frequently invoked these ancient civilizations in their defenses of slavery. Historian Edwin A. Miles argues that white southerners particularly emulated the Greeks. They pointed to parallels between the societies' institutions of slavery, their systems of "small independent states," their form of democratic government (where only free citizens constituted the electorate), and their "accomplishments in oratory and statesmanship." Elite white southerners had claimed that slave labor afforded them, as it had their ancient predecessors, the free time for leisure and learning that elevated their society's cultural standing above that of the North.¹⁵⁵ In the South, the juxtaposition of culture and modernity pitted the southern, agrarian,

¹⁵² Cabaniss, *The University of Mississippi*, 136.

¹⁵³ Grace Elizabeth Hale refers to the nostalgic, and largely fictitious, world of plantation life created by southern whites during and after Reconstruction as a "reimagining of the recent past." See Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999), Chapter Two, quote, 48.

¹⁵⁴ Miles, "The Old South and the Classical World," 258.

¹⁵⁵ Miles, "The Old South and the Classical World," 266-267, 270-272.

slave society versus an industrialized, materialistic North ¹⁵⁶ In the years following the Civil War, elite white southerners, confronted with the demise of the slave-based economy and the end of their leisure culture, found continued cause for their imagined affinity with ancient Greece In fact, classicism provided another foundation for “Old South” nostalgia as southern whites tried to come to terms with their fledgling, and paradoxical, relationship with modern industrialism

While searching for stability and a way to cope with the loss of their glorified pre-war civilization, some white southerners equated the post-Civil War South with the fallen ancient societies of Greece and Rome Historian David Blight notes that former Confederate General Bradley T. Johnson, a popular protector of the Confederate tradition in the South, referenced classical antecedents in his defense of the South’s cause Johnson described southerners as “ambitious, intellectual and brave, such as led Athens in her brightest epoch and controlled Rome in her most glorious days”¹⁵⁷ Blight characterizes the South, as memorialized by “Lost Cause” proponents, as a society whose “ruins had become America’s classical past, a terrible and fascinating civilization that multitudes wished to redeem and admire because it was lost”¹⁵⁸ The ideology of the Lost Cause, as perpetuated by organizations such as Ladies’ Memorial Associations (LMAs), which began almost immediately following the Civil War, the Southern Historical Society, which formed in 1869, and the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), which organized in 1889 and 1894, respectively, glorified the Confederate past, honored Confederate soldiers, and assured southerners that secession from the Union had been a noble endeavor ¹⁵⁹ By casting the South as the rightful inheritor of classical tradition, its champions further mythologized the narrative of the region as a

¹⁵⁶ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 76

¹⁵⁷ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 257

¹⁵⁸ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 219

¹⁵⁹ Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987), 4, 50; Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies’ Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 39, 102, 168, 243-244 (fn. 38), 127

“glorious, organic civilization destroyed by an avaricious ‘industrial society’ determined to wipe out its cultural foes ”¹⁶⁰

As I have noted earlier in the chapter, Americans of the late nineteenth century saw classicism as a purgative for the ills of modernity. Northerners perceived of a non-industrialized southern society as a respite from the hectic pace of modern living. As historian Nina Silber has argued, middle and upper class northerners eyed the South as a vacation destination in the years following the Civil War. For northerners, the South, Silber holds, offered a haven from “the distressing uniformity and alienation of the mass consumer society where life had not been homogenized by a corporate and commodified culture ”¹⁶¹

The South, too, however, moved slowly along the path of modernization. Historian Edward Ayers notes that by the 1880s, new southern industries exported raw materials, including lumber, turpentine, and phosphate for use in the North. New railroad lines crisscrossed the region and some hamlets grew into larger towns or cities. Former white, southern planters and their families, many of whom relinquished their farms for new residences and occupations in towns, often saw these changes as bittersweet.¹⁶² The transition to a modernized economy altered the southern landscape and the place of southerners, both white and black, within that setting.

By the late 1880s, African Americans in the South had witnessed the faltering promise of their recently found freedom. White supremacist Democrats had seized control of southern governments, “redeeming” their states from Republican-led Reconstruction. In the 1890s and early 1900s, Democratic legislatures in southern states amended their state constitutions to disfranchise African Americans. Shortly afterward, southern states legally encoded the *de facto* racial segregation that had existed with varying severity in the region since the fall of the

¹⁶⁰ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 257

¹⁶¹ Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 69

¹⁶² Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 7-25

Confederacy From 1898 to 1907, white leaders in southern states launched “Jim Crow” laws to enforce a systematized program of segregation and discrimination against African Americans ¹⁶³ Throughout this period, however, black southerners remained actively engaged in battles to gain respect and civil rights as American citizens and to maintain their dignity as human beings under the watch of frequently uncivil, and sometimes downright vicious, southern whites The lynching of African-Americans by whites became an all-too-common spectacle that historian Grace Elizabeth Hale has argued, “symbolically and physically subverted segregation, separation as a culture, in order to strengthen it”¹⁶⁴

Historians have shown the connections between the post-Reconstruction era changes in the South and the rise and subsequent persistence of the Lost Cause mentality among white southerners ¹⁶⁵ Simultaneously, perpetuation of the Lost Cause narrative aided the cause of white supremacy Hale has characterized the Lost Cause as a “reimagining of the recent past,” where

White southerners celebrated a plantation pastoral of racial harmony and a noble war of principle and valor, while making Reconstruction the fall that made segregation the only possible future ¹⁶⁶

Members of the southern patriotic organizations mentioned above, as well as authors, such as Thomas Nelson Page (1853-1922) of Virginia and Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908) of Georgia among others, helped reinforce the images of the “reimagined” southern past Page and Harris penned immensely popular accounts of life in the South prior to the Civil War that helped to establish the plantation legend of the benevolent white master and the dutiful and contented slaves Page’s *In Ole Virginia, or Marse Chan and Other Stories* (1887), in particular, solidified

¹⁶³ Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 83-85, 34, 97-98

¹⁶⁴ On racial violence and lynchings of African Americans by whites in the New South, see Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness*, Chapter Five, quote, 238, Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 153-159

¹⁶⁵ Some of the works most influential for my study include Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, Blight, *Race and Reunion* Karen Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003), Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past*, Rollin G. Osterweis, *The Myth of the Lost Cause 1865-1900* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1973), Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1980), Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*

¹⁶⁶ Hale *Making Whiteness*, 48

this myth of a comfortable, and mutually beneficial relationship between white southerners and their black slaves during the antebellum period.¹⁶⁷ In the story of “Marse Chan,” Sam, a former slave still faithful to his master (Channing), narrates a tranquil picture of life on “Marse Chan’s” plantation. Sam’s story, replete with a cavalier gentleman and a southern belle, set in the years just before the Civil War, serves to reinforce the image of the kind and munificent white master and the well-treated, gently worked African American slave.¹⁶⁸ Harris’s popular Uncle Remus tales featured what, Hale argues, were “some of the most complicated and sympathetic white-authored black characters” of the era. Nevertheless, Hale explains, Harris also helped to fashion the “plantation pastorate” image that championed the supposedly “integrated” plantation past in opposition to “current racial conflict as justification for a segregated future.”¹⁶⁹ Between 1880 and his death in 1908, Harris wrote 185 different Uncle Remus tales. In each, former slave, Uncle Remus, relates the stories of characters such as Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox, Brer B’ar, and Brer ‘Possum, among others, to a young white boy. Supposedly retold African-American folktales from Harris’s youth, the allegorical stories were meant to impart wisdom to young readers. In the words of Harris, they were also designed to elicit the “genuine flavor of the old plantation,” and were told by an “old Negro who appears to be venerable enough to have lived during the period which he describes – who has nothing but pleasant memories of the discipline of slavery.”¹⁷⁰

For whites, the stories of Page and Harris, which almost always featured a former slave as the narrator and as the “chief spokesperson” for the advantages of the plantation system, served

¹⁶⁷ For further discussion of *In Ole Virginia*, see Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 222-227.

¹⁶⁸ Thomas Nelson Page, *In Ole Virginia, or Marse Chan and Other Stories* (1887. Reprint New York, NY: Charles Scribner Sons, 1897), 1-37. Page wrote “Marse Chan,” his first major story in 1881, but did not publish it until 1884. Edward Ayers includes a summary of “Marse Chan” in *The Promise of a New South*, 32.

¹⁶⁹ Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 54;

¹⁷⁰ R. Bruce Bickley, Jr., “Joel Chandler Harris (1845-1908),” *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-525>, website accessed November 1, 2009; Joel Chandler Harris, “Introduction from *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings*,” in *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus*, ed. Richard Chase (1880, 1883, 1889, 1892, 1905, 1907, 1910, 1918, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1955), xxi-xxvii.

to ease their inescapable fears caused by an omnipresent population of recently emancipated African Americans desiring rights as American citizens¹⁷¹ As Blight and Hale have argued, the sentimental literature by authors of the “plantation school” promoted a positive, if also largely falsified, picture of the antebellum South that helped justify the Lost Cause At the same time, the literature “defended the South’s honor,” which enabled a national reunion “on the South’s terms, white supremacy the means of redemption ”¹⁷²

At the turn of the twentieth century, Americans’ imperialist designs also aided the cause of regional reconciliation In 1898, the Spanish-American War was a flashpoint in this process American men from the North and the South fought together overseas against an outside foe As Americans waged battle in Cuba and the Philippines, two of Spain’s territories, they met with nonwhite enemy combatants The United States’ brief and successful campaign in the war and its subsequent emergence as a colonial power, Nina Silber has noted, allowed “northern and southern whites [to] internationalize the race problem, identifying the common, backward characteristics of all nonwhite peoples, as well as the common superiority of Anglo-Saxons, around the world ”¹⁷³

Simply arguing for a racially segregated future was not enough for some white southern writers Fears mingled with anger and calls to racial violence erupted from some literary works Most notably, the writings of North Carolinian, Thomas F Dixon, Jr (1864-1946) seized upon the racial anxieties of southern whites to advocate extreme measures, including lynching African Americans, as a means of ensuring racial separation and white supremacy in the South Dixon also saw the Spanish-American War as a key moment in the national reunion, serving to align all white Americans in the project of Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy¹⁷⁴ Historian Joel Williamson

¹⁷¹ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 221-222 , Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 59-62

¹⁷² Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 225, 227, Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 68-79

¹⁷³ Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, 181

¹⁷⁴ Michael Rogin, “‘The Sword Became a Flashing Vision’ D W Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*,” *Representations* 9 (Winter 1985), 153-154

notes that in all of Dixon's works, the "racial message remained the same." "Somehow the Negro had caused the Civil War, and the failure of the North during Reconstruction to recognize the rising reversion of free blacks to bestiality had continued to divide the nation."¹⁷⁵ In Dixon's first novel, *The Leopard's Spots, A Romance of the White Man's Burden – 1856-1900* (1902), he credits the war with renewing a commonality between northern and southern whites. In the chapter, "The New America," Dixon simultaneously honors the Confederate past while merging it with a reunified American future. From the moment the United States entered the conflict, he writes, "There was no North, no South – but from the James to the Rio Grande the children of the Confederacy rushed with eager, flushed faces to defend the flag their fathers had once fought." The "marvellous" conclusion of the "hundred days of war," he observed, "reunited the Anglo-Saxon race...disturbed the equilibrium of the world, and confirmed the Anglo-Saxon in his title to the primacy of racial sway."¹⁷⁶

Dixon merged themes from *The Leopard's Spots* with the hastily completed follow-up, *The Clansman, A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (1905) into a stage play, titled *The Clansman* (1905), which director D.W. Griffith subsequently made into the film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).¹⁷⁷ The film's visual presentation of a post-Civil War northern and southern reconciliation around the issue of white supremacy solidified the place of racial segregation over regional segregation in the nation's future. The movie was immensely popular with white audiences and drew praise from southerner and then-United States President Woodrow Wilson. Yet it also faced much criticism, including protests by the National Association for the

¹⁷⁵ Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order Black-White Relations in the South Since Emancipation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 99

¹⁷⁶ Thomas F. Dixon, *The Leopard's Spots A Romance of the White Man's Burden, 1865-1915* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1902), 410, 412.

¹⁷⁷ Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 98; Tomas F. Dixon, *The Clansman, A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1905).

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)¹⁷⁸ Additionally, the film served as a partial inspiration for the 1915 revival of the Ku Klux Klan in Atlanta, Georgia¹⁷⁹ Ayers describes the books of Page, Harris, Dixon and Griffith's film as works that

Provided white Southerners a way to have what they wanted most a clear conscience, a way back into the national mythology of innocence, a way to see the violence against Reconstruction and the continuation of lynching as means to racial and national redemption¹⁸⁰

While ancient Greek society held special meaning for southern whites honoring the Old South, *Greek-letter societies* also held symbolic importance for white southerners of the New South As supposed extensions of the Hellenic culture, sororities and fraternities in the South would serve as protectors of classical tradition and reinforcers of the elite southern models of gender More than instruments of individual self-perfection, Greek-letter organizations in the South would resurrect the ideals of classicism that were, for many white southerners, representative of the South itself Moreover, as in the example of the University of Mississippi, sororities and fraternities would reestablish a visible white nobility reminiscent of the image of antebellum aristocracy

Some sororities and fraternities founded in the South consciously identified as pro-southern organizations¹⁸¹ During the first half of the twentieth century, the groups' southern

¹⁷⁸ Anthony Slide, *American Racist The Life and Films of Thomas Dixon* (Lexington, KY The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 83-85, Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America A Cultural History of American Movies*, rev ed (New York, NY Vintage Books, 1994), 58-59

¹⁷⁹ The Klan revival also followed closely on the heels of the Leo Frank lynching in Georgia In 1913, Frank had been convicted of murdering Mary Phagan, a thirteen-year-old girl who worked in the National Pencil Factory where Frank served as supervisor Frank was Jewish, from New York, and was educated and well to-do Joel Williamson explains that Frank "represented the penetration of the South by the industrial revolution" and became an easy scapegoat for southern angers that were usually directed at African Americans As Williamson holds, "Frank was killed as a surrogate for the black beast rapist" The second Ku Klux Klan, explains historian Nancy MacLean, spread out across the country from its rebirth in Atlanta and used re-screenings of *The Birth of a Nation* as a means of recruiting new members See Williamson, *Rage for Order*, 240-245, Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York, NY Oxford University Press, 1994), 7

¹⁸⁰ Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 372

¹⁸¹ Sororities founded in the South include Alpha Delta Pi (which originated as the Adelphean Society), Phi Mu (which originated as the Philomathean Society), Delta Gamma, Chi Omega, Kappa Delta, Sigma Sigma Sigma, Zeta Tau Alpha, and Alpha Sigma Alpha The groups are listed chronologically by founding

birthplaces became a way for members to link their sorority to the popular mythology of the antebellum South. Today, the men's Greek-letter society, Kappa Alpha Order, is well known for its history of displaying allegiance to the Confederate South.¹⁸² The regional affiliation of southern sororities was not always so blatantly evident as that of the Kappa Alphas.¹⁸³ Still, references to sororities' southern identities conveyed equally spirited messages. By means more subtle, but no less intended, these women suggested their support of southern white women's "traditionally" feminine and apolitical behavior, of maintaining white supremacy in the New South of the twentieth century, and of a continued veneration of the South's "reimagined" past.¹⁸⁴

Official Sorority Histories: National Sororities Founded in the South and Links to a Reimagined Southern Past

Sorority authored histories provided a platform for white women to voice remembrance of and reverence for the idealized Old South replete with its images of aristocratic, cavalier planters and southern belles.¹⁸⁵ Elite white southern women of the post-Civil War South, historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage has argued, organized to promote a pro-Confederate historical memory while "claim[ing] a new source of cultural authority."¹⁸⁶ Through the erection of

dates. As of 1911, some fraternities founded in the South, most notably Kappa Alpha (Southern) (1865) and Pi Kappa Alpha (1868) were "by tradition if not by law, limited to the South." Other fraternities founded in the South include Sigma Alpha Epsilon (1856), Alpha Tau Omega (1865), Kappa Sigma (1869), and Sigma Nu (1869). See Shepardson, ed., *Baird's Manual*, 289, 310, 320, 332, 340, 355, 566, 618; Claude T. Reno, *The Manual of the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity* (Claude T. Reno, 1911), 17-18.

¹⁸² Gary Scott Thomas, "The Kappa Alpha Order, 1865-1897: How It Came to Be and How It Came to Be Southern," (M.A. Thesis: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1968); Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 476-477.

¹⁸³ Beta Sigma Omicron, founded in 1888 as a local sorority at the University of Missouri, made the conscious decision to expand to southern women's colleges. By the early 1920s, so many of the sorority's chapters had been killed by opposition from college administrations and anti-fraternity legislation that they decided to limit future chapters to Class A colleges and universities. In 1964, Zeta Tau Alpha absorbed Beta Sigma Omicron. See Shepardson, ed., *Baird's Manual*, 308-309; *The State of Zeta*, April 2004, www.zetataualpha.org/content/publications/TFRED/Apr2004.pdf, website accessed October 28, 2009, 5.

¹⁸⁴ For discussion of the "reimagined recent past", see Hale, *Making Whiteness*, Chapter Two, page 48 in particular.

¹⁸⁵ Osterweis, *The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900*, ix.

¹⁸⁶ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "White Women and the Politics of Historical Memory in the New South, 1880-1920," in *Jumpin' Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*, eds. Jane Dayley, Glenda Gilmore, Bryan Simon (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 119.

memorials to the dead, the establishment of historical associations, and the pioneering of historic preservation projects, these women perpetuated southern social hierarchies, which, Brundage states, “celebrated the traditional privileges of race, gender, and class while making them appear to be a natural inviolable part of history.”¹⁸⁷ Likewise, sorority alumnae, writing well into the twentieth century, claimed cultural authority and advanced the Lost Cause ideology through their organizational histories. By linking a southern-white-manufactured historical memory to the narratives of individual sororities from the 1920s to the 1980s, white sorority women demonstrated their organizations’ devotion to the creation of refined, white southern ladies.

The sorority women also laid claim to esoteric knowledge of the classical past that positioned them among the culturally elite. Like other white women’s clubs in the South during this period, sororities emphasized ancestry, an activity, which Brundage has noted, “revealed the grip of notions about the link between blood, race, and civilization.”¹⁸⁸ Sorority women literally spoke of themselves as sisters, a fact which heightened the importance of publicizing their Anglo-Saxon lineage. Correspondingly, sororities, along with other women’s groups, provided a social outlet that simultaneously served to mark women as members of the better classes. As Caroline Janney has noted in her study of Ladies’ Memorial Associations in Virginia, white, southern women of the post-Civil War period, sought new ways to reaffirm their status as “ladies” in the post-slavery society. Prior to the war, Janney argues, slaveholding had served as a marker of elite status as it produced the image of a “‘lady’...who was freed from the burdens of drudgery and work because of her reliance on slave labor.”¹⁸⁹ Sororities, like LMAs and other white, women’s organizations in the South, helped women to reclaim their ladyhood.

The infusion of Old South nostalgia into the published histories of national sororities also suggested an attempt at sectional reconciliation. As in the “plantation school” southern literature,

¹⁸⁷ Brundage, “White Women and the Politics of Historical Memory in the New South,” 117.

¹⁸⁸ Brundage, “White Women and the Politics of Historical Memory in the New South,” 126.

¹⁸⁹ Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past*, 55, 170-171.

the North and South would be reunited by a common interest in maintaining Anglo-Saxon racial superiority. Scholars have also noted that southern white women, more so than southern white men, remained more critical of reconciliation with the North.¹⁹⁰ In the case of sorority women, however, I argue that we can view instances of southern nostalgia in sorority history books as a parallel to the sentimental, conciliatory messages of southern authors that I described earlier in this chapter. Like the sentimental novels, the organizational histories allowed southern sorority women to maintain their southern honor while looking forward to a modern, reunified nation, built upon the shared belief of the racial superiority of white civilization and its progress toward perfection. And with the ideal behavior for sorority women closely resembling the mythic ideal of the antebellum, white southern lady, southern white women were able to weave a piece of their reimagined past into the fabric of the unified, national sororities during the twentieth century.

Aside from the physical image of the sorority members themselves, the groups' published materials were the most common and direct form of public address. Sorority alumnae across the country, anxious to engineer positions of social status for their respective groups, eagerly embraced the idea of official organizational histories. As a tool for both member education and public relations, published history books allowed the groups to portray themselves as they wished to be seen by those within and outside of their organizations. The function of the books was to establish the status of sororities and their members in a social hierarchy that prized whiteness, dignified ancestry, and financial wealth. By casting themselves as part of the larger American historical narrative, sororities sought to solidify their own heritage.

Typically the books told the story of the sorority's founding, profiled its founders and the organization's national leadership, explained official group symbols, and chronicled the history of the sorority's chapters. Sorority alumnae authored a flurry of histories on their respective groups beginning in the first three decades of the 1900s. Although Minnie Lulu Royse Walker published

¹⁹⁰ Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past*, 153-156; Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, 26-28.

the sixty-four page *Kappa's Record* in 1903, *Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities* (1968) considers Bessie Leach Priddy's *A Detailed Record of Delta Delta Delta, 1888-1907* (1907), which it described as a "well-illustrated, cloth-bound volume of 268 pages," to be the first of its kind. Other groups soon followed suit; Alpha Chi Omega and Gamma Phi Beta published their first histories in 1911 and 1921, respectively. In 1922, Alpha Phi became the first sorority to author an organizational history to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of its founding.¹⁹¹

These and other official sorority histories were written during a period of marked change in the makeup of the American population. As I discussed earlier in the chapter, large numbers of Eastern European immigrants arrived in the United States in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. So as to distinguish themselves from these new inhabitants, white Americans, both native born and those who arrived in earlier immigrations, sought to establish their ancestry and prove their racial and ethnic heritage. The drive to create these "hereditary patriotic groups," which also frequently undertook historic preservation projects, accompanied individuals' desire to publicly establish a thoroughly American, and preferably Anglo-Saxon, lineage.¹⁹²

As I mentioned above, sororities founded in the South used the pages of their histories to capitalize on their ties to the region and its culture.¹⁹³ The sorority alumnae who authored the works reminded readers of the South's distinguishing characteristics, trumpeting the importance of place in relation to a dignified heritage. They described the region in terms that connoted a nostalgic attachment to the mythologized Old South. The alumnae's version of southern regional history, like that of the "plantation school" authors, depicted faithful slaves during the antebellum and Civil War years, but did not mention black and white race relations in the wake of

¹⁹¹ Robson, ed., *Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities*, 18; Mabel Harriet Siller, *The History of Alpha Chi Omega*, 1st ed. (Alpha Chi Omega, 1911); Barbee, *The Story of Gamma Phi Beta*; Minnie Lulu Royse Walker, *Kappa's Record; A Short History of the Kappa Kappa Gamma Fraternity* (New York, 1903); Roedel, *History of the Alpha Phi Fraternity*, vii.

¹⁹² Barbara J. Howe, "Women in Historic Preservation: The Legacy of Ann Pamela Cunningham," *Public Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1990), 36.

¹⁹³ The publication dates of the books surveyed range from 1921 to 1982. The publication dates of books by sororities founded in the South range from 1927 to 1982.

emancipation.¹⁹⁴ The “sketch of the South,” in the *History of Chi Omega* (1928) was written, the authors explained, “to give a picture of that land so redolent with tradition and romance,” that, “[was] as vitally a part of the southern era...as [were] other qualities developed with the “building up of a new, vigorous South on the disappointments and ruins of the war.”¹⁹⁵ As Grace Elizabeth Hale writes of the use of history in the late nineteenth century South:

Named the ‘Old South,’ the antebellum past provided white southerners, particularly a modern middle class in the process of formation, with perhaps their most abundant postwar resource, strangely another time and space within which first to deny and then to escape the present and then to reconstruct the foundations of racial difference.¹⁹⁶

White southerners of the New South, whether they were of the elite, the newly impoverished, or the solidly middle class could, in the “reimagined” history, envision themselves as genteel southern belles or dashing cavaliers who resided on plantations and owned slaves. Through a nostalgic lens, then, white southerners retreated in their minds to a society where the only divisions of class were those made by race.

Likewise, in their sketches, sorority historians ignored class differences in the South, embellishing the socioeconomic standing of both antebellum southern families and the contemporary, white, southern families that yielded sorority women. Certainly, not all women who joined sororities in the South during the twentieth century were from elite backgrounds. Even if the women’s families had attained social prominence and an estimable financial wealth that made sorority membership feasible, they may have worked their way up from less refined circumstances. Or their ancestors might have been among those immigrant groups seen as less desirable by Americans of Anglo-Saxon descent. By the stroke of a pen (or a typewriter key), then, sorority alumnae could obscure any less than genteel backgrounds in a blur of plantation romanticism.

¹⁹⁴ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 221-229.

¹⁹⁵ Ferguson, et al., *History of Chi Omega*, 38.

¹⁹⁶ Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 44.

Authors of sorority histories wrote of a “landed aristocracy” occupied “plantation households,” where the “quiet life gave leisure and opportunity for study, contemplation and poise.” The “noble,” (read, white) southern population, according to the *History of Chi Omega*, resulted from good “breeding” in old, southern cities like Charleston, South Carolina. Like their contemporaries in academic history, the Chi Omega historians presented a selective version of southern history.¹⁹⁷ In their telling, genteel, white southerners suffered mightily during the Civil War and Reconstruction but remained “ladies and gentlemen,” while “slaves were faithful to the defenseless people left behind at home.” The *History* stated that, “women of the South cherished the glories that passed with the Civil War,” but “retained their habits of gracious manner.” By tying the character of sorority members to a glorified antebellum South, where “breeding and culture were more important than money and business,” the white southern women’s organizations positioned themselves both as guardians of white southern historical memory and purveyors of the modern incarnation of white southern ladyhood.¹⁹⁸ “The white South,” explains Hale, with “its regional autobiography fixed in a plantation romance peopled with ‘happy darkies,’ noble masters, and doting mistresses, had won the peace.”¹⁹⁹

Within these passages sorority alumnae also set a classically cultured, white South against a modernized North of various races and ethnicities. As I have described earlier in this chapter, some northerners, besieged by what they saw as the ills of industrialization, urbanization,

¹⁹⁷ In the first two decades of the twentieth century, works by historian Ulrich B. Phillips, most notably *American Negro Slavery* (1918), legitimized the idea that plantation labor had provided useful training for otherwise unruly slaves and that the slaves had been content in their subservient roles. Hale refers to Phillips’s depiction as the “plantation pastorate.” William A. Dunning, professor of history at Columbia University, and his students composed what became known as the Dunning school of Reconstruction historiography. Their interpretation of the Reconstruction period was sympathetic toward the South and former slaveholders and hinged on the supposition of what one member of the school termed “negro incapacity.” See Phillips, *American Negro Slavery, A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1918), “The Plantation as a Civilizing Factor,” *Sewanee Review* 12 (July 1904): 257-267; Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 62-67, 80-81; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1988), xix-xx.

¹⁹⁸ Ferguson, et al., *History of Chi Omega*, 44-45, 48.

¹⁹⁹ Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 52.

and immigration in the late nineteenth century, had turned to a romanticized picture of the South as a cultured, historic, and unspoiled land with curative powers. For wealthy Yankees, seeking respite from the crowded urbanity of the North, a leisurely tour of the South was seen as a way to restore the self while offering the cache' of social exclusivity.²⁰⁰ By continuing to promote this model of the romanticized South in their official histories during the twentieth century, the southern-born sororities fashioned themselves as beacons of high culture and aristocratic tradition while creating what they believed was the proper popular imaginary for southern and non-southern sorority members and observers alike. "By dramatizing any one of the fragments of the [Old South] myth," notes literary scholar Kathryn Lee Seidel, an artist "could reveal the truth or falsity of the southern gentleman, of southern history, of the Civil War, of the southern belle."²⁰¹

Likewise, by adding adjectives to the text the authors of sorority histories could enhance or create a background of white, southern gentility. The founders of Zeta Tau Alpha were, according to the organization's official history, "from fine, established land-holding families that had progressed through postwar economic hardships and the Reconstruction."²⁰² The Phi Mu historian introduced the founders of Philomathean Society (Phi Mu's predecessor) as having come from "well-to-do families of plantation owners, professional and military men." Located in Quincy, Florida, the family home of founder, Mary Ann DuPont Lines, was described as "a capacious mansion, which was the seat of refinement and hospitality."²⁰³ The Sigma Sigma Sigmas (Tri-Sigmas) began their book with a celebration of life in Virginia that detailed the aristocratic bearing of the state's colonial-era families and its ties to "English customs and habits of life." The section quoted at length from Virginia author Thomas Nelson Page's 1892 essay, "Social Life Before the War," to describe the "Southern girl."

²⁰⁰ Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, 72-82

²⁰¹ Kathryn Lee Seidel, *The Southern Belle in the American Novel* (Tampa, FL: University of South Florida Press, 1985), xiv

²⁰² Strout, *History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 43

²⁰³ Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu*, 21

She was, indeed, a strange creature, that delicate, dainty, mischievous, God-fearing, Southern girl. With her fine grain, her silken hair, her musical speech, her pleasure-loving habits, and her bewitching manners, down deep in her lay the bed-rock innate virtue, piety, and womanliness on which were planted all that nature can hope, and all to which it can aspire.²⁰⁴

Page's exceptionally detailed, yet highly idealized, account of the home-life of whites of "aristocratic character" in Virginia before the Civil War exemplifies yet another of his sentimental depictions of the Old South.²⁰⁵ His sketch, like that created by sorority women for the Tri-Sigma history sixty years later, invites readers both southern and non-southern to glimpse a version of life that is offered as somehow truer, better, or more carefree for having existed during the period of slaveholding in the South. "For all its faults," Page wrote, social life in the Old South was, "[he] believe[d], the purest, sweetest life ever lived."²⁰⁶

All of the Tri-Sigma founders were natives of Virginia. By printing the Page passage in *The Years Remembered of Sigma Sigma Sigma* (1953) the organization showed their desire to remind readers of the Tri-Sigmas' southern heritage while connecting the image of the contemporary sorority woman to the powerful symbol of white southern ladyhood. Published on the eve of the Supreme Court's monumental ruling against public school segregation in *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), *The Years Remembered* also served as a tacit warning that the much-heralded purity of the "delicate" and "dainty" white southern girl would be threatened by any changes in the time-honored code of racial segregation of social spaces.²⁰⁷ Indeed, the book's foreword recalled Virginia's "rich heritage of deeply-rooted history, romance, sentiment, and charm," that the sisters "cherish[ed] and [found] more appealing as the passing years [brought] into perspective the rich and abiding values written in Sigma's Book of Life."²⁰⁸ The

²⁰⁴ Stinson, *The Years Remembered of Sigma Sigma Sigma*, 2.

²⁰⁵ Thomas Nelson Page, "Social Life in Old Virginia," in Page, *The Old South Essays Social and Political* (New York, NY: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1908), 192.

²⁰⁶ Thomas Nelson Page, "Social Life in Old Virginia," 220.

²⁰⁷ James T. Patterson, *Brown v Board of Education A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), xiii.

²⁰⁸ Stinson, *The Years Remembered of Sigma Sigma Sigma*, vii.

allegiance to a common, white southern past that was “more appealing,” underscored the tense racial landscape of the 1950s South and suggested sororities’ support of racial segregation in American society.

The Philomathean Society (later Phi Mu) was more direct in its attempt to link itself to the image of the Lost Cause. In the years following the Civil War, the group elected to bestow honorary membership on Confederate hero, General Robert E. Lee. Lee accepted the invitation, pleased “at thus being honored by an organization which represented the highest ideals in Southern womanhood.” The group proceeded to make the late General T.J. “Stonewall” Jackson and the president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, honorary members as well.²⁰⁹ Lee, more than any other figure, however, came to symbolize the Lost Cause of the Confederacy for white southerners. Particularly after his death in 1870, Confederate societies catapulted Lee to legendary status. Although Lee had supported reconciliation between the North and the South after the war and tried to discourage Confederate memorials and other such celebrations, posthumously, his image became synonymous with the Lost Cause movement in the South.²¹⁰ Phi Mu continued to herald their association with Lee, Jackson, and Davis in their *History of Phi Mu* (1982) well into the twentieth century. Like the LMAs and the UDC, southern-founded sororities provided white southern women another venue to honor the Confederate past while tacitly perpetuating the ideology of white supremacy to a national audience.

Sororities revised their histories at varying intervals. The information in the books tended to build on previous versions, with the seated historians relying on the work of former sorority historians for the foundation of the texts. It might seem surprising that some of the sorority histories featuring Old South nostalgia were written or overseen by alumnae from chapters at non-southern universities. Annadell Craig Lamb of Phi Mu was a member of the Delta Alpha Chapter at Indiana University. Tri-Sigma Susanne Stinson was a sister of the

²⁰⁹ Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu*, 15.

²¹⁰ Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 51-52, 120-122.

Omicron Chapter at Michigan State Normal College (now Eastern Michigan University), while Zeta Tau Alpha's Shirley Kreasan Strout was a sister of the Tau Chapter at Decatur, Illinois's Millikin University.²¹¹ These women, although without apparent connection to the South, created or upheld the moonlight-and-magnolia image of the region in their organization's national history. The publication of each new edition of a sorority's history allowed for an update from newly opened chapters, recent national conventions, and biographies of the latest national officers. The revised editions also allowed sorority historians to modify or remove text that might appear outmoded or unreasonable to their contemporary readership. It is telling that these sorority historians chose to leave the romanticized depictions of the South and white southerners in their books as the twentieth century progressed. By connecting their respective sororities to a "deep-rooted," white heritage that they pictured as noble and genteel, sorority women hoped to solidify the image of their organizations' as establishments of the upper social class.

Yet the sections of the books that celebrated white southern historical memory also presented troubling suggestions of sorority racial intolerance. While racial strife went unmentioned in the histories, the version of southern history portrayed in the narratives privileges white experience at the expense of black experience, virtually erasing the existence of African Americans in the South. The sororities glossed over the history of economic hardship and of racial, class, and gender inequality in the region, presenting a revisionist history based on white supremacy.

Students of these history lessons included southerners and northerners born during the early decades of the twentieth century who, although born years after the Civil War, absorbed teachings on the importance of states' rights and white supremacy. "By the 1920s," writes historian Karen Cox, "most southern states had adopted pro-Confederate textbooks" for school

²¹¹ Lamb, *History of Phi Mu*, 218, 275; Stinson, *The Years Remember of Sigma Sigma Sigma*, x, 435-437; Strout, *History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 516-911.

children.²¹² And as we noted earlier, in even in the North, students, teachers, and parents gained a romanticized understanding of the South through the works of writers such as Thomas Nelson Page.²¹³ Indeed, the prevailing historical narrative in white, southern schools until the 1970s remained true to the myth of the Lost Cause. As a result, the depictions of the South in the sorority histories would not appear at odds with the version of southern history understood by the generations of readers during the first three quarters of the twentieth century. As Cox points out, the lessons that UCV and UDC members saw as integral to children's understanding and upholding of the region's practice of Jim Crow, were still championed by White Citizens' Councils fighting to uphold southern segregation in the 1950s and 1960s.²¹⁴ It seems that we can read the efforts by sorority historians in a similar light. Supportive and unquestioning of the status quo, national sororities played a role in the dissemination of these pro-southern public images. While their alignment with a white southern memory may have been designed to promote the image of the southern lady as the model for contemporary sorority women, the regional attachment also alluded to the organizations' long-standing interest in maintaining a white, and for the most part, Protestant membership.

By 1930, the southern-founded sororities had more existing chapters at non-southern colleges and universities than at those in the South.²¹⁵ Their alumnae, however, continued to deftly weave histories of classical culturing and southern heritage to produce what that they deemed sufficiently dignified lineages. In their attempts to elevate their sororities above public

²¹² Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 160.

²¹³ Osterweis, *The Myth of the Lost Cause*, 113.

²¹⁴ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 162.

²¹⁵ In 1930 Alpha Delta Pi had thirteen chapters at southern and thirty-eight at non-southern institutions; Alpha Sigma Alpha had one in the South and twenty-four in the non-South; Chi Omega had twenty-three in the South and sixty-one in the non-South; Delta Gamma had three in the South and thirty-seven in the non-South; Kappa Delta had seventeen in the South and fifty in the non-South; Phi Mu had seventeen in the South and forty-one in the non-South; Sigma Sigma Sigma had three in the South and twenty-three in the non-South; Zeta Tau Alpha had fifteen in the South and forty-five in the non-South. See, Baird, ed., *Baird's Manual*, 289-90, 320-321; 618-619; Ferguson, ed., *History of Chi Omega*, 16-17; Morse, *History of Kappa Delta*, 849-851; Lamb, *History of Phi Mu*, 273-276; Stinson, *The Years Remembered of Sigma Sigma Sigma*, 518-519; Strout, *History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 911-912.

criticism that they were merely upstart social clubs, they also solidified the association between the American sorority woman and southern culture. These organizations, presented by their proponents as more than mere social outlets, became important *socializing* forces in American society. The ability to prove oneself an able American citizen, within the limited and pre-existing categories of “white” and “Protestant” would remain important factors of social acceptance. As heteronormative sexuality also came to figure prominently on this list by the twentieth century, sororities stood poised to affirm that members would meet all of the above criteria for citizenship. Portraying themselves as schools for social education, sororities would exert a strong influence on the acceptable and unacceptable behaviors for women on campus, both sorority and independent.

CHAPTER THREE: TRAINING FOR “WHOLE WOMANHOOD”: THE SORORITY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

“Fraternities are potentially the greatest socializing force on the college campus today,” wrote Katherine Davis, an alumna of Alpha Omicron Pi, in 1939. “Educators and fraternity officers are emphasizing the trend toward training students as social beings, as well as training them as mental beings.”¹ Davis’s words succinctly captured the increasingly publicized mission of Greek-letter, social sororities during the second and third quarters of the twentieth century. By promoting a program of character education for their members, sororities fit neatly into the ideal of a well-rounded college education, as promised by the classical, or liberal arts, curriculum. “It is an established fact,” stated Minnie Allen Hubbard, former Grand President of Alpha Delta Pi, in 1939, “that a well-rounded education includes more than intellectual attainments. A charming personality and social graces should be the mark of a college bred woman.”² In a time when the male-dominated spaces of coeducational colleges and universities could be seen as inappropriate educational venues for white, southern ladies, sororities positioned themselves to offer female students additional training for normative womanhood.

Sororities offered a publicly visible bastion of, or training ground for, white, southern femininity on coeducational campuses where administrators constantly sought to ease public fears over young women living apart from the conventional family home and being in the company of men on a regular basis. In particular, the presence of sorority chapters on coeducational campuses signified the existence of “proper” feminine activities within a supposedly masculine space. The groups also came equipped with connections to additional “teachers” of social skills, in the form of alumnae members. In this respect, the pursuits of sorority life – parties, teas, fashion shows, and dances – that to some appeared frivolous, could be exactly what southern,

¹ Katherine Davis, “Fraternity as a Socializing Force Is Theme of Regional Conference,” *The Aglaia*, Vol. 33, No. 3, March, 1939, 27.

² Minnie Allen Hubbard, “What Alpha Delta Pi Offers the College Girl,” *The Adelphean*, Vol. 32, no. 2 (September 1939), 3-4.

male (and some female) university administrators sought for their women students. Sororities' national educational programs, designed to produce a model of white, middle and upper class womanhood, established the groups as socially sophisticated organizations promoting a "well-adjusted" social life, manners of gracious living, and an attractive appearance among their members. As such, sorority chapters on southern, coeducational campuses could add the essential components for culturally acceptable, white femininity, thereby preserving southern "ladyhood" among white women seeking higher education.

As I noted in previous chapters, sororities on southern, coeducational campuses in the early twentieth century had the important distinction of offering a supportive, women's network and socializing opportunities for women students in a setting where few had previously existed. These women's experiences of organizing meaningful female communities within the largely male space of the university campus, mirrored instances of group consciousness within women's-only colleges in the North and the South, and within the female organized and oriented settlement houses, such as Chicago's Hull House, founded by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr.³ Likewise, women's historians have shown how urban, working class women around the turn of the twentieth century formed a similar self-sustaining culture among the women in their workplaces, boarding houses, and sites of recreation.⁴ In these spaces, women found camaraderie and a family-like structure, as well as places where they might experiment with their newly found autonomy in areas such as styles of dress, consumer spending, and sexual expression.⁵ For elite

³ On communities of women at women's-only colleges, see Pamela Dean, "Covert Curriculum: Class, Gender, and Student Culture at a New South Woman's College, 1892-1910," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1995); Horowitz, *Alma Mater*; Patricia Palmieiri, *In Adamless Eden The Community of Women Faculty at Wellesley* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995). On women's community in settlement houses, see Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Hull House in the 1890s: A Community of Women Reformers," *Signs* Vol. 10, no 4, *Communities of Women* (Summer 1985), 658-677.

⁴ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 48-51, Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, 69-90.

⁵ On working women's fashion, see Nan L. Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), 28-31, 48-83. On women's sexuality, see Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*, 101-116, Clement, *Love for Sale*, 45, 56-57.

white women, and increasingly for women of the middle class by the 1920s, college would become a similar setting for self-discovery and semi-autonomous living.

While a sorority promised an environment that would nurture white, southern girls on their way to ladyhood, the women's-only social space could also provide a haven for them to imagine, or plan for, a future that did not always meet regional standards of social propriety. For a number of college women, sorority membership may have helped to provide a strong foundation of self-confidence that enabled them to occupy civic leadership positions or to pursue unconventional careers. The organizations themselves, however, did not leave a legacy of progressive activity. Instead, their leaders remained conservative in their actions and in the behaviors they prescribed for their members.

The standards of behavior set by the various sororities' national leadership as well as by officers of individual chapters, demonstrated the seriousness with which the organizations approached the task of molding upstanding members and loyal alumnae. Female students had originally established secret societies and sororities as small clubs to provide friendship, encouragement, and opportunities for self-betterment in the sometimes-hostile spaces of what had previously been all-male universities. The preponderance of official standards for everything from styles of dress, to grades, to behavior, however, began to diminish the supportive nature of the sisterhoods. By enforcing social standards, sororities' simultaneously insured against differences among their membership.

In this chapter, I argue that national sororities adopted the public image of etiquette instructors for college women during the twentieth century as a way to demonstrate their value as campus organizations. Many university administrators bought into this logic, as they were pleased to find that sororities could serve as models to enforce behavioral regulations for all female students on campus. I discuss how sororities' lessons compared with the somewhat related training available in university home economics courses. In the post-World War II era,

we will see how sororities' social education programs also stood to aid university administrators who sought to monitor students' personal adjustment and psychological well-being. To determine how these programs played out on the local level, I draw on talks and writings by deans of women and minutes from several southern sorority chapters.

Shifting Social Norms for White Women of the Middle and Upper Class After 1930

The types of social training designed for sorority women during the first three quarters of the twentieth century reflected shifting norms for white middle class women's behavior in this period. Such training also took into account the intricate relationship between standards of behavior for women and Americans' attitudes toward the visibility of women's sexuality. As I outlined in Chapter One, by the 1910s and 1920s, some college-educated women had moved into careers in emerging, "feminized" fields as well as in historically male-dominated professions. The increasing public acceptance of companionate marriage and the availability of birth control in these years enabled women to exercise choice in when, or if, to have children. As a result, more women were able to continue their jobs or careers after marriage. Women were able to maintain their foothold in the workforce, even in professional positions, during the Depression years, despite public disapproval of white women taking jobs that white male, "breadwinners" needed to provide for their families.⁶ While most women performed unpaid labor in their own homes, the economic crisis of the 1930s, historian Elaine Tyler May argues, allowed for the creation of a new possibility for the American family model "based on shared breadwinning and equality of the sexes."⁷ As she points out, however, the crisis also brought forth a nostalgic view of a mythic life where families required only one (male) breadwinner while women remained in the home. It was the second image of American family that would triumph following the

⁶ Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own American Women in the 1930s* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 21, 71.

⁷ Ware, *Holding Their Own*, 21, 29; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound American Families in the Cold War Era*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), 31.

Depression and the disruption of World War II, setting the stage for the model of the suburban, nuclear family of the 1950s.⁸

Although public perception of women's employment in the 1930s had been tempered by the portrayal of the working woman as unfeminine and as emasculating to men, by the 1940s, Americans saw women in the workforce as a wartime necessity. As women filled jobs left by men going off to war, the United States government portrayed women's paid labor outside the home as their patriotic duty.⁹ While these women in the workplace enjoyed economic and personal independence, American society also expected that they remain "feminine" in appearance and demeanor.¹⁰ At the close of World War II, many of women's temporary jobs reverted to returning veterans. The public expected women to return to the domestic realm where, social scientists believed, as wives they would offer support to veterans readjusting to civilian life.¹¹

Following the social upheaval of the 1930s and 1940s, Americans of the postwar 1940s and 1950s sought a return to "normalcy." An important part of Americans' image of the stable nuclear family included the father as the sole breadwinner and the mother as homemaker. The federal government, which at the start of the war had urged women to fulfill their duty as patriotic citizens by working outside of the home, now encouraged women to return to the home to undertake the duty of raising future patriotic American citizens while creating job openings for returning veterans.¹² As May has explained, "in the wake of World War II...the short-lived affirmation of women's independence gave way to a pervasive endorsement of female subordination and domesticity."¹³ Public opinion called for white, middle and upper class women

⁸ May, *Homeward Bound*, 31.

⁹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 50.

¹⁰ Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 23.

¹¹ Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond*, 23, 25.

¹² Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond*, 25.

¹³ May, *Homeward Bound*, 77.

to reestablish themselves as purely feminine and, thus, non-threatening to their husbands' masculine authority as the family provider. In reality, however, the number of married women in the workplace actually increased during the 1950s. Most of these women worked outside the home, frequently in clerical or retail positions, but not in jobs the public perceived as "male."¹⁴ Yet, the *image* of the white, middle or upper class woman safely ensconced in the suburban home helped to allay public concerns over independent women's sexuality. May has persuasively argued that the "containment" of women's sexuality within marriage and the home during the Cold War era helped assuage American's anxieties over the perceived threat of "sexual chaos" as a national security concern in the post-World War II era.¹⁵

As social expectations for women's activities changed with each decade, so had the social prescriptions for their sexual behavior. The premarital sexual expression popularized by middle class youth of the 1920s continued in the 1930s and 1940s. The dislocations of the World War II era, during which both young men and women left home behind for military service or for employment "provided unprecedented opportunities," note historians Estelle Freedman and John D'Emilio, "for premarital sexual experience."¹⁶ Even as norms for sexual behavior became more permissive, gender, however, continued to define the consequences for individuals engaging in sexual activity. The sexual double standard reinforced the idea that middle and upper class men could engage in premarital sex without damage to their reputations, but that women of the same class who pushed the same boundaries for sexual behavior (which had shifted from necking and petting in the 1920s and 1930s to sexual intercourse by the 1950s) would be perceived by society as "bad girls" who had crossed a line of moral propriety.¹⁷

Some women attempted to couch their sexual activity within the language of romance so as to justify behavior that was publicly held to be inappropriate for women outside of marriage.

¹⁴ May, *Homeward Bound*, 76-77, 16, 87; Hartmann, *Homefront and Beyond*, 92-94.

¹⁵ May, *Homeward Bound*, see Chapters Four and Five in particular.

¹⁶ D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 260.

¹⁷ D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 262.

By the 1940s, many young women felt that sexual activity, including intercourse, was acceptable within a loving, committed relationship. For these women, “going steady” in a long-term relationship with the same man opened the door for what they felt was acceptable sexual experimentation while allowing them to maintain a respectable image as “good girls.”¹⁸

During the 1950s, policing of sexual behavior reached a fever pitch. The American public viewed nonmarital sexual activity as “abnormal” behavior, and imagined direct links between an individual’s deviance from “normal,” married, (hetero)sexual behavior and his or her moral standards. Public opinion branded those who engaged in sex outside of marriage as having a weak moral character and, thus, representing an easy target for communist subversion. As such, society came to equate a weak moral character with sexually “deviant” or “abnormal” behavior.¹⁹ In their searches for possible communist subversives, federal and local government campaigns specifically targeted lesbian and gay government employees on the basis of their sexuality, which historian David K. Johnson has argued, was “euphemis[tically]” categorized as a “security risk.”²⁰ In addition, these lesbian and gay “witch hunts” also targeted teachers, whom, the public worried, might fail to educate students according to their “appropriate” male or female gender orientation. In the public imagination’s worst-case scenario, lesbian and gay teachers were not just failing to train students as “normal” girls and boys, but were also potential sexual predators.²¹

To uphold the image of the American public’s strong moral character, behavioral experts of the post-World War II era, including educators, psychologists, sociologists, and physicians, sought to advocate marriage as the primary tool to control all forms of nonmarital sexual

¹⁸ D’Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 263; Winifred Brien, *Young White and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 115-119; Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 52-53.

¹⁹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 82.

²⁰ David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 5.

²¹ Jackie M. Blount, *Fit to Teach: Same-Sex Desire, Gender, and School Work in the Twentieth Century* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 91-94; Stacy Braukman, “‘Nothing Else Matters But Sex’: Cold War Narratives of Deviance and the Search for Lesbian Teachers in Florida, 1959-1963,” in *Other Souths: Diversity and Difference in the U.S. South: Reconstruction to Present*, ed. Pippa Holloway (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 280, 282.

behavior. They saw early marriage as a way to contain youthful sexual indiscretion, turning its supposed negative effects into the foundations of fortified and apparently healthy nuclear families to guard against communist infiltration²² Moving beyond what Dr Ernest T Groves had proposed with his “Marriage and the Family” course in the 1920s and 1930s, experts proposed sex education for students in colleges and secondary schools as a way to encourage “healthy” sexuality – meaning heterosexual and within the boundaries of marriage As such, sex education courses often included lessons in preparation for marriage.²³

Educational administrators in this period took a great interest in shaping “well-adjusted” students whom, they believed, would be the future upstanding leaders of the country Universities’ new student personnel departments, which included a staff of women and men specifically trained to help guide students in their college studies and in shaping their adult lifestyles, gradually supplanted the older model where one dean of women and one dean of men ministered to the needs of the entire student body.²⁴ The student personnel movement had grown up as a product of military training in World War I and began to be implemented in higher education in the 1920s and early 1930s.²⁵ The personnel selection process submitted the participant to a variety of tests and interviews designed to help a “trained observer” determine the participant’s interests and abilities.

Put into practice at universities, this model assisted staff in “direct[ing] and support[ing] student’s energies toward constructive and useful ends,” usually in the form of a successful

²² May, *Homeward Bound*, 88

²³ Historians Jeffery Moran and Susan Freeman explain that the term “sex education” was often supplanted by “marriage education” and “family life education” (FLE) courses Educators hoped these courses titles would be less offensive to some parents who objected to sex education in schools In the classes, teachers encouraged students to discuss society’s gender norms, dating relationships, marriage, and preparation for family living See Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 88, 124, 126, 144, 149, Susan K Freeman, *Sex Goes to School Girls and Sex Education Before the 1960s* (Urbana, IL University of Illinois Press, 2008), x-xii

²⁴ Robert A Schwartz, “Reconceptualizing the Leadership Roles of Women in Higher Education A Brief History on the Importance of Deans of Women,” *Journal of Higher Education* Vol 68, no 5, (September/October 1997), 514-517

²⁵ Robert A Schwartz, “The Rise and Demise of Deans of Men” *Review of Higher Education* Vol 26, no 2 (Winter 2002), 227-228, Schwartz, “Reconceptualizing the Leadership Roles of Women in Higher Education,” 512-514

career.²⁶ Student personnel departments also looked to psychology and psychiatry to help categorize and control student behaviors. As historian Beth Bailey notes, this interest in the psychological assessment of student behavior also led to the shift of control over incidents involving student sexual misconduct from the deans' offices to the realm of the university medical staff.²⁷ This change, she argues, resulted in new categorizations for sexual misconduct. Behaviors that medical experts viewed as "normal," but "wrong," such as engaging in premarital sexual intercourse, were subject to punishment, whereas conduct they saw as "abnormal," such as same-sex sexual activity, they diagnosed as a treatable medical condition.²⁸

For experts in student personal development, an important facet of the "normal," "well-adjusted" individual was the establishment of a heteronormative sexuality. Although parents, educators, and medical experts did not want young people freely expressing their sexuality outside of marriage, they *did* hope that individuals would express what they believed was a healthy interest in the opposite sex, the proof of which required heterosexual dating. These dating relationships could lead to potentially problematic issues in regard to premarital sexual activity. Yet, deans of women, student personnel staff, and national sororities believed that when carefully restricted, dating played an important role in preparing students for adulthood while also establishing their heteronormative sexuality. National sororities, like university administrators and experts in adolescent development, were greatly concerned with the process of shaping "well-adjusted" women. Sororities and deans of women understood that by cooperating with one another, they could unify their efforts toward molding the character of female students.

A Social Education: Sororities Define Their Purpose

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, as a growing number of female students enrolled at previously male-only southern universities, many of the women found that the

²⁶ Swartz, "Reconceptualizing the Leadership Roles of Women in Higher Education," 512-513.

²⁷ Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 49-50.

²⁸ Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 50, 55.

schools, composed of majority-male faculties, failed to offer ample support for their academic endeavors or opportunities for extracurricular activities. Met with these obstacles, the young women created their own campus culture to supplement their classroom experience. As we learned in Chapter One, sorority membership represented one of the primary ways in which the first groups of female students constructed an alternate “family” and a home away from home, where they found support for their academic endeavors, and an outlet for social activity. As women’s enrollment numbers at newly coeducational colleges increased, however, so did opportunities for women’s student activities that catered to specific interests and hobbies and did not require an invitation to join. Literary and debate societies, dramatics clubs, glee clubs, dance ensembles, religious groups, and clubs geared toward students’ majors were just some of the options.²⁹ With an increasing variety of extracurricular activities on campus open to all women, critics of sororities found it easier to cast the invitation-only groups as elitist social clubs.

As a result, sororities’ national leaders frequently found themselves defending against critics’ charges that sororities were undemocratic and hurtful to those women whom they denied membership. The sororities’ faced a growing need to demonstrate the necessity of their presence to the colleges and their women students. Arguing for their existence, then, sororities publicized the important role that they believed they could play in the social education of white female students. I use the term “social education” throughout this chapter to describe the non-academic lessons of basic socialization that a young woman (or man) learned during college. These lessons, conveyed to students both formally and informally, included topics such as working and living with others, good hygiene and appearance, healthy interpersonal relationships, and preparation for normative female (and male) adulthood. Evidence of a well-received social education could mark an individual as a productive member of society.

²⁹ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 132; Baldwin, “The Woman’s College as I Remember It,” 1959, Alice Mary Baldwin Papers, Box 21, University Archives, Duke University, 7; Parrish, “When Mary Entered With Her Brother William,” 16-17.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, many universities actively promoted coursework designed to impart skills of normative middle class womanhood that included activities such as homemaking and motherhood. Classes and departments in domestic science, or the more popularly termed, home economics, became university administrators' answer to public criticism that higher education would "unsex" female students and prove harmful to their perceived social duty of procreation of the white race.³⁰ By the 1920s, home economics curricula transitioned from a discipline rooted in the hard sciences, which advocated the use of science in social reform, to one that utilized vocational skills and dealt primarily with domestic and individual concerns.³¹ Even as home economics moved away from training women for specific post-college careers and toward embracing courses that prepared them to become efficient housewives, sororities could promote their social education programs as distinctly different from the standard home economics curriculum. Instead of training women to create a household budget, mend clothing, or cook nutritious meals for their families, sororities intended their lessons in social education to impart cultural polish. By teaching members to value other women who possessed a cultured demeanor and the ability to eschew work (both unpaid within the home as well as paid employment outside the home), the groups reinforced the notion that socioeconomic class was an indicator of an individual's citizenship potential. Part of the allure of the sororities' lessons, then, was the popular perception that sorority women did not have to concern themselves with such specific and apparently mundane tasks as befell a typical white American housewife.

Instead, they would learn social graces – how to conduct oneself in public, to speak pleasingly, to move gracefully – and gain knowledge of how to interact with and date men. All of these lessons were preparations for engagement and marriage and the eventual career of cultured homemaker, but sororities presented them in a captivating manner that spoke to the present

³⁰ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 81-85.

³¹ Sarah Stage, introduction to *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, edited by Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincetti (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 10.

instead of the future. Promises of parties and dates would encourage many women to go out for rush, but those social events might not immediately appear as part of a larger purpose of readying them for their gender-prescribed adult lives.

Many of the sororities' teachings were geared toward the culturing of new members so as to ensure the appearance and popularity of each sorority chapter as a whole. Since sororities were exclusive, invitation-only organizations, their training would appear all the more selective when compared with a home economics course in which any female (or male) student could enroll. As the twentieth century progressed, sororities' national leadership also promoted an increasing array of materials and programs designed to prepare their members for the "reality" of adult womanhood. By offering their unique brand of social education based on the image of highly cultured white womanhood, sororities' leaders elevated their groups above the criticism that they were merely silly social clubs, while at the same time showing how the organizations could play important roles in student socialization and productive citizenship.

At times sororities seemed to conflate the public message of a social education with that of social prestige. Whether or not they acknowledged the fusion of the two ideas (and most probably did, even if only on a subliminal level), female students and their families saw the promise of a social education, and subsequent social prestige, as worth the financial costs of membership. As such, sororities became training grounds for female students who sought social inclusion during their college years and hoped to maintain the status after graduation. Young women aspiring to sorority membership saw the groups as a way to gain friends as well as an active social life in their new environment. By meeting new people and joining in extracurricular activities, students could broaden their horizons while also learning how to socialize with their peer group. Historian Paula Fass argues that, for American college students of the 1920s, the emerging "peer culture...developed an intricate set of work and play relationships, provided a sense of solidarity and identification, and asked in turn for obedience to its rule and conformity to

its standards.”³² In a culture that increasingly valued an individual based upon his or her appearance, public performance, and “personality,” membership in a Greek-letter society could help students learn the social standards to which they needed to conform, while aiding them in the cultivation of a personality that met the desires of the popular public culture.³³ A socially well-educated student, who presented (or marketed) her or himself in an attractive manner, would likely have a greater chance at success in work, marriage, and family in their adulthood.

In college, young women and men would learn social standards of adulthood from their peers instead of within the confines of the consanguineal family. As I noted in Chapter One, peer relationships within a sorority or fraternity reinforced a fictive kinship among the women and men in the groups.³⁴ Sororities expected their members to advocate these supposed ties of “sisterhood” as more meaningful and lasting than relationships between non-sorority women, between sorority women and their non-sorority peers, or between women and men. As I discuss in the following chapter, sorority women often ran afoul of the notion that their relationships with their “sisters” should take primacy over relationships, or potential for relationships, with men. The image of a lifelong bond between a group of women, both within each sorority chapter and throughout each national sorority, provided a compelling reason for some women to seek membership in a sorority.

Belief in this form of kinship, purportedly established through sorority sisterhood, could explain why some of these women (and their parents) also saw membership as an important step in preparing for their lives *after* college. The language of sisterhood suggested lasting, even unseverable, bonds between a sorority’s members. Women could expect to draw on these fictive

³² Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 368-369.

³³ For discussion of the twentieth century’s emerging “culture of personality,” as compared to the nineteenth century’s celebration of an individual’s “character” as a measure of his or her worth, see Warren Susman, “‘Personality’ and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture,” in *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1984), 277-281.

³⁴ Handler, “In the Fraternal Sisterhood: Sororities as Gender Strategy,” 241. See also Chapter One, 32.

kinship ties while networking in a new place, searching for a job, or attempting to meet prospective male suitors. Again, it is key to note that some women and their families perceived the identity of sorority sister and its attendant social connections as a potential way to meet men from similar, or perhaps higher, social classes. Membership implied a cultural status that would place the women in an upper-middle class or elite social bracket.

Sorority alumnae furthered the clubs' class-conscious image by showcasing themselves as socially competent women in culturally prescribed positions as wives, mothers, and engaged civic volunteers. Yet, they also advocated the somewhat paradoxical idea that sorority training enabled women to go on to successful, even non-traditional, professional careers. These diverse ideas delivered a somewhat confusing and contradictory message to college women. Sororities' national journals proudly profiled members who became politicians, deans of women, and doctors after college. While touting the path-breaking positions held by these alumnae, the articles, however, also sought to portray the women as typically feminine, highlighting their attractive physical appearance or their "private lives" as wives and mothers.³⁵ By virtue of their placement in sorority journals the profiles further suggested that these women who had achieved success, and even authority, in conventionally male professions were somehow able to maintain a non-threatening femininity as a result of their sorority social training.

While in college, on the other hand, sororities' members often valued activities that ran contrary to shows of intellectualism, professional drive, or unconventional living. Although many women would seek employment after graduation, most viewed jobs as part of a temporary

³⁵ Jane Yelvington McCallum, an alumna of Alpha Delta Pi's Delta Chapter at the University of Texas, was active in the woman suffrage movement and later in Texas politics. Texas governor, Daniel J. Moody, appointed McCallum Secretary of State in 1927. See "This Alpha Delta Pi is Secretary of State," *The Adelphean* Vol. 23, no. 4, January, 1931, 12-13. Lena Clauve, an alumna of Alpha Delta Pi's Alpha Nu Chapter at the University of New Mexico, became dean of women at her alma mater. See "Can This Smiling Young Miss Be a Dean of Women?" *The Adelphean* Vol. 23, no. 4, January, 1931, 45. Dr. G.S. Ham, an alumna of Alpha Delta Pi's Epsilon Chapter at Tulane became a successful obstetrician and gynecological surgeon in Houston, Texas. See "Houston City Club's Boast ADPi is Outstanding Woman Surgeon," *The Adelphean* Vol. 28, no. 2, June, 1935, 24-25.

phase before a marriage and children would become the focus of their lives. Arguably, sororities' lessons in social education were most useful for women who held marriage and homemaking as their ultimate goal. Through leadership activities, planning and hostessing of social affairs, and learning, in the words of the University of North Carolina's (UNC) dean of women, Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, to "get along with" others, the sorority claimed to help its members gain necessary experience in "the art of fine living," all of which could prepare women to take on the job of a multitasking housewife while playing a leadership role in her community.³⁶

The lessons of "how to get along with others" also extended into sorority women's heterosocial relationships.³⁷ A primary part of the sororities' social education included the preparation for and participation in "heterosocializing" and heterosexual dating practices. While sororities' did not publicize this aspect of the social education in so many words, the copious advice on dress, grooming, and dating etiquette in sorority pledge handbooks suggests that lessons in heterosocializing were at least as common as those in executive office work, if not more so. The linchpin of normative, white, American womanhood for much of the twentieth century (and, it can be argued, to the present day) was for a woman to meet, date, and marry a white man from a respectable, even privileged, background. To meet the demands of American society that expected white women, and particularly white southern women, to seek a stable husband, get married, and settle down to raise a family, sororities would necessarily include this ideal – and an introduction to the heterosexual dating culture that would facilitate the ideal – as foundational elements of their member education.

³⁶ Hubbard, "What Alpha Delta Pi Offers the College Girl," 3-4; Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, "The Sorority Woman Moves into the World of the Future," April 28, 1956, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.2, Box 4, 17.

³⁷ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, "The Sorority Woman Moves into the World of the Future," April 28, 1956, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.2, Box 4, 17.

Molding Good Citizens

As I discuss in Chapter Two, a woman's identity as a member of a white, Greek-letter sorority, sorority proponents held, signified her highly civilized character and fitness for citizenship. The groups' discriminating membership criteria – which ensured that members be white, and for the most part, Protestant – provided an important declaration of a woman's civilized status and her citizenship potential. The programs of social education, that prepared white women to participate as good citizens, formalized the mission that sororities had carried out since their inception – that of striving to perfect (Anglo-American) civilization. In the 1910s and 1920s, sororities needed to promote good citizenship as a means of deflecting public criticism that they might be secretive fronts for radical communist groups. During World War II and the ensuing Cold War era, Americans were shaken by another, more threatening, round of encounters with fascism and communism. As they looked for ways to assure one another of their loyalty to the United States and an “American way” of life, the correlation between sorority training and citizenship would become increasingly explicit.³⁸

In this environment, molding solid citizens was a top priority for educators, psychologist, sociologists, and other experts on adolescent development. Katherine Kennedy Carmichael noted that university administrators' held a tremendous interest in cultivating “happy...well-adjusted...[and] mature” students in the post-World War II era.³⁹ This meant that students should conform to their culturally prescribed roles as American citizens, training themselves to be

³⁸ Wendy L. Wall explains that the phrase, “American Way,” came into popular use during the late 1930s when “U.S. citizens turned to the question of America's national identity and shared values.” She argues that during this era, “domestic and international pressures converged to produce a particularly intense, self-conscious, and wide-ranging ‘cultural conversation’ on the nation's collective self identity.” Wall notes that the terms “American dream,” “American creed,” and “American idea” all appeared around this time, as well. See Wendy L. Wall, *Inventing the “American Way” The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16-17.

³⁹ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, “Why Your Daughter Wants Coeducation,” n d., UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.2., Box 5, 4.

socially and (hetero)sexually mature females and males, ready to form strong, nuclear families and produce the next generation of healthy, American children.

In 1948, the Freshman Advisory Council at William and Mary solicited “sponsors” to report on assigned freshman women, gauging their scholastic and social abilities, their physical health, and their mental well-being. Over the course of the school year, the sponsor would complete four reports on her assigned freshman. This reporting was likely secretive, and unnoticed by the freshmen, unless their sponsors elected to tell them of their duty. In the first report, one question asked of the sponsor, “Do you foresee any probable difficulties of adjustment?” By the fourth report, when the Advisory Council presumably would be familiar with the freshman and her interests (at least on paper), they asked the sponsor to “give [their] impression of the student under the following headings: judgment, steadiness of purpose, health and habits, opinion of the girls in her dormitory, factors which retard her development, commendable qualities, and attitude toward college regulations.”⁴⁰ Through careful monitoring, students and administrators aimed to identify any behavioral abnormalities. While we might guess that activities conflicting with the white middle class norms for women’s behavior would raise flags, it is unclear *exactly* what actions, under the categories provided, might mark the freshman as possibly “maladjusted” in her development, or what steps the Advisory Council would take if they believed a woman was exhibiting “abnormal” behavior. All of the categories that the Council asked the sponsors to examine, however, relied on sponsors’ subjective judgments of the women in question. Seemingly less harsh than stark “rights” and “wrongs” allowed by the universities’ rules for women students’ behavior, the peer advisory system, operating within the post-World War II “therapeutic culture,” fostered an increasingly complex structure for handling behavior that did not fit with social norms.⁴¹ As conformity to normative

⁴⁰ “Freshman Advisory Council Report Forms,” Office of the Dean of Women Records (UA 24), Box 1, Dean of Women, SCRC.

⁴¹ See Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, Chapter Two on “therapeutic culture,” in particular, 54-56, 62-63.

American ideals became a key point of desirable citizenship in the Cold War era, identifying and treating, or “fixing,” “abnormal” student behavior became the preferred method of handling the actions of those that appeared to deviate from the accepted conventions.⁴²

At both William and Mary and UNC, students took an active part in the regulation of normative behavior. Good citizenship expanded to include participation in the communal policing of their peers. In 1945, the Woman’s Association at UNC proposed the formation of a Personality Committee that would function as part of the Women’s Government. The committee’s purpose was to “counsel, in friendship, those girls who have engaged in anti-social activity,” with the goal of helping them “to adjust their personality difficulties by locating [their] particular source of dissatisfaction and attempting to guide [them] into a point of view compatible with the standards established by the W[oman’s] G[overnment] A[ssociation].” The Personality Committee seemed dedicated to taking this therapeutic approach a step further than the William and Mary Freshman Advisory Council, as they actually endeavored to intervene in cases where individuals failed to meet certain standards for personality. It is unclear exactly what the committee defined as “anti-social activity,” or who referred women to the committee’s attention. Possible solutions for women’s personality problems, however, ranged from “referring her to glamour experts,” to recommending that she see a clinical psychologist or a psychiatrist.⁴³ While the anti-social behavior in question might stem from a lack of self-confidence, from difficulties getting along with other girls, from disinterest in heterosocial activities, or from a combination of these and other issues, the main point was that any behavior suggesting a maladjustment to social life would be questioned and dissected.

Sororities publicized a social education replete with lessons that university deans of women considered integral to the creation of “well-adjusted” women students. As I mentioned in

⁴² Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 45-50.

⁴³ “Proposal: To Establish a Personality Committee Which Will Function as a Part of Woman’s Government,” 1945, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Woman’s Association, 1935-1945.

Chapter One, deans of women generally saw sororities as a positive influence on their campuses' female populations. Some women deans and advisers perceived sororities, acting both as supportive networks and regulative bodies, as added tools for managing their students. Men's fraternities, on the other hand, typically found themselves at odds with deans' offices. As I discuss in the following chapter, the unchecked behavior of fraternity men limited the groups' abilities to prove themselves as valuable to campus administrators as the sororities.

Deans of women and male university administrators understood sororities' "school of manners" to provide necessary lessons safeguarding women students' femininity.⁴⁴ At the same time, the standards of the "feminine culture" upheld by sororities produced a policy of self-policing among the female students. Sororities' systems of control could prove a useful model for monitoring students and could be replicated in programs like those enacted by the Freshman Advisory Council at William and Mary and the Personnel Committee at UNC. Instead of relying on the assistance of outside panels or university student personnel staff, however, sororities seemed to prefer to handle their own corrections in their members' behavior. In an apparently natural way, sorority women would represent the ideal student, the example of which all other female students should strive to emulate. Even non-sorority women, deans noted, would try to adhere to the model set by sorority members. In 1950, Helen L. Reich, dean of women at the University of Iowa, pointed to the "success" which the sorority chapters on her campus had experienced "in maintaining certain standards of behavior" on campus.⁴⁵ With the sorority women enforcing their own, dean-sanctioned, standards on campus, controlling the women students' actions could become much simpler for the dean of women.

In 1935, Dr. Mary Alice Jones, a Pi Beta Phi alumna (Texas Alpha Chapter, University of Texas) and an expert on religious education, reported the findings of her survey on deans of

⁴⁴ *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, Stewart Howe Collection (26/30/30), Kappa Alpha Theta Publications, 15.

⁴⁵ Helen Reich, "Discussion Material on the Chapter House and Standards Problem," March 1950, NPC Archives, Committee File (41/82/50), Box 1, NPC-NAWADAC Liaison Committee, 1957-1959, 6.

women's opinions of sororities on their campuses. According to the results, Jones believed that over fifty percent of the 101 deans of women responding to the questionnaire, "had a friendly and constructive attitude" toward sororities. A third of the respondents thought that "the good and bad features just balanced," while eight felt that the organizations were largely harmful, and four thought that the campus would be better without Greek-letter groups. In this chapter I focus on deans who found sororities, for the most part, beneficial to their campuses. I will discuss some of the comments by deans of women who held less favorable opinions of sororities in Chapter Five. Jones noted that many of the deans of women surveyed felt that the social standards practiced by sorority women were more useful for creating social standards on campus than the administrative rules designed for this purpose. Sorority social standards, Jones explained, "were the social standards which were considered valid by the students on campus."⁴⁶ She suggested that non-sorority women looked up to the sorority members and aspired to conform to their example. To put it bluntly, Jones and other pro-sorority educators and deans of women, as well as sorority alumnae, believed that non-sorority women would emulate sorority women's appearance and actions without question.

Since the 1910s the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) had worked constantly to cultivate a mutually beneficial relationship with the National Association of Deans of Women (NADW). With their social education programs offering assistance to the dean of women's office, sororities stood a greater chance of maintaining a good image on campus. By 1926, the NPC had voted to hold their biennial meetings at the same time and place as the NADW conventions to promote cooperation between the two groups. They began holding a joint session for the NPC and the NADW that year.⁴⁷ In 1941, at the invitation of Sara Blanding, dean of women at the University of Kentucky (1923-1940), and president of the NADW, the two groups

⁴⁶ I will discuss deans of women who did *not* have a favorable impression of sororities in Chapter Five. See, Mary Alice Jones, "The Fraternity Membership – Today and Tomorrow," NPC Archives, NPC Proceedings (41/82/10), Twenty-fourth Congress, 1935, 205-206.

⁴⁷ Turk, *Bound By A Mighty Vow*, 208, FN 13.

formed a joint committee where the groups could address topics of concern to both.⁴⁸ A result of the NPC's efforts in working with deans of women over the years, national sororities had managed to engineer an ostensibly useful, even *necessary*, role for the groups on campuses, instead of falling victim to the charges, issued by some, that they were frivolous, elitist clubs. While the NPC would have to continually reaffirm their devotion to educating women students as good citizens, the generally positive relationship between sorority alumnae and campus administrators created a foundation that allowed sororities to thrive on university campuses, with few detractors, by the mid-twentieth century.

Social Education and University Curricula for Women

By offering specialized knowledge, designed to aid women students in becoming well-rounded, graceful women, sororities found the key to staying power on twentieth century college campuses. Among deans of women who felt that a conventional liberal arts education, equivalent to that received by male students, left women most prepared for adulthood, campus sororities stood to provide what many deans viewed as the equally necessary, gendered lessons of womanhood. Even as the home economics major grew in popularity among college women, sororities appeared to offer a distinctly different type of preparation for normative womanhood. Less practical training and more cultural guidance seemed to be the pattern of sorority education. As educators, administrators, and student personnel staff addressed questions about what types of university coursework would most benefit women students in their adult lives, a number of these individuals found that sororities' lessons filled an area of need.

As historian Amy Thompson McCandless has explained, college curricula for women during the twentieth century can be divided into two types, the "traditional," or liberal arts curriculum, and the "utilitarian," or vocational curriculum. At the beginning of the twentieth

⁴⁸ "Report of the Conference of a Committee of Deans of Women and National Panhellenic Congress Representatives," NPC Records, NPC Committee File (41/82/50), Box 1, NPC-NAWDC Historical File, 1905-1941; Carolyn Terry Bashaw, *"Stalwart Women": A Historical Analysis of Deans of Women in the South* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1999), 11-12; 37-38.

century, the liberal arts curriculum focused on classical studies and languages and was also the accepted curriculum at the majority male, white, public universities of the South. The purpose of the vocational curriculum, on the other hand, was to train students for their socially prescribed roles as housewives and mothers, or for “female” jobs or professions, including teaching, or clerical, library, or social work.⁴⁹ The curricular choices at a particular school were, she notes, “to a considerable extent, a reflection of the social composition of th[e] student body.” Private liberal arts colleges for women in the South frequently enrolled students from the upper socioeconomic classes who could afford to take courses for their cultural or educational value and did not necessarily need to train for a job. Private, coeducational colleges were also more expensive than the state supported institutions. State women’s colleges, starting as normal and industrial institutions, often catered to lower or middle class women who sought specific training for a vocation, most often, teaching. As the public universities and land-grant colleges for white men in the South began to open their classes and campuses to white female students, they first attracted women who wanted a solid, liberal arts education at an affordable price. Over time, young, white women from a variety of social strata would seek schooling at public, coeducational universities of the South, however, as McCandless astutely observes, “class and race were mitigating factors in determining the type of education to be offered women.”⁵⁰

Higher education for African American women in the South during this period did not, argues historian Glenda Gilmore, promote the cult of southern ladyhood, but instead “an evangelically driven ethos of ‘usefulness.’”⁵¹ Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, Gilmore notes, black women’s higher education outpaced that of white women in North Carolina. The state did not fund an institution of higher education for white women until 1892 (the North

⁴⁹ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 53-55.

⁵⁰ McCandless, “Pedagogy and the Pedestal: The Impact of Traditional Views of Woman’s Place on the Curricula of Southern Colleges in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Thought* Vol. 20, no. 3 (Fall 1985), 273.

⁵¹ Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow*, 36-37.

Carolina Normal and Industrial College), fifteen years after funding a normal institute for African Americans in Fayetteville, North Carolina.⁵² Since African American schooling took place mostly in coeducational settings during these years, black women often received lessons from the classical curriculum, an educational opportunity denied many white women at the time. Yet, in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, white philanthropists and white southern leaders in education and government, fearful that highly educated blacks might challenge the southern racial hierarchy, encouraged a practical, industrial education for African Americans, and limited their ability to partake of liberal arts coursework.

African American women students in the early twentieth century, however, also received lessons in manners and morals, similar to their white contemporaries. As historians of African American women and women's education have explained, the purpose of these lessons for African American women took on an added significance. While the emphasis on a refined character pointed to the cultural role of African American women as the moral and social leaders of their communities, it also served to help "negate the image of the promiscuous slave" that formed the contemporary white stereotypes of black females. At the same time, course offerings for black women reflected the need to prepare them for positions as active leaders of their communities, and for remunerative vocations.⁵³

As historian of women's education, Barbara Miller Solomon, has noted, practical, vocational needs often guided women's choice of coursework. Many white women expected to go into teaching, at least for a short time after college, and majored in liberal arts courses, such as literature or modern languages, that most readily prepared them for that occupation. Between 1890 and 1920, Miller explains, a small, but still significant number of matriculating women

⁵² Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow*, 36-38.

⁵³ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 70,72; Jeanne Noble, *The Negro Woman's College Education* (1956; reprint, New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), 24; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 190-191.

students came from wealthy backgrounds and were not forced, by necessity, to prepare for a job or career. In some instances, the students needed neither to train for a job, nor did they display a strong academic interest, which led educators to attempt to devise new ways to make college useful and meaningful for them. As a result of the varied educational needs of women students, some educators began to promote a specific woman's curriculum that would train women for the jobs of homemaking and child rearing. Domestic science and home economics courses, established by colleges during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, were a direct result of this perceived need to educate women students for their socially prescribed occupations of wife and mother.⁵⁴

By the turn of the twentieth century, however, due in large part to the work of Vassar graduate, Ellen Swallow Richards, home economics became a rigorous, science-based, academic discipline. Richards, who was the first female to take graduate courses in chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and later taught at the same institution, formed the American Home Economics Association, a professional organization for those involved in the work of home economics, in 1909. Under Richards's guidance, explains historian Sarah Stage, home economics emerged as a "profession that enabled and encouraged women to expand their activities beyond the home and kitchen."⁵⁵ By the 1910s, home economics courses were popular at many universities.⁵⁶ A number of white, southern universities sought to implement home economics departments during and after the World War I era as a way to increase women students' enrollment, while making the curriculum more acceptable to parents of some white, southern women.⁵⁷ Home economics courses were also popular offerings at black colleges and

⁵⁴ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 81-85.

⁵⁵ Sarah Stage, "Ellen Richards and the Social Significance of the Home Economics Movement," in *Rethinking Home Economics*, eds. Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vinceti, 19-29.

⁵⁶ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 85-87; McCandless, "Pedagogy and the Pedestal," 272-273.

⁵⁷ The University of Alabama first offered home economics courses during the 1914 summer session. Regular courses began in the College of Arts and Sciences in 1917-1918. Alabama Polytechnic Institute

universities in the interwar period, as they promised skills for possible employment as home economics teachers or supervisors, extension officers, or dieticians, in addition to imparting lessons of efficiency for a woman's personal homemaking.⁵⁸

At southern, land-grant institutions, such as Alabama Polytechnic Institute (API) and the University of Georgia, the Smith-Lever Act (1914), opened the door for home economics courses. The Smith-Lever Act provided for the establishment of agricultural extension agencies at state land-grant universities as a means of spreading practical information in agriculture and home economics to rural citizens and improving the quality of life in rural areas. The states would need college educated women, trained in home economics, to serve as home demonstration agents and teach rural women methods of food production (winter gardens, canning, and bread making) and sanitation (prevention of malaria, typhoid, and tuberculosis)⁵⁹. However, the Smith-Lever Act, which combined the forces of land-grant universities and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to establish the Cooperative Extension Service, and the Smith-Hughes Act (1917), which provided funds for vocational agricultural education, helped define home economics as vocational work, shifting it away from the path originally charted by Ellen Richards.⁶⁰

Although Stage suggests that it was during the 1920s that, "home economics lost much of its sense of social mission," female students at API trained in the field *specifically* to work as

also began teaching home economics classes in the summer of 1914 as a way to prepare the increasing number of home demonstration agents in the state. In the fall of 1920, the school introduced a home economics department to train women as county home demonstration and extension agents. The University of Georgia added a curriculum for the degree in home economics in 1918, and began admitting women students for a two-year course. The College of William and Mary added a home economics department to coincide with the admission of female students in the fall of 1918. See Delpar, "Coeds and the Lords of Creation," 302-304, Atkins, *Blossoms Amid the Deep Verdure*, 16-17, Reed, *History of the University of Georgia*, 2413-2415, Parrish, "When Mary Entered With Her Brother William: Women Students at the College of William and Mary, 1918-1945," (M.A. thesis: The College of William and Mary, 1988), 26.⁵⁸ McCandless, "Pedagogy and the Pedestal," 271-273.

⁵⁹ Carmen Harris, "Grace Under Pressure: The Black Home Extension Service in South Carolina, 1919-1966," in *Rethinking Home Economics*, eds. Stage and Vinceti, 207.

⁶⁰ Harris, "Grace Under Pressure," 205, Rima D. Apple, "Liberal Arts or Vocational Training? Home Economics Education for Girls," in *Rethinking Home Economics*, eds. Stage and Vinceti, 92.

county home demonstration and extension agents in the state.⁶¹ In South Carolina, African American women also trained in home economics at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg to serve as officers of the state's Black Home Extension Service.⁶² As home extension agents, these black and white women were on a social mission to improve the lives of rural farmwomen and their families, by teaching them basic skills of food production, nutrition, cleanliness, and disease control. African American home demonstration agents, historian Carmen Harris has argued, worked to provide these services to black farmwomen even as white South Carolinians attempted to "use [them] as part of their social control mechanisms."⁶³ By making rural African Americans satisfied with their existence, Harris explains, whites hoped that they would be less likely to migrate North for industrial jobs. In addition, whites' fears of disease, particularly among black women that entered their homes as domestics and laundresses, enabled continued support for the efforts of black extension agents.⁶⁴ While their work was certainly significant for its impact on portions of the rural population and as a new possibility for women's occupations, historians have viewed the larger impact of the Smith-Lever and Smith-Hughes Acts on the field of home economics as negative. The emphasis on training women to teach home economics in primary schools and to rural women, and the disassociation from original research and scientific study, they argue, reduced home economics to a discipline that was vocationally geared and domestically centered.⁶⁵ And yet, even when limited to vocational training and domestic skills, home economics training directly influenced the broader public welfare in a way that a sorority's lessons decidedly did not.

⁶¹ Stage, "Ellen Richards and the Social Significance of the Home Economics Movement," 31; Atkins, *Blossoms Amid the Deep Verdure*, 17.

⁶² Harris explains that the programs to train the black, female home agents were designed and implemented by the home economics department at Winthrop College. Winthrop was white women's counterpart to South Carolina's white, men's, land-grant institution, Clemson College. See Harris, "Grace Under Pressure," 203, 206-208.

⁶³ Harris, "Grace Under Pressure," 203.

⁶⁴ Harris, "Grace Under Pressure," 206-208.

⁶⁵ Stage, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Home Economics*, eds. Stage and Vinceti, 9-10.

At southern, white, coeducational universities, administrators might suggest “appropriate” coursework for women students, but they did not prohibit women from taking or majoring in the subjects of their choice. Liberal arts courses – learning for the sake of learning – were still the mainstay of the coeducational college curriculum, but specialized disciplines that were geared toward specific vocations became a new way to divide female and male students based on society’s gender expectations. The “feminization” of those disciplines frequented by women students, including education, fine arts, and domestic sciences, helped cement the idea of an appropriately gendered curriculum.⁶⁶ What started as an attempt by colleges and universities to meet the educational demands of a diversifying student body resulted in the patterning of early and middle twentieth century higher education on established cultural beliefs about the normative division of labor between women and men in the United States.

While women students’ interest in certain disciplines may have ebbed and flowed along with the country’s contemporary cultural climate, they continually faced the larger issue that Barbara Miller Solomon has identified as “the divided sentiment about the goals of female education.”⁶⁷ By the mid-twentieth century, educators waged battles over such issues as: what were the goals of higher education for women and whether universities should adopt a separate curriculum for women students. For example, while a champion of a specialized women’s culture on campus, UNC dean of women, Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, clearly stated that she “would never approve a female curriculum” for a coeducational college. Instead, as she explained in her 1950s essay “How Shall I Choose a College For My Daughter?,” she would want her daughter to select a school that “offered specialized ability for developing her in her role as a woman, as well as a student.”⁶⁸ By that, Carmichael meant a college that adhered to a liberal arts curriculum for its women students. As I described earlier in the chapter, the desire of post-World

⁶⁶ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 80-81.

⁶⁷ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 83.

⁶⁸ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, “How Shall I Choose a College For My Daughter?” n.d. (circa 1950s), UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.2., Box 5, Folder 106, 9.

War II American society to reaffirm women's femininity and reassert the ideal of homemaker as a woman's goal in life, helped realign curricular models. In this postwar understanding of women's curricula, a third option, the "women's curriculum" or "feminine curriculum," joined the "traditional," or liberal arts curriculum, and the "utilitarian," or vocational curriculum.⁶⁹

In 1947, Lynn White, Jr., president of Mills College in Oakland, California, and an advocate for a specialized, women's curriculum, described the differences in the curricula models. A vocational curriculum with coursework of limited breadth, he believed, might suit a woman seeking career-specific training and no more. A liberal arts curriculum, however, provided "education for personal development," which White saw as imperative for the woman's role as wife, mother, and teacher of her children. In White's view, a woman with a liberal arts education would serve "primarily to foster the intellectual and emotional life of her family and community." And yet, he felt that liberal arts training left woman's education incomplete. To train women "to play their role as citizens," he argued, necessitated a *specific* women's curriculum that would prepare them for "family living," promote "study" in "theory and preparation of a Basque paella, or a well marinated shish kebob," and help them choose the type of community service they most enjoyed. White predicted that when women began to "make their distinctive wishes felt" concerning curricula, not only would "every woman's college and coeducational institution offer a firm course in The Family," but would extend that to a "series dealing with foods and nutrition, textiles and clothing, house-planning and interior decoration, garden design and applied botany, and child development."⁷⁰ Ironically, much of the coursework that White deigned appropriate for women students had its roots in home economics and domestic science, which themselves began as courses that stressed scientific research.

⁶⁹ Lynn White, Jr., "New Yardsticks for Women's Education," *Journal of the American Association of University Women* 41, no. 1 (Fall 1947), 5-6.

⁷⁰ Lynn White, Jr., "New Yardsticks for Women's Education," 5-6.

In the South, white cultural beliefs about the division of labor between women and men remained deeply entrenched well into the twentieth century. This conventional wisdom fostered tensions between universities and the public over what types of subjects were appropriate for the education of white, southern ladies. In attempting to design a course of study for white, female students at schools in the region, deans of women and university educators faced a difficult dilemma. McCandless holds that, “southern institutions of higher education were very much part of the national debate over curriculum, and no one pedagogical view dominated.”⁷¹

Alice Mary Baldwin, dean of the newly formed Women’s College of Duke University (1926-1947) and assistant professor of history, strongly supported a curriculum that made all liberal arts courses at Duke available to women students. Baldwin believed that higher education should enable women to pursue any profession that they wished. In taking the job at Duke, Baldwin likely saw an opportunity to shape the next generation of female scholars who might have the chance to achieve positions like the one that she was denied on the basis of her gender. She recalled that during her first few years at Duke, “some of the parents were greatly opposed to their daughters going into any occupation but teaching.” Baldwin explained that she “had occasion now and then” to help a young woman “enter a business or nursing or medical field when the parents opposed it.” At the same time, however, Baldwin recognized the importance of an adequate social education and worked to promote standards of “gracious living” for the women under her tutelage. She made efforts to attractively furnish the women’s social room and set aside evenings for sewing and socializing where she could discuss matters of etiquette with the women students in what she described as a collegial and natural atmosphere.⁷²

As the former Trinity College morphed into Duke University in 1924, Duke president, William Preston Few, left up to Baldwin the decision of whether to abolish sororities at the new Women’s College. National sororities had existed at Trinity since 1911 when the local sorority,

⁷¹ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 55.

⁷² Baldwin, “The Woman’s College as I Remember It,” 7, 27-28, 8-9.

“V.D.W.,” became the Omicron chapter of Alpha Delta Pi sorority. The earliest local sorority, Sigma Delta, organized in 1904, became the Sigma Delta chapter of Kappa Delta sorority in 1913.⁷³ Baldwin chose to let sororities remain, fostering their development while “striv[ing] to emphasize the good things about them” and, as much as possible, eliminating the less desirable points. Also, since the university continued to allow men’s fraternities, Baldwin was “most anxious not to have any discrimination against the women in the new college.” She saw the existence of sororities as a way to uphold school traditions, create ties with alumnae, and, importantly, “encourag[e] them to recommend able students” to the Woman’s College.⁷⁴ Baldwin’s plan suggests that she understood a woman’s sorority ties to be more important than those of her alma mater. While obviously appreciating the necessity of social education for women students, Baldwin’s approach to women’s intellectual needs and abilities suggest that she kept sororities around more for their public relations potential and less for reasons of social training.

Even as most coeducational colleges and universities adhered to the liberal arts curriculum, deans of Katherine Kennedy Carmichael’s mindset sought ways to supplement the regular coursework with programs that would help ensure that women students obtained a higher education in a “distinctly feminine atmosphere.”⁷⁵ Carmichael, along with Baldwin and many other deans of women, maintained that women students should receive a liberal arts education identical to that of the male students at their institutions. They did, however, recognize the importance – even the necessity – of also teaching young women to be proper white, southern ladies.

⁷³ The V.D.W. sorority began in 1910 but no history of its organizations remains. It is unknown for what words the letters “V.D.W.” stand. See Ben M. Patrick, “The Front Line: Materials For a Study of Leadership In College and After,” (Thesis, Duke University, 1942), 117, 121.

⁷⁴ Baldwin, “The Woman’s College As I Remember It,” 36.

⁷⁵ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to R.B. House, August 6, 1947, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.1, Box 2, Annual Reports 1946-1947, 8.

In 1947, readily acknowledging that she might be “accused of mid-Victorianism,”

Carmichael expressed her strong feelings that:

Women should explore the curriculum to study those courses which tend toward gracious womanhood. Too often young women in masculine fashion march through courses which are unrelated to their inner desires, and neglect to consider courses basic to woman’s society: music, the fine art, literature, philosophy, physical education, foods and nutrition.⁷⁶

The courses, she conceded, were “known to the finishing school of our grandmother’s day.” Yet, she concluded, “We should never forget that our finishing schools in the South have brought forth great and accomplished women.” For her own part, Carmichael saw the task of helping women consider the “courses basic to woman’s society” that might be more closely related to “their inner desires,” as a primary responsibility of her career.⁷⁷

While she did not approve of the social class distinctions created by sororities on campus, Carmichael did find the groups useful for forming a “feminine atmosphere” and for instilling lessons of “gracious womanhood.”⁷⁸ Reared in the deep South, she sought to fit the mold of southern ladyhood and expected women students at UNC to follow in her stead. Born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1912, to a financially secure and respected family that prized educational achievement, Carmichael grew up learning to think of herself as a lady. Paradoxically, however, she also came to claim the unconventional life of a professional woman in the South. By fashioning herself as the ideal of southern, feminine, social grace, Carmichael hoped to detract from her status as an unmarried woman and soften public reception of her career ambitions. Her quest to reconcile the contradictory images of the “southern lady” and the

⁷⁶ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to R.B. House, August 6, 1947, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.1, Box 2, Annual Reports 1946-1947, 8.

⁷⁷ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to R.B. House, August 6, 1947, 8.

⁷⁸ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to R.B. House, August 6, 1947, 8.

“professional woman” in an acceptable model of ladyhood for women students, led her to press for what she termed a “milieu specifically adapted to female needs” on campus.⁷⁹

Carmichael had been a sorority member in college, but was not an active alumna during her years as dean of women. In 1929, while a student at her hometown’s Birmingham-Southern College, she joined the Alpha Omega Chapter of Alpha Chi Omega. Carmichael’s older sister, Mary, had been a charter member of the Alpha Omega group three years before.⁸⁰ It is unclear exactly what Katherine Carmichael’s sorority experience meant to her, but she later reflected on its positive training. With approval, she recalled an evening when the sorority chastised her for being late to dinner. She also praised the way that the sorority taught hostess’ skills, recounting the sorority tea when she learned the custom of serving cream with tea.⁸¹ Carmichael found that these small lessons helped prepare her for the hostessing duties included in her job as a woman’s dean. From her vantage point as a dean in the mid-twentieth century South, Carmichael likely viewed sororities as teaching tools and, more importantly, as a means to assist ambitious young women in appearing safely within contemporary gender norms.

As an unmarried, highly educated, professional woman in the post-World War II era, Carmichael saw the benefit of using “femininity” as a shield against possible public criticism that she was somehow an unfulfilled, or “unnatural,” woman because she did not have a husband or children, and apparently no desire for either. As women’s historians have shown, starting around the turn of the twentieth century, opponents of feminism began to paint women’s desire for equality with men as a sign of mannishness. Other challengers went further, explicitly linking

⁷⁹ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, “If the Dean of Women Disappears, Who Will Take Care of Your Little Girl?” n.d., UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.2, Box 5, 10.

⁸⁰ Linda Long, “Dean Honored by Alma Mater,” *The Lyre of Alpha Chi Omega*, n.d., UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.3, Box 6, Clippings [Personal] 3:38, 23; Dalglish, *The History of Alpha Chi Omega*, 284, 285, caption.

⁸¹ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, “Speech at Birmingham-Southern College,” UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.2, Box 4, Folder 80, 3; Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, “The Sorority Woman Moves into the World of the Future,” UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 3.2, Box 4, Folder 22, 18.

feminism and lesbianism. In “cultural terms,” historian Christina Simmons has explained, “lesbianism came to represent women’s autonomy in various forms.”⁸² Well attuned to the fact that unmarried, career-women, in her day might be publicly perceived as lesbians, Carmichael wrote in an unpublished manuscript, “the dedicated career woman is too often the spinster, suspect in a Freudian age.”⁸³ In reality, Carmichael’s personal correspondence suggests that she had had several promising heterosexual relationships thwarted by her parents. Even in her late thirties, the idea of displeasing her parents kept her from marriage with an apparently otherwise ideal suitor. Portions of Carmichael’s correspondence with her sister reveal that she actually harbored a strong desire to have a husband to “take care of” her and was “heartsick” at her “childlessness.”⁸⁴

By advocating a feminine curriculum, it appears that Carmichael hoped to express to female students the importance of preparing for a conventional lifestyle with marriage and family, and not necessarily a career, as the primary goals. She saw the sororities’ lessons facilitating a view of life that prized ease in social situations, dating and securing a stable husband, and running a well-appointed household, all of which she had grown to feel was more meaningful than her job and the path she had taken in life.

“A Laboratory in How to Get Along With People”⁸⁵: Sororities and Social Education

In the midst of these uncertainties about the most suitable form of education for women at the college level, sororities conveniently offered an arrangement that promised to fill the perceived absence of a specifically feminine culture in the coeducational university setting. With

⁸² See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Disorder and Gender Crisis, 1870-1936,” in Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), 265, 270-283; Christina Simmons, “Companionate Marriage and the Lesbian Threat,” *Frontiers* Vol. 4, No. 3 (1979): 55-58.

⁸³ Carmichael, “If the Dean of Women Disappears, Who Will Take Care of Your Little Girl?” 13; Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, “History of the Dean of Women, Manuscript,” n.d. UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.2, Box 5, Folder 131, 77. Although officially undated, both of these writings appear to date from the 1950s.

⁸⁴ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to Mary Carmichael Pickels, December 22, 1951, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.3, Box 6, Nov. 16, 1951-Feb. 1, 1952.

⁸⁵ Carmichael, “The Sorority Woman Moves Into the World of the Future,” 17.

their educational programs designed to shape a national model of womanhood based on white middle and upper class standards of behavior, national sororities promised to provide a social education that would enable the coeducational, liberal arts university to impart an education for “whole womanhood.” I borrow the term “whole womanhood” from Barbara Miller Solomon, who uses it to describe the goal of the liberal arts education for women students – to educate the “whole woman.”⁸⁶ She bases this idea on what historian George E. Peterson has called the “whole man.” The desired product of men’s, liberal arts colleges, the “whole man” has been a “symbol” which Peterson notes, “represented the yearnings of that portion of the country which preferred traditional culture to excessively material progress.” Through the figure of the “whole woman” or “whole man,” Americans in the twentieth century could attempt to divorce the image of the cultured individual from the designation of socioeconomic class, to which it was inevitably tied.⁸⁷ Greek-letter societies, however, only strengthened that relationship. Sororities’ versions of education for “whole womanhood” prized the attainment of “civilized” culture – in this case, often meaning social skills – which members translated into social currency to secure an image of elite status.

As Ida Shaw Martin explained in her *Sorority Handbook*, sororities schooled young women in group living and shared responsibility.⁸⁸ Instruction in the integral life lesson of “how to get along with people” became one of sororities’ main contributions to campus life. Katherine Carmichael described sorority living as a “laboratory” for socialization where women students could “have a learning experience in how to live beautifully.”⁸⁹ Sororities’ programs of “character education” would provide model patterns of behavior for all women students.⁹⁰ The

⁸⁶ See Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 92-93.

⁸⁷ George E. Peterson, *The New England College in the Age of the University* (Amherst, MA: Amherst College Press, 1964), 28-30, 214.

⁸⁸ Martin, *The Sorority Handbook*, 8th ed., 52-55.

⁸⁹ Carmichael, “The Sorority Woman Moves Into the World of the Future,” 17.

⁹⁰ Mary Alice Jones, “The Fraternity Membership – Today and Tomorrow,” NPC Archives, Proceedings (41/82/10), Twenty-fourth Congress, 1935, 198.

sororities' leadership hoped that deans of women would view the groups as essential tools for molding desired behaviors for the entire women's student body.

Comments by Helen L. Reich, dean of women at the University of Iowa, during the joint committee meeting of the NADW and NPC in 1950 suggest that many deans did appreciate the standards created by sororities. In a talk prior to a discussion on "the chapter house and standards problems," Reich gave voice to the aims of many deans and sorority leaders, saying "our efforts and hopes [in group standardization] lie in having these traditional mores of control exert an effective social control on the campus." She explained that "in general, the more homogeneous the group the more effective and lasting a tradition."⁹¹ Sororities provided a means to instill traditions, produce standardization, and enforce group control. Nevertheless, it was for the same reasons that deans like Reich found sororities beneficial that they often produced a negative image in the public eye. Sororities may have been useful for deans of women and other administrators trying to manage women students, but their restrictive standards also kept members conservative in their actions and unwilling to accept differences in behavior, opinions, or backgrounds among their membership. These limitations actually made sororities *less* desirable as the behavioral prototypes for women students on campus.

Designed by sororities' national leadership, but implemented at the chapter level, the educational programs would attempt to ensure that members achieved contemporary, white, middle class ideals for women's activities, appearance, sexuality, and public engagement. Sororities instructed members in how to achieve these norms through their lessons on physical appearance and presentation, proper behavior for heterosexual dating relationships, and preparation for their prescribed positions as future homemakers. To accomplish these tasks, alumnae leaders and active collegiate members created a culture of restriction that upheld the

⁹¹ "Symposium on Standards of Behavior on the Campus and in the Chapter House," March, 1950, NPC Committee File (41/82/50), Box 1, NPC-NADWAC Liaison Committee, 1947-1959, 6.

accepted social standards by promising ostracism or outright censure for those who failed to “learn” and comply.

Still, the sororities’ promises to build “proper” group attitudes among women students gave administrators a compelling reason to support their presence on campus. In her description of the contemporary campus generation of 1950, Kate Hevner Mueller, dean of women at Indiana University (1937-1949), suggested that, “on the typical university campus, one third to one half of the students will come from the working classes rather than from the substantial business and professional or upper-middle class.” Mueller’s description of a “typical university campus,” primarily referred to state universities, such as her own Indiana. She suggested that university educators and administrators should look to Greek-letter groups to “indoctrinate this large group of students in manners and morals with which they have never been familiar.”⁹²

Mueller was a well-known advocate of specialized training for student services personnel in the post-World War II era. A native of Pennsylvania, she graduated from Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania in 1920. Mueller majored in English, but psychology and student affairs became her life’s work. She received an M.A. in psychology from Columbia University and undertook further training at the University of Chicago. After a brief period as an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Minnesota, she married fellow scholar, John Mueller, who she had met during a research trip to the University of Oregon. The couple moved to Indiana University in 1937 when John Mueller took a position in the school’s sociology department. While she held no prior experience and had no intention of working in university administration, the university offered Kate Mueller the position of dean of women and she accepted. Although the postwar consolidation of many universities’ men’s and women’s student personnel departments typically eliminated the position of dean of women, Mueller remained an advocate for women’s expanded role in student personnel services. In the departmental overhaul

⁹² “Symposium on Standards of Behavior on the Campus and in the Chapter House,” March, 1950, NPC Archives, Committee File (41/82/50), Box 1, NPC-NADWAC Liaison Committee, 1947-1959, 1.

at Indiana, administrators demoted Mueller to counseling services, but the change did not diminish her contributions to the field of women's student services in higher education.⁹³

One of her books, *Educating Women for a Changing World* (1954), called for a variety of university curricula to suit the broad range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of the current generation of female students. Like Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, Mueller recognized that young women in the mid-twentieth century faced a limited array of options for work and activity based on socially prescribed gender conditions. In the book, she described sororities as “campus housing units with invitational membership, high *esprit de corps*, and a richer social program than is provided by university residences.” Mueller believed that sororities’ “intrinsic worth to the student,” might be “much or little, depending on many factors, but especially the exclusiveness and social prestige which they afford.”⁹⁴ Yet she also argued that the groups served a “legitimate function on the campus,” which included, “protect[ing] members from indiscriminate contacts, especially in the way of romantic partners with too divergent backgrounds,” and offering a higher “standard of living” than the typical residence hall. Mueller noted that sororities had the “freedom to practice [their] religious convictions without reference to the taxpayer,” and to “embrace political or economic or societal principles according to [their] own taste and pocketbook[s].” Apparently viewing these abilities as evidence of sororities’ attempts to cater to specific interests within the diverse population of female college students, she applauded the existence of the privatized groups. Within the chapter house, she observed, there was “sometimes” the “spirit of camaraderie” and “an affectionate sharing of life’s pleasures and vicissitudes, possible only for sheltered and well-bred youth.”⁹⁵ Even if it was not the case in every chapter house, the *chance* that sorority members might experience what Mueller saw as the

⁹³ Michael D. Coomes, Elizabeth J. Witt, and George D. Kuh, “Kate Hevner Mueller: Woman For a Changing World,” *Journal of Counseling and Development* Vol. 65, no. 8 (April 1987), 407.

⁹⁴ Kate Hevner Mueller, *Educating Women For a Changing World* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1954), 271.

⁹⁵ Mueller, *Educating Women For a Changing World*, 272-273.

pleasing benefits of a “sheltered” and cultured (read, white and elite) existence, helped substantiate the place of the groups in her eyes.

Mueller’s comments about students’ socioeconomic status during the joint committee meeting of the NADW and the NPC gave voice to a continued concern among educated members of the white middle and upper classes at the perceived “uncivilized” character of working class members of the American public. Like their turn of the twentieth century counterparts, educated white women half a century later continued to see sororities as a means to promote their brand of culture to women students. The difference, by Mueller’s day, was that some women seemed to advocate, at least implicitly, that sororities alter their membership criteria to actively pursue pledges from working class backgrounds, publicly understood to have less cultural knowledge. Whether Mueller actually wanted sororities to rush women who appeared less culturally aware, in order to “civilize” their behaviors, or just wanted sororities (and their elite members) to serve as models of civilized behavior for those she believed were in need of lessons in white, middle class mores, she and others were proposing a new role for the sorority on campus.

In the post-World War II era when Mueller made her remarks, university enrollments for male students had mushroomed as a result of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (1944), also known as the G.I. Bill of Rights.⁹⁶ The bill enabled many white men from working class backgrounds to attend college when they otherwise would not have received a higher education. The educational benefits also helped African American veterans to enroll at black colleges or to complete vocational training courses that they could not have afforded without government aid.⁹⁷ Women veterans, too, took advantage of the G.I. Bill funding. Historian Leisa Meyer notes that “one third of all ex-Wacs [Women’s Army Corp members] began college or made definitive

⁹⁶ May, *Homeward Bound*, 68, 150.

⁹⁷ Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 54-57, 72-76.

plans to enter school shortly after their discharge.”⁹⁸ For new male and female college students who may have been unfamiliar with middle class standards of behavior, Greek-letter groups could play a key role in helping them to develop an “acceptable” code of behavior and publicly pleasing personality.

Deans of women at southern universities with overall less affluent student populations saw sororities as particularly important agents for smoothing the rough edges of women students’ etiquette. In 1935, Agnes Ellen Harris, dean of women at the University of Alabama (1927-1945), raised this point in a session of the twenty-fourth NPC convention. For deans like Harris, the image of the less affluent student mingled with that of the culturally inept, suggesting that they saw basic, middle class manners as foreign to students from working class backgrounds. Sororities could most benefit these female students from underprivileged backgrounds, she argued, by introducing them to middle class mores.

Harris was born in Cedartown, Georgia in 1883. Her father, an educator and school superintendent, encouraged her to pursue an education beyond the secondary level. Her first introduction to home economics, which would become her profession, was in a year-long course at the Oread Institute of Domestic Science in Worcester, Massachusetts. Afterward, Harris continued her education in a two-year certificate program at the Georgia Normal and Industrial College for Women in Milledgeville and later in summer sessions at Teacher’s College, Columbia University where she received her bachelor’s degree in home economics in 1910. Harris was no stranger to working class, rural, farm families. During the 1910s, prior to being head of the home economics department and dean of women at Alabama, she had worked in various capacities for the United States Department of Agriculture home demonstration agency in

⁹⁸ Leisa D. Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women’s Army Corps During World War II* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), 182.

the state of Florida. At the same time, she served as dean of the school of home economics at the Florida State College for Women in Tallahassee.⁹⁹

As an unofficial public relations representative for home economics training, Harris expressed hope that university home economics departments and sororities might find ways to work together to educate women in the future.¹⁰⁰ While sorority leaders may have seen promise in distinguishing sorority training from home economics courses, Harris suggested, however, that the two entities held comparable goals for women's development, even if they relied on different methods for their achievement. She appeared to view sororities and home economics as two sides of the same coin. In later years, the Alpha Zeta chapter of Phi Mu at the University of Alabama inducted Harris into membership.¹⁰¹

At the 1935 NPC meeting, Harris spoke in support of making sorority dues affordable for Depression-era students in economically hard-hit southern schools. She used that platform, however, to press the idea that less wealthy women students were in even greater need of a sorority's teachings than those of upper class backgrounds, whose families could more easily pay their membership fees:

The so-called plain man's daughter really needs more education, because, after all, the...daughter of the man of means, she is a precious young person. She has had a charming social life. [The] mother has educated the daughter and she does not need the sorority, but the plain man's daughter needs the social education.¹⁰²

While Harris's comments might sound biased against the child-rearing abilities of parents in lower socioeconomic classes, she also expressed an important, and somewhat novel, viewpoint that sororities at schools in the South should be vehicles by which to elevate women of lesser circumstances. Again identifying sorority training with the work of home economists in the field,

⁹⁹ Bashaw, "*Stalwart Women*," 26-27.

¹⁰⁰ Agnes Ellen Harris, "Administrative Problems of a College in Relation to Fraternities," NPC Archives, Proceedings (41/82/10), Twenty-fourth Congress, 1935, 14.

¹⁰¹ "Death Claims Two 'Distinguished Alumnae' Citation Winners," *The Aglaia* Vol. 47, no. 2 (January 1953), 7-8.

¹⁰² NPC Archives, Proceedings (41/82/10), Twenty-fourth Congress, 1935, 41.

Harris sought additional ways to train women for “home management” and a “good home life,” which she may have translated to an increased standard of living for a woman’s future family.¹⁰³ Sororities would provide tutelage in accepted standards of middle and upper class behavior – knowledge that could enable working class women to move into a higher socioeconomic class, through either a career, or more likely, a marriage to a financially established or upwardly mobile man.

Of course, the idea of “elevating” underprivileged women carried with it the assumption that the underprivileged individual could not, or *would* not, seek to “better” herself of her own accord. The fact that some university administrators and sorority leaders believed that the mission of national sororities’ should extend to “lifting” young women’s class status, in turn helped sorority women to define their own places in the socioeconomic order. As they identified the type of women supposedly in need of their social elevation skills, the sorority women inherently defined themselves as “better than” or “above” those women they aimed to help.¹⁰⁴ As national sororities expanded, adding new chapters that enabled ever increasing numbers of women to become members, the groups needed to find another way to continue to construct themselves as a privileged and select group. By identifying and offering assistance to women whom they perceived as being from a lower class than themselves, sorority alumnae and active members could maintain their self-proclaimed position as elites. I suggest that we can view sorority philanthropy projects in this same vein. By the 1920s, a number of national sororities, including Pi Beta Phi, Sigma Kappa, Phi Mu and Kappa Delta commenced with philanthropic works, typically in the form of one, large, easily visible project to which all chapters could

¹⁰³ Agnes Ellen Harris, “Administrative Problems of a College in Relation to Fraternities,” NPC Proceedings (41/82/10), Twenty-fourth Congress, 1935, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Christine Stansell demonstrates these class tensions in the case of working class women and middle class moral reformers as well as in the relationship of domestic servants and their employers in nineteenth century New York City. See Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 66-69, 74-75, 156, 163-165.

contribute.¹⁰⁵ I discuss this work and its possible benefits, for both the sororities and those in need, in Chapter Six.

As it turned out, sororities' national leaders did not adopt the suggestions of deans like Kate Hevner Mueller and Agnes Ellen Harris to overhaul the makeup of sorority membership. Instead of actually inviting into membership these young women whom sorority alumnae and national officers viewed as uncivilized, they suggested that *all* female students could benefit equally from sororities' social training simply by following the sorority women's example. It was the alumnae's hope that sorority women would serve as paragons of virtue and role models for non-sorority women on campus. Since the 1921 NPC convention, the groups' national officers had officially promoted socializing between their members and female students who were not in sororities. The level of success of these programs depended on the status of relationships between Greeks and non-Greeks on each campus and, as I suggested in Chapter One, the relationships between these two groups were often less than ideal.

Sorority literature put forth the idea that the unaffiliated women students would have few other opportunities in which to learn ladylike graces or socialize in such an enjoyable setting as did sorority women. A 1922 article in *The Adelphean* of Alpha Delta Pi by a freshman member of the Phi Chapter at Hanover College, in Hanover, Indiana, explained that, "the college life for the non-sorority girl especially, is often very uneventful." By entertaining the independents, she noted, the sorority women would be bringing, "to the other girls a little of the society side of college life."¹⁰⁶ Just as deans of women and sorority leaders made assumptions about female students from working class backgrounds, collegiate sorority women issued suppositions about

¹⁰⁵ "Philanthropies and Projects, 1965," NPC Archives Fraternity Affairs File (41/82/9), Box 1, NPC Philanthropy Reports, 1965-1971, 8, 10; *A Century of Friendship in Pi Beta Phi; 1867-1967*, 171, 176; [Lillian M. Perkins?], *History of Sigma Kappa, 1874-1974* (Indianapolis, IA: Sigma Kappa, 1974), 23; "History," <http://www.seacoastmission.org/history.html>, website accessed June 8, 2009; [Lillian M. Perkins?], *History of Sigma Kappa, 1874-1974*, 23. See Chapter Six for further discussion of sorority philanthropy.

¹⁰⁶ "Entertaining Outside Girls," *The Adelphean* Vol. 13, no. 2 (June, 1922), 445.

the needs of non-sorority women on campus. The sorority member's comments appear, at best, to overlook female students' other opportunities for socializing on campus at events such as dormitory parties, teas held by the dean of women's office, campus-wide formals, sporting events, and other organizational gatherings. At worst, she simultaneously acknowledges these activities while devaluing their worth as social sites for unaffiliated women, not to mention devaluing the relationships the sites might foster. Between their own chapters' events and the campus activities open to all students, members of Greek-letter groups did have more opportunities for socializing, and typically, more money available to fund the events.¹⁰⁷ Yet, the ADPi member was not simply suggesting that sorority members should take pity on non-members because the latter did not have as many opportunities for socially enriching entertainment. She was also suggesting that the independent women should be pitied because they were perceived as inherently inferior to the sorority women.

According to their alumnae leadership, the sorority sisters would be doing the non-sorority women a favor by organizing a party or tea for them to attend. Whatever the event, the message was clear, sorority women would not be inviting independents to socialize out of a sincere desire to form friendships between the groups of women, but to set forth their behavior as the standard for emulation and instill in the independents a sense of respect for sorority women. By following the example of sorority members, sorority leaders suggested that the independent women would aspire to gracious living or to become a member of a sorority themselves. Additionally, the young woman who authored the article cautioned that, "every girl must be met in an attitude of equality, all hints [of] 'I am a sorority girl and you are not' must be avoided."¹⁰⁸ The fact that she needed to issue a reminder against snobbishness, demonstrates, in itself, the

¹⁰⁷ For example, during the 1951-1952 school year, students at the University of Georgia held 310 authorized social activities. One hundred and seventy-one of these events (over half) were held by social fraternities and sororities. See "Annual Report, 1951-1952," Edith L. Stallings and Louise McBee (Dean of Women, 1947-1974) Papers (UGA 97-119), Box 1, Folder 6, 47.

¹⁰⁸ "Entertaining Outside Girls," *The Adelphean* Vol. 13, no. 2 (June, 1922), 445.

assumed outcome of many interactions between sorority women and their non-sorority counterparts. Even the way the woman phrases her warning suggested that she, herself, believed that sorority members were superior to the independent women, but that it would be indelicate to show any evidence of that sentiment.

No matter how important the *appearance* of friendly relations between sorority women and independents on a campus, the actual social interaction generally necessary for relationships to form between the groups did not appear to be a high priority for the sorority sisters or the independents. In the fall of 1937 at the Woman's College of Duke University, the administration asked each sorority to "give a tea for non-sorority girls."¹⁰⁹ The fact that the administration made this a requirement instead of the women in the various chapters coming up with the idea themselves, suggests a lack of interest by the women, themselves, in forging ties between the groups. Two years later, the Delta Beta Chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma at Duke had planned a picnic for the "town girls" (women who attended the college but lived with family or friends in Durham and not on campus), but ended up indefinitely postponing the affair when the original date fell through. Delta Beta had decided to fine each member seventy-five cents in the case of an unexcused absence from the picnic, suggesting that many of the sisters may have intended to skip the event.¹¹⁰ In the end, the chapter may have found it easier to call the whole thing off.

When required by the Duke Woman's College administration to hold a tea for non-sorority women in 1938, the Gamma Epsilon Chapter of Phi Mu decided to schedule the event during their chapter "inspection."¹¹¹ Chapter inspection involved a visit from one or more regional officers, or perhaps a national officer, who would evaluate the chapter as it stood on campus, as it measured up to other chapters of the sorority nationally, and on its ability to minister to its members. Since the Gamma Epsilon chapter appeared to have a somewhat

¹⁰⁹ November 22, 1937, Minutes, 1936-1941, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

¹¹⁰ April 17, April 24, 1939, Minutes, 1936-1941, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

¹¹¹ February 17, 1938, Minutes, February 1938-April 1945, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

contentious relationship with the regional and national sorority leadership – they had been reprimanded for lack of pledges, lack of finances, and “deplorably low” scholarship – the chapter officers may have hoped to improve their image by holding the tea at a time when they could present themselves as superior to the non-sorority women on campus.¹¹² They might not be Phi Mu’s best chapter, but they could at least, it seemed, try to prove themselves as “better” than women who were not in any Greek-letter group.

We can imagine that the independents on college campuses were equally unenthusiastic about events where they would necessarily be seen as the “have-nots,” partaking of the sororities’ “charity.” These mixers may have been particularly painful for women who had gone through rush only to end up without a bid from a sorority. As sorority leaders and some deans of women cooperated to create a campus culture that strictly adhered to middle and upper class mores, they simultaneously helped to position sorority women as campus role models and non-sorority women as underdeveloped, even uncouth, empty vessels, awaiting lessons of culture that sorority women ostensibly could provide. While some sorority and non-sorority women certainly formed (or maintained pre-existing) close friendships that rose above any issues caused by the seemingly incompatible groups, doing so could be complicated for women on both sides.

In Peggy Goodin’s novel, *Take Care of My Little Girl* (1950), ambivalent sorority pledge, Liz Ericson, realizes the true nature of the group she is about to join when the older sorority sisters demand that Liz perform a mocking impersonation of several non-sorority women she knows from her residence hall. “Do a take-off on that enormous fat girl and that funny little intense thing with glasses,” one sister ordered. “I saw you with them at the drugstore. Let’s have some Brooklyn accent.”¹¹³ This exercise, a form of hazing prior to initiation, immediately clarifies Liz’s opinion of the sorority. “I’m sorry,” she tells the group, “but I doubt if I’d fit in

¹¹² January 26, 1935, November 14, 1935, Minutes, November 1934-December 1937, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

¹¹³ Goodin, *Take Care of My Little Girl*, 137.

anywhere where I'd have to apologize for my friends and opinions."¹¹⁴ Liz has recognized that this sorority chapter teaches its members to disrespect people who seem, at a superficial level, "different" from them. With the lessons of sorority "good citizenship" built upon such a foundation, I argue that we might question its value.

As some deans of women aided their cause, national sororities worked to solidify their positions of prominence on college campuses. In an age when controlling the development of America's youth was a key concern for educators, psychologists, sociologists, as well as the general public, sororities could publicize their activities as integral to this task. In the following chapter, I examine sorority initiatives for members' social training in further detail to show how sororities' lessons reinforced white middle and upper middle class mores and how the groups functioned to ensure normative gendered behavior among its membership.

¹¹⁴ Goodin, *Take Care of My Little Girl*, 141.

CHAPTER FOUR: INSTRUCTION FOR LIVING BEAUTIFULLY

“During the four years of a college career a girl should develop social poise,” stated a 1938 National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) Publication. It was the work of the social sorority, the NPC reasoned, to provide a group influence to “correc[t] individual faults and cultivat[e] gracious social habits.” In their view, the sorority represented a microcosm of social relations in the world. More specifically, the sorority would monitor members’ behavior in an environment where “social conduct [was] discussed freely, and criticism offered where it [was] due.” While the sorority may have taken on the responsibility of offering social education to its members, the NPC clearly explained that it was the individual woman’s “personal responsibility” to abide by the lessons and in turn, contribute to the “success of social functions given by her group.”¹

In the previous chapter, I argued that sororities marketed themselves as instructors in social education for college women. In this chapter I focus on the lessons that sororities devised for their members as well as the ways that some chapters attempted to implement these programs. Sororities’ lessons worked to reinforce conventional notions of women’s behavior, particularly in regard to their sexuality; lessons to prepare women for heterosocial interaction and heterosexual dating with fraternity men emerged as the key point in this literature and the sorority culture. In the latter part of the chapter, I examine the increasing acceptance of drinking among students as an integral part of heterosocial activities on campus. The Greek-letter groups’ proclivity for drinking at parties and at date functions could serve to create a dangerous space for heterosexual interactions, particularly in a time when the consequences of sexual activity for female students far exceeded those for their male peers.

¹ “NPC Fraternities,” 1938, NPC Records, NPC Publications (41/82/800), Box 1, 9.

Guidebooks for “Living Beautifully”

The goal of “living beautifully,” as put forth by University of North Carolina (UNC) dean of women Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, resonated with students, university administrators, and sorority alumnae alike. If a woman appeared to deviate from socially acceptable forms of dress, behavior, or sexuality, behavioral experts, including psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, and university administrators could view her transgression as a sign of social “maladjustment.” For young women at college, in unfamiliar surroundings, with new people, and uncertain of campus norms, the duty of remaining firmly within the boundaries of socially approved behavior could be difficult, perhaps even confusing. Meanwhile, the *importance* of maintaining propriety was vital. While the dean of women’s office proposed to help women transition into the college lifestyle, expanding women’s enrollments hindered the university orientation programs’ efforts at individual student attention. Sororities’ firm guidance, which the organizations touted as similar to the supervision administered by the young women’s families back home, was meant to enable greater control over individual women than the dean’s office alone. The lessons of “ladyhood,” a national program of the sororities, were particularly well suited to feminize the atmosphere of majority-male, coeducational institutions in the South. These lessons required that members adhere to certain regulations for grades and attendance at sorority events as well as abide by suggested rules for behavior and appearance. As I have shown in previous chapters, national sororities continued their efforts to uphold white middle and upper class standards of behavior among their membership. Sorority literature, produced and distributed nationally by the groups throughout the period of this study, served to help new and veteran sorority woman alike abide by contemporary, white middle and upper class, gendered norms of behavior. In turn, by upholding these standards, members would assist their sorority chapter in presenting an “acceptable” public image.

Sorority etiquette and pledge training books, in effect, members' lesson books, instructed the women on everything from becoming active in campus activities, to the proper application of makeup, to cultivating a pleasant speaking voice, to the correct way to get in and out of a chair – which, apparently, was to “approach a chair from the side, then turn so the back of your leg touches the chair.”² In the area of chair etiquette, one set of authors from the 1930s noted that it was imperative that “in both sitting and rising all motion is below the hips, with easy grace dependent upon the flexibility of knees and ankles.”³ Bodily control and attention to detail were paramount in all activities. The handbooks' exacting standards demonstrated that the sororities' programs for social education could function to streamline the members' identities and morph them into the homogeneous, easily controlled group sought by deans like Helen Reich.

In some ways, these guides were similar to other rulebooks for women's behavior during the period. The women's student government associations or the Young Women's Christian Associations (YWCA's) at universities typically published guides to help acclimate incoming women students to the campus culture. Booklets from the 1920s and 1930s adopted an authoritarian approach, listing dorm closing hours and rules relating to noise, attendance at fraternity parties, “motoring,” and the necessity of chaperones (both at parties and while “motoring”). The *Handbook for Women Students at the University of North Carolina* in 1924-1925 also included important instructions about which *three* restrooms on campus the administration had designated for use by women students.⁴ In the post-World War II period, some guides shifted to a conversational tone that suggested advice given by an older sister or close friend instead of dictatorial campus regulations. These guides often included rules for

² *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, Stewart Howe Collection (26/20/30) Kappa Alpha Theta Publications, 12-13; Beverly H. Ballard and Margaret Ward, *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, Stewart Howe Collection (26/20/30), Delta Delta Delta Publications, 6; *Ladies First*, 1966, Stewart Howe Collection (26/20/30), Zeta Tau Alpha Publications, Box F-73, 2,4.

³ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 6.

⁴ *Handbook for Women Students at the University of North Carolina*, 1930-1931, 8; *Handbook for Women Students at the University of North Carolina*, 1924-1925, 6-7.

behavior, standards of dress, and explanations of campus traditions, all while reinforcing women's heteronormativity.⁵

Design for a Duchess (1962), a guide published annually by the Social Standards Committee of the Women's Student Government Association (WGSA) and distributed among female students arriving at the Woman's College of Duke University, suggested that women find a balance between their studies and participation in the wide range of social activities available at Duke. The booklet's title suggested that the college was in the business of fashioning young "ladies" in an upper class mold ("duchesses"), and its promise that women would "have the opportunity to develop [their] individuality within a provided framework," echoed the mentality of a sorority guidebook.⁶ Yet, the WGSA handbooks lacked the extensive concentration on social training and etiquette found in the sorority guides, along with the lists of requisite activities to instill those lessons. While the Standards Committee advised new students on "appropriate" clothing for a variety of situations – from class, to football games, to going into town, to attending cocktail parties and other "date" events – *Design for a Duchess* did not reach the level of detail in aspects of clothing, makeup, posture, and speaking voice as did some sorority handbooks. *Design* included a page of behaviors from which "duchesses" should refrain (such as borrowing things without asking, chewing gum, eating, or chatting in class, and being "perpetual grippers"), and rules for certain activities (such as sunbathing only in designated areas, wearing Bermuda shorts only on certain occasions, and abstaining from public displays of affection (presumed with male students) at dorm closing hours), but it did not pressure the women to go out of their way to overhaul their behavior, appearance, or personality.⁷

Although *Design* did not *require* that female students regularly attend heterosocial activities or go on a specific number of dates with men each week, the Social Standards

⁵ *Handbook for Women Students at the University of North Carolina, 1958-1959.*

⁶ *Design for a Duchess*, 1962, Order of the White Duchy Records, 1925-1968, Box 1, Reference, "Design for a Duchess," 1962, University Archives, Duke University, 4.

⁷ *Design for a Duchess*, 1962, 12, 19, 16-17.

Committee *assumed* that the women would participate in the campus' heterosexual dating culture. When the guide encouraged female students to get out and enjoy Duke's spring activities, including – “oh yes!” – men's spring athletics, the Committee reminded the women to “Watch your man!” During the seasonal dances, when “duchesses” sometimes “step[ed] out” as dates at male-only, or majority male campuses such as “Davidson College, N.C. State, U.Va., Annapolis, or the Ivy League,” the guide reminded the women to write “thank you” notes to their dates as well as their weekend hostesses.⁸ While social standards committees of women's student government associations and other women's student activities also provided guides designed to help female students conform to campus and popular social standards for white, middle and upper class women's behavior, these books were less exacting than the sorority-authored guides for organizational conformity.

Sororities' guidebooks and methods for monitoring members' behavior reflected the contemporary professional and popular interest in identifying students with possible behavioral “abnormalities” and helping them to correct these issues. Educational psychology, a growing specialization by the 1910s and 1920s, sought to define the “normal” development of children and adolescents.⁹ While taking into account individual differences in students, psychologists could test students for deviations from what they saw as “normal” behavior, then introduce therapies to guide these individuals back into the prescribed “normal” range. By the 1920s, historian Stephen Petrina notes, many psychologists “shifted responsibility for social failure and emotional maladjustment...to society and family tutelage,” arguing against the hereditary explanation offered by eugenicists.¹⁰ This mean that experts attributed individuals' displays of “undesirable” behaviors to “deficiencies” in their upbringings or their respective inability to “properly” interact with their peers, not to inherited, biological “abnormalities.” Following this

⁸ *Design for a Duchess*, 1962, 10, 8.

⁹ Stephen Petrina, “Luella Cole, Sydney Pressey, and Educational Psychoanalysis, 1921-1931,” *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 44, no. 4 (Winter 2004), 528, Fn. 8.

¹⁰ Petrina, “Luella Cole, Sydney Pressey, and Educational Psychoanalysis, 1921-1931,” 539.

approach, psychologists and other behavioral experts suggested that they could effectively treat what they saw as “maladjustments” in students, thus returning the individual to a “normal,” productive life as a contributing member of society.

Student personnel workers looked to the expertise of educational psychologists to help identify and counsel students who had difficulty adjusting to college life. Socialization through student activities was one method suggested for use by deans of students and other student personnel officers in helping students adjust to the new environment of the college campus and their transition from youth to adult. In 1929, educational psychologist Luella Cole of The Ohio State University advised that:

A well-developed college social life is by no means to be deplored. Rather it is highly desirable. It is natural and healthy for young people to be much together. And an adequate, well-rounded education should include the achievement of that social competency which is so important for both success and happiness in life.¹¹

Cole noted that student socialization needed balance with other aspects of the college experience and that some students might become overly social. She believed, however, that the overly social student was less problematic and less common than the case of the isolated, antisocial student. Without guidance and forced socialization, Cole contended, the antisocial student would only become more and more withdrawn from his or her peers.¹²

The emphasis on student socialization continued into the post-World War II period. As Indiana University dean of women and specialist in student personnel work Kate Hevner Mueller explained in 1961:

It might seem obvious to the activities director and the psychologist that the learning of social skills is a typical learning process and that the social program on the campus needs mature, experience, and authoritative guides, but it is only recently that college administrators and college faculties have begun to see that a successful program for

¹¹ Luella Cole Pressey, *Some College Students and Their Problems* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 1929), 46.

¹² Pressey, *Some College Students and Their Problems*, 46.

socialization and personal development requires as much planning, supervision, and co-operation from all parties as any academic subject-matter course¹³

In accord with contemporary opinion on behavioral guidance and “appropriate” student socialization, sororities offered guidebooks and training as methods to complement the efforts of student personnel administrators

Sororities saw the pledge period as the optimal time to mold the desired identity of new members. Generally, pledging lasted several months or for the semester following rush, leading up to the time when the sorority initiated the women into full membership. The 1927 *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, a national publication of the sorority, reported that, “pledges are most impressionable, ready to follow suggestions and examples of members.” The book instructed Kappa Alpha Theta (Theta) sisters to view each pledge as “an individual problem.” If she was “guided and helped rightly” the pledge would be “an asset, and if not, a liability.”¹⁴ By shaping new members’ behavior to meet accepted standards, sorority chapters sought to uphold, or improve, their standing on campus. In addition, Kappa Alpha Theta’s national leadership saw it as the chapters’ “duty” to “do everything possible to make pledges better students, better fraternity women, [and] better campus citizens.”¹⁵ This language suggests that the sorority leaders and alumnae *did* take seriously the groups’ efforts to educate young women for the campus “citizenship” that would prepare them for good citizenship in their communities following graduation.

In their attempts to make pledges into assets instead of liabilities, however, the sororities often resorted to strict policing of members’ behavior, appearance, and campus involvement to ensure that their chapter was well received by other students, and by fraternity men in particular. With such emphasis on the chapter’s image, the attention to the needs of individual members

¹³ Kate Hevner Mueller, *Student Personnel Work in Higher Education* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), 296

¹⁴ *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 1

¹⁵ *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 1

could easily fall by the wayside. As a precaution then, it seemed, the national leaders hoped that sorority sisters would act as pseudo-psychologists, identifying “types” of women they might encounter as pledges. The mental hygiene movement, which gained force in the United States during the 1920s, located “personality” as the central factor in mental health. Educational historian, Sol Cohen, notes that mental hygienists traced all behavioral “maladjustments” back to “faulty personality development, which had its roots in childhood.” In these years, Cohen explains, the “crusading zeal” of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene (NCMH) “aimed the [mental hygiene] movement at the broadest possible audience.” As a result, public attention focused on identifying personality “disorders,” such as “evasiveness, seclusiveness, passivity, introversion – or the ‘shut-in personality,’” all of which were designated by hygienists as “early symptoms of potential mental illness.” The mental hygiene movement concentrated on schools as the spaces in which to “correct” individuals’ “abnormal personalities” before, they believed, these individual quirks developed into mental illness.¹⁶ By seeking to identify the pledges as “types” of women who needed specific training based on their personality, sororities continued this hygiene work, albeit in an unofficial capacity. After “typing” the pledge, sorority members would then decide how to best tailor the sorority’s lessons to render a successful social education while remaking each of these pupils in the normative image set forth by the chapter.

While each individual chapter’s image might differ slightly, members would be expected to abide by suggestions and requirements set by their own chapter as well as the national organization. By the 1920s, Theta’s national prescriptions, designed to shape their chapters’ images, included participation in campus activities and heterosexual dating, attendance at social affairs, demonstration of hostessing skills, and an attention to “good grooming and proper clothes

¹⁶ Rooted in the Progressive reform movements around the turn of the twentieth century, and led by “reform-minded academicians, social workers, physicians, and psychiatrists,” the National Committee for Mental Hygiene (NCMH) began in 1909. See Sol Cohen, “The Mental Hygiene Movement, the Development of Personality and the School: The Medicalization of Education,” *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 23, no. 2 (Summer, 1983), 125-127.

for proper occasions” to create an “attractive personal appearance ” These behavioral standards, Theta’s national leadership held, would convey the image of Thetas as “good campus citizens” who displayed a successful “adjustment to social conditions” of college life ¹⁷

The authors of the Theta pledge training book supposed that women chosen for membership would possess a variety of personality types and levels of sociability Explaining how the members should “deal with” the “different types of girls,” however, indicated that sororities sought to establish less variation in their ranks Kappa Alpha Theta suggested that the most common type of girl (and the easiest to work with) was the “charming, vivacious, winning girl ” This type of girl, the guide book explained, had come from a home where “family influence has been for the highest ideals,” and she would be heavily involved in dating, dances, shows, and parties The authors apparently saw the “charming, vivacious” woman as the ideal without question Her “winning” character was somehow immediately perceptible and, the authors believed, she would almost instinctively know her “duty to her fraternity and her relation to the group ”¹⁸ The only thing the sorority members might have to teach the winning type of girl was how to budget her time for study so as to maintain her scholastic standing In other words, she actually needed little of the sorority’s social training and would fit right into the stylized picture of the fun, exciting, heterosocial life of a sorority woman

“Not very uncommon” the guide stated, was the “too studious type of girl ”¹⁹ This comment implied that a significant number of women came to college set on studying hard, taking coursework seriously, and getting a good education Yet, to the sororities, the studious woman presented a problem Each chapter sought to present itself as a popular sorority on campus by participating in extracurricular activities and gaining the admiration of fraternity men If too many chapter members spent an overwhelming amount of time studying, they would cut

¹⁷ *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 12-15

¹⁸ *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 1

¹⁹ *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 1

into the hours available for extracurricular involvement and heterosocializing. While sororities wanted intelligent girls among their ranks, a member who seemed *too* intent on matters of academics and earned the nickname “brain” or “grind,” might appear threatening to men. Studious members could undercut the “fun” image that sororities sought to project. Women who flaunted their intellect, advice columnists warned, would be unattractive to men and would remain dateless, perhaps ending up as culturally stigmatized spinsters.²⁰ Sorority members, the guide advised, “owe[d] it to her to try to overcome her one-sided system of living.” With so much time spent studying, the author chided, the bookish girl would “miss half of the joy of college life” if she did not “develop contact with people in a social way.”²¹ The job of sorority sisters was to help the studious pledge become *less* focused on academics and more interested in socializing and extracurricular activities. Ideally, sorority sisters would endeavor to help the new members adjust to college life by striking a delicate balance between the first two pledge “types,” but the guidebook’s language makes clear that the social butterfly, who devoted less time to books, was the sorority’s preferred model.

Yet another, but supposedly less typical, type of pledge was the “timid or reticent” girl.²² To help these young women become a part of the group, the book proposed that “special attention” should be given to the “timid, awkward, and socially inexperienced pledges.”²³ By “special attention” the guide meant that particular members would be specifically channeled into tasks of hostessing or heterosocializing to help the pledges of this type overcome what their sorority sisters perceived as their social shortcomings or inabilities. Social skills were important lessons to impart to students who would certainly need to interact with other individuals throughout the course of their daily lives. The prescribed activities for socially inexperienced

²⁰ Lynn Peril, *College Girls: Bluestockings, Sex Kittens, and Coeds, Then and Now* (New York, NY: W W Norton and Company, 2006), 207-216.

²¹ *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 1.

²² *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 1.

²³ *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 14.

pledges, however, may have led to forced interactions with others more for the good of the group image than for the benefit of the individual woman. The guidebooks held that by making sure that these “less sophisticated” girls were taking active part in sorority events, the guidebooks held, the groups could hope to produce their goal of a fully socialized “lady.” According to the sororities’ vision, to become a “fully socialized lady,” a member would follow the groups’ prescriptions for her activities and behave in the manner exhibited by the elder sorority sisters and alumnae. She would not be allowed to learn by her own mistakes, nor would she make her own decisions about “proper” behavior, for such missteps could damage the reputation of the entire house. The sororities’ training booklets suggested that any woman who failed to behave as the groups prescribed or to live up to their strictly defined standards was at best improperly socialized and at worst *not* a “lady,” the latter also a label which connoted the image of sexual impropriety. By limiting a member’s ability to choose her own course of action, sororities presented a skewed model of socialization that could actually inhibit a woman’s capacity to participate as a useful citizen.

To help members learn the behaviors that their national organization expected of them, the guidebooks offered an array of activities for the chapters to put into practice as teaching scenarios. Frequently, the handbooks advised sorority chapters to stage teas, dinners, parties, and formal dances that would give members the chance to learn and exercise their skills of socializing and hostessing. Delta Delta Delta’s 1937 publication *The Tri Delta Hostess* instructed members on the appropriate techniques for hospitality while entertaining. In fact, the importance of social events to train women at entertaining was a topic of discussion during the 1950 National Association of Deans of Women-National Panhellenic Conference (NADW-NPC) joint committee meeting. In a talk entitled, “Techniques in Education for Standards,” a Mrs. William Owen of Gamma Phi Beta, described the “creation of social situations which give our members training and pleasure too.” Undoubtedly, Mrs. Owen saw the sorority as fulfilling both social and

educational needs of women on campus, but the “training” aspect took priority. She listed “teas, coffees, et cetera,” as spaces where the women could, “observe and practice hospitality, thoughtfulness, graciousness and service by entertaining faculty, fellow students, alumnae, and needy children.”²⁴ In addition, proper care of these guests would provide positive publicity for the sorority chapter.

The Tri Delta Hostess included sections on appearance and personality, hospitality, entertaining, household routine, appearance in public, and rushing (in that order). The authors, Beverly Holtenhouse Ballard and Margaret Ward, geared these lessons toward life in the sorority house, but also designed them to translate seamlessly to a woman’s social life in adulthood. Although the authors put forth what they believed was a “modern” 1930s view of white women’s place in contemporary society, they were, in fact, limited by their own desire to identify themselves as cultural authorities on women’s lifestyles. Ballard’s and Ward’s writing hinted at their own conformity to conventional expectations for women as they devised their lessons to train sorority women for a distinctly white, gender normative, upper middle class or elite existence. Somewhat surprisingly, Ballard and Ward were recent graduates, not older alumnae with what might be seen as a greater cultural knowledge base to share with young women. Ballard was a 1932 graduate of the University of Washington, where she was a member of the Theta Alpha Chapter.²⁵ Ward had just graduated from the University of Texas in 1936, and was a member of the Theta Zeta Chapter.²⁶ The authors’ youth suggests that Tri-Delta may have hoped

²⁴ “Symposium on Standards of Behavior on the Campus and in the Chapter House,” March, 1950, NPC Archives, Committee File (41/82/50), Box 1, NPC-NADWAC Liaison Committee, 1947-1959, 15.

²⁵ *Tyee*, 1932, 66, 272, http://www.e-yearbook.com/yearbooks/University_Washington_Tyee_Yearbook/1932/Page_66.html, <http://www.e-yearbook.com/sp/eybb?school=122&year=1932&rpp=18&startpage=270&up=18>, websites accessed January 25, 2010.

²⁶ *Cactus*, 1936, 230, http://www.e-yearbook.com/yearbooks/University_Texas_Cactus_Yearbook/1936/Page_230.html, website accessed January 25, 2010.

to produce, for its members, a guide that presented the sorority's standards in a contemporary manner and that pertained to the experiences of young women of the day.

While the book's foreword began with the statement that "persistent change in social ideals attendant upon the gradual emancipation of women...has freed her from the stuffy inhibitions and more artificial existence which her forbears were obliged to endure," it quickly moved on to say that "the basic elements of breeding and good taste are too universal and everlasting to be confined to one period, and a lady is a lady, whether in Victoria's period or our own."²⁷ Oddly, Ballard and Ward did not seem to notice a contradiction between their proclamation that 1930s women had been freed from "stuffy inhibitions" and from having to conform to an "artificial existence," even as the remainder of their booklet contained extensive requirements for women's behavior. Their comments suggested that they saw the image of the "lady" and the standards for her behavior as constants in American culture and, furthermore, that they were quite fine with the stagnation. In the pages that followed, the authors' advised the sorority women to exhibit behaviors and a physical appearance that would keep them safely within the boundaries of accepted white middle and upper class standards of ladyhood, confining their behavior just as they claimed its liberation.

Ballard and Ward claimed that the "cultural advantages offered by college education" and the "benefits derived from group life in the sorority" would enable the 1930s "coed" to "live in perfect accord with the times and people of her world." According to the authors' vision, however, the sorority woman's world would be limited to other white, middle and upper class individuals who also had experienced these "cultural advantages." To "live in perfect accord" with that limited future, the sorority woman needed to receive social training that would prepare her specifically for culturally acceptable activities and interpersonal relationships in adulthood. The contemporary coed, the authors guided, was "smart, gay, attractive, and very independent,"

²⁷ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 4.

but not *overly* independent. “Convention,” they reminded, “is as old as time itself and, rather than rebel against it, the college girl should conform gracefully and willingly.”²⁸ The statement might act as the motto of sorority life.

By reinforcing the propriety of conventional behavior, the sorority trained its members to maintain conservative standards. Still young women themselves, Ballard and Ward seemed eager to promote the sorority woman as a modern American woman. As Elaine Tyler May has noted, female movie stars of the 1930s portrayed women who were “strong, autonomous, competent, and career oriented.”²⁹ But this picture of independent white womanhood caused public alarm and could appear particularly threatening to middle and upper class white men. The last thing sorority women wanted to do was frighten away male students (most often fraternity men) who might become their dates or future romantic partners. While it seemed that Ballard and Ward wished to present the sorority woman as being in-step with contemporary popular culture images of modern womanhood, they tempered this portrayal with constant reminders that a “proper” sorority woman would know when to bow to convention. If a sorority sister were to become *overly* independent in any aspect of her life, it could spell disaster for these groups that needed cohesion and uniformity to function. Ballard and Ward appeared to be well aware of that fact and were direct in their admonition against nonconformity.

Appearance and personality were the primary points of instruction in the *Hostess* because of their importance to the overall image of the sorority. “A sorority’s personality,” the authors explained, “is expressed through the appearance and behavior of its members. There are various reasons why a sorority ‘rates’ on campus, but, almost invariably, the group is a leader whose members are uniformly well groomed and posses[s] a good share of *savoir faire*.”³⁰ “Rating” was a term conceived by sociologist Willard Waller in his 1937 article “The Rating and Dating

²⁸ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 4.

²⁹ May, *Homeward*, 35.

³⁰ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 5.

Complex,” which described the system of popularity rankings he observed among undergraduates at Pennsylvania State College. Male students “rated” well as dates on criteria such as membership in a “better” fraternity, owning fashionable clothes, having ample spending money and an automobile, and displaying good manners and dancing ability. Female students also rated highly as dates for having a fashionable wardrobe, a “smooth line,” and dancing ability. The most important criteria for women to rate as a date, however, was their popularity. Thus a woman’s desirability as a date relied primarily on her ability to have many dates and appear sought after by men.³¹ With their comments, Ballard and Ward basically admitted that a sorority chapter’s popularity was based on superficial, “at-first-sight” assessments of the membership as a whole. As sociologist Lisa Handler has noted in her study of contemporary sorority women, sororities “make decisions for the ‘collective good’ of the group” and these are “filtered through the goal of attracting male attention.”³² So while sororities’ national leaders and some deans of women advocated social training to benefit the individual woman, we see that the actual desired result of social training was to make individual members more attractive to men. Since finding a marriage partner signaled “success” for a woman during this period (and arguably, to the present day) simply gearing sororities’ social training toward preparation for heterosexual dating, could be seen as beneficial to the individual woman’s development.

While maintaining the physical appearance of the sorority chapter was the first step to “rating” well on campus, the ability of members to competently express themselves served to confirm the group’s “cultured” status. To ensure that members held sufficient knowledge to be quality conversationalists, the book offered a list of magazines intended to provide appropriately cultured reading material for the sorority house. Ballard and Ward recommended that sorority houses subscribe to magazines from two groups: “(1) current reviews such as *Time*, *Reader’s*

³¹ Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 26-27; Willard Waller, “The Rating and Dating Complex,” *American Sociological Review* Vol. 2, no. 5 (October 1937), 730.

³² Handler, “In the Fraternal Sisterhood: Sororities as Gender Strategy,” 249.

Digest, *The Atlantic Monthly*, [or] *The American Mercury*, and (2) women's magazines such as *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *House and Garden*."³³ They placed greater importance in the women's magazines, as they also listed both *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* as essentials in an earlier section of the booklet, entitled, "Why Don't You." "Why Don't You" was a list of "requests" of the sorority women made by the authors that seemed designed to "improve," or normativize, members' appearance and personality. These magazines, they explained in somewhat vague terms, frequently contained "personal culture articles from a youthful point of view." Since most of the other items on the "Why Don't You" list pertained to "appropriate" attire, makeup application, exercise routines, and personal hygiene, it is probably safe to assume that these topics fell under the heading of "personal culture."³⁴ Yet, according to the authors, the women need not actually "read extensively or with effort" the articles from any of the suggested publications. To find "material for conversation" Ballard and Ward advised that, "just a few minutes each day for one article, or...scanning a magazine, will bolster your store of information surprisingly."³⁵ For the purpose of sororities' social training, being a good conversationalist did not necessarily mean possessing great knowledge about a subject – or even a firm grasp of the subject; a woman just needed to know enough easily retrievable information to make pleasant, superficial conversation in social settings. Again, as with physical appearance, superficiality and image were more important than substance.

The guide recommended that sororities regularly dispense advice on personal grooming, fashion, and etiquette. Ballard and Ward suggested that members "get down" their *Emily Post*³⁶ (apparently Post's etiquette book needed thorough attention, while other reading materials only required a few minutes of skimming) or contact alumnae members to give presentations on topics

³³ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 8.

³⁴ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 7-8.

³⁵ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 7.

³⁶ The authors refer to Post's *Etiquette, The Blue Book of Social Usage*. See Emily Post, *Etiquette, The Blue Book of Social Usage*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls, 1955).

of personal culture. They placed even greater emphasis on physical appearance and clothing choices than had the Kappa Alpha Theta leaders' guidance in the previous decade. Clothing for campuswear should be simple, explained Ballard and Ward, but the simplicity also required women to "lend" charm to their appearance with their "bearing." To exact a charming bearing, they suggested that women, "Hold the head high (a good hairdo looks better that way), throw out the chest, and, by all means, pull in the abdomen." As part of achieving their ideal posture and physique, the authors mentioned that there was "nothing like golf, tennis, badminton, swimming, and so forth, to give a gal clear bright eyes, and a really hard, flat tummy!"³⁷

The authors even gave directions for teaching women how to move gracefully about a room. In order to practice their poise, they instructed sorority chapters to have meetings where "each girl [would] walk twice across the room while the chapter observe[d] to criticize and make helpful suggestions."³⁸ Through *negative* reinforcement, members would learn how to conduct themselves as ladies so as to represent their sorority in a suitable manner and fulfill the image expected of members. Instead of a supportive group of women, working together to strengthen each member's abilities and self-image, the picture of sororities painted by the guidebook suggests an organization where personal criticisms stood to undermine women's confidence, perhaps even turning them against one another. Ballard and Ward did not seem concerned that a sorority chapter's routine criticism of its members might lead to group discord or might teach members to forfeit tact and kindness in personal relationships in pursuit of the chapter's image goals. In fact, throughout the guidebook, the two women neglect to discuss how sorority women should act toward *one another*. Their suggestions of how to appear and act were designed to make the women appeal to a public audience *outside* of the sorority chapter, and their discussions of hospitality were tailored to fit interactions with alumnae, university administrators, and other "adults;" lessons of everyday friendship and civility among the "sisters" are surprisingly absent.

³⁷ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 6.

³⁸ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 5-8.

The book's segment on entertaining – a sort of condensed version of Post's *Etiquette* – explained such intricacies as the “correct forms for invitations” to teas and formal dinners, how to organize a tea, what to wear to the tea, how to serve tea, ordering flowers for the events, how to make introductions among dinner guests, how to set a formal dinner table, and also included menus for different meals. “Household routine” covered basic “manners,” including “table etiquette,” advised the appropriate attire for women in public areas of the sorority house, and discussed how to address, and interact with, house servants.³⁹ While good manners and shows of courtesy to guests were essential social skills, the *Hostess*'s lessons for sorority women seemed ill prepared to supplement the basic homemaking needs of most post-collegiate women. Instead, the advice might better suit the practices of a wealthy socialite. This lack of attention to the everyday issues encountered by many young housewives, such as budgeting and consumer spending, meal preparation, household cleaning, and child care, again suggests that sorority leaders did not view these topics as part of their social training program. They seemed to suggest that commonplace household duties were the purview of home economics departments, and perhaps, that sorority women would not have to concern themselves with such work since it might be taken care of by servants or part-time domestic help. With specific social training fitted to the upper class image that sororities peddled to prospective members, the organizations left the lessons of wifhood and motherhood to home economics courses that were likely filled by many sorority women.⁴⁰

The guide's reference to house servants meant servants *within* the sorority house, but it also clearly presumed that sororities expected their members to employ household help in the future and that the women should be prepared for handling such issues. The *Hostess* held that a sorority woman's “attitude toward the servants [could] reveal the whole groundwork of her character.” While Ballard and Ward reminded readers to be “kindly, courteous, and appreciative”

³⁹ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 15-31.

⁴⁰ Ordell Griffith, a student at LSU in the early 1930s, recalled that most women students majored in either education or home economics. Ordell Griffith Interview, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, LSU, 28.

of the servants' work, they also cautioned them against becoming too familiar with "the help." Here we can see a parallel to the class-conscious interactions between sorority women and non-sorority women on campus that I discussed in the previous chapter. The members' contacts with servants would, the authors seemed to say, provide a way for sorority women to assure themselves of their own middle or upper class status in relation to working class women. Ballard and Ward chose the name, "Mrs. Reilly," for their hypothetical cook, illustrating a presumed Irish ethnic identity for their guidebook's imagined domestic workers.⁴¹ They intended the cook's surname to symbolize her position as both a domestic worker and a member of a non-Anglo-Saxon immigrant population, which had only assimilated into American citizenship over the previous half century. As such, this would reinforce, for the Tri-Delta readership, the image that Mrs. Reilly (who, the authors noted, could also be addressed "by her given name, Kate"), was from a class *and* ethnic background that should mark her as less "civilized" than the sorority women.

Although Ballard and Ward adhered to the popular stereotype of the Irish, female, domestic workers in their discussion of "servants," the majority of domestic workers in this period were African American women.⁴² In reading this fact against the guide's protocol for "servant" (employee)/sorority woman (employer) relationships, the authors' example also provides a tacit commentary on race relations in the 1930s. Relationships between the servants in the house and the sorority chapter members (potential employers of servants), Ballard and Ward noted, should remain professional and the servants should always show deference, calling the members "by the surname prefixed by Miss." The sorority women, however, were free to refer to cooks and servants by their first name only, if they so chose. "Personal friendships between servants and chapter members" were "not advisable" as they could lead to "partiality, discontent,

⁴¹ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 30.

⁴² Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond*, 86, 90.

and serve to decentralize the authority of the domestic routine.”⁴³ The decentralization of authority was the most dangerous issue for the sorority women. By befriending the servants – likely to be African Americans – the white sorority woman stood to upset the delicate balance of power in the racially and class-based social hierarchy.

The tutorials provided by *The Tri Delta Hostess* and similar publications circulated by national sororities presented a lifestyle to which sorority women could aspire but, in reality, probably did not live. Nevertheless, this type of social education implied a level of culture and class status that the alumnae and national officers hoped to convey as their own. As they seized on the opportunity for positive publicity generated by a “school of manners” for women students, the sororities made social education and the related lessons of citizenship training their primary platforms.

Sororities continued to promote social education in the late 1960s and early 1970s, even as students protested against universities’ rules of *in loco parentis*, demanding that campus administrators do away with many detailed regulations for students’ behavior – and particularly those directed at female students.⁴⁴ While the detailed directives of sorority handbooks and pledge training books from the 1920s and 1930s might have seemed overly-concerned with matters of etiquette and the streamlining of members’ personalities and behaviors, the fact that similar books, printed by the groups decades later, echo the same sentiments, demonstrate sororities’ persisting support of conservative and elite social standards for women in society. A boon to deans of women and other university administrators concerned with changing mores and the “deterioration of morals” among college students of the 1960s, sororities sought to represent the feminine, well-mannered, appropriately attired “lady” student. While southern deans of

⁴³ *The Tri Delta Hostess*, 1937, 30.

⁴⁴ Jeffrey A. Turner notes that similar student protests took place at African American colleges in the South. Turner, *Sitting in and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South, 1960-1970* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 138, 178-179. For examples of the changes in rules specifically governing female students during these years, see Dean, “Women on the Hill,” 16-22.

women like Katherine Kennedy Carmichael combated the “activist student” of the era, whom she described as afflicted by, “the cult of the ugly,” and “accompanied by the dirty, the meanly dressed, [and] the foul word,” women’s Greek-letter organizations represented ideals of southern ladyhood that many white southerners feared might cease to exist.⁴⁵

In 1966, Zeta Tau Alpha (one of the sororities founded in the South) printed *Ladies First*, a guide for sorority women much like *The Tri Delta Hostess*. The booklet provided beauty advice delivered in a tone reminiscent of an overly attentive mother and held fast to conventional standards for women’s attire and personal grooming. The book stated that “of course” as a lady, “you have on a girdle.” “All ladies, fat or thin, wear girdles.” It noted that the Zeta lady should also “strive toward a hundred strokes with the [hair]brush a day,” and included a two page segment on “Twentieth Century Glove Etiquette.”⁴⁶ This type of instruction, which a number of college-aged women would find increasingly inappropriate by the late 1960s, may have been included precisely because of its out-modishness. While girdles remained sought after staples of women’s undergarment collections in the late 1960s, they existed alongside less restrictive underwear designs, which may have been preferred by college women for daily wear.⁴⁷ For sorority women who already found the myriad rules of their organizations stifling – regulations that dictated their appearance right down to their underwear may have been seen as superfluous and thus disregarded. If some sorority chapters or individual sorority women were revising their

⁴⁵ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, “Notes Concerning the Activist Student Life at the University of North Carolina,” July 8, 1970, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Box 3, Folder 85.

⁴⁶ *Ladies First*, 1966, 7, 12-13.

⁴⁷ Survey of advertisements in issues of *Mademoiselle* magazine, 1968-1970. As Joan Jacobs Brumberg explains, by the mid-1950s, both physicians and retailers from the “reenergized corset and brassier industry” promoted the idea that young women and adolescent girls should wear “training bras” and girdles to provide “junior figure control.” The “training” of bodily tissue provided by bras and girdles was supposed to help adolescent girls train their bodies to meet physical standards for beauty during the time. If these women learned that girdles were part of a professionally recommended routine to achieve physical beauty and successful womanhood, some may have been unwilling to give them up and would likely advise their younger cohort to wear them as well. See Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls* (New York, NY: Random House, 1997), 112-114.

standards of appearance or behavior, national officers wanted to remind them of the alumnae's expectations for their behavior and the importance of upholding tradition

One thing that *had* changed between the 1930s and the 1960s was the candor with which the guidebooks delivered the message that sorority women's main purpose was to attract male attention. More specifically, they explained, women should attract attention primarily with their physical appearance. *Ladies First* contained a segment entitled "Hey! Look Me Over" that purported to offer ways for young women to build self-confidence and be happier by "feel[ing] that [they] look[ed] pretty"⁴⁸. This confidence, however, was supposed to result from being "look[ed] over" by men. The sorority woman might feel confident that she was attracting the male gaze and that she might be asked on dates by popular male students. Yet, any power that she might *feel* that she possessed in that situation, had to be, in a sense, allowed by the men. The guide's message suggested that a young woman could not be content with her own accomplishments if they did not involve male approval of her physical appearance.

In a way, *Ladies First* echoed the themes of writer Helen Gurley Brown's then recent book, *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962). Brown demanded acceptance of unmarried women in American society, while she argued for their empowerment through conventionally male avenues of authority, such as building a professional career and actively pursuing heterosexual relationships. Brown's stance angered some feminists, who felt that her message was actually disempowering to women, as it firmly grounded their individual value in their physical appearance. Yet, her book was important for turning public attention to the fact that many women participated in, and enjoyed, premarital sexual activity and that doing so did not make them morally reprehensible.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Ladies First*, 1966, 6-7

⁴⁹ Jennifer Scanlon, *Bad Girls Go Everywhere: The Life of Helen Gurley Brown* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), ix-xiii

While the conservatively positioned sorority leaders most likely did not want to admit that sorority women, whom they considered to be the “good girls,” had the same desires as those women they believed to be “bad,” the wording of *Ladies First* suggested the influences of shifting popular sentiment regarding how a woman should conduct herself in heterosexual relationships. Whereas earlier guidebooks instructed members to look and act their best so as to attract as dates the men the sorority “preferred,” the late 1960s booklets were not so circumspect in their approach to sexuality. It seemed that if the women obtained an audience of leering fraternity men, who may or may not have taken interest in anything about them beyond their bodies, then they had achieved the goal the sorority held for them. Sorority training appeared, over this period, to move away from the idea of members’ self-improvement for their own benefit and toward an explicitly stated goal of pleasing male students.

Educational Programming

Sorority education programs complemented the advice in guidebooks like the *Hostess* and *Ladies First*. Typically incorporated into the groups’ regular meetings, one object of the education programs was to introduce pledges and active members to the cultural activities, including the arts, music, and travel, which fit popular ideals of an elite lifestyle that sororities aspired to portray. Program topics also promoted the idea that sorority education shaped “well-rounded” women who, while versed in popularly perceived “elite” interests listed above, would also demonstrate an understanding of contemporary issues and would take part in community activities. By displaying an awareness of life beyond the sorority chapter, college sorority members would support their national leaders’ claims that sororities trained good citizens. The notion of the “cultured” individual, as defined by a person’s familiarity with elite pursuits, returns to my argument from Chapter Two, regarding sorority women’s preoccupation with classifying themselves as members of the nation’s “civilized” population. Early twentieth century sorority women used their manufactured ties to classicism and their “cultivated” appreciation of “elite”

interests as signifiers of their social status and claims to “Americanness.” By the mid-twentieth century, sororities continued to demonstrate their intention of training “cultured” individuals (meaning those who upheld “elite” standards of behavior, maintained “elite” interests, *and* practiced good citizenship) as a way to establish their groups as socially superior, both in the categories of class and race. Significantly, the national sororities designed their educational programs to complement the organizations’ agendas, not to encourage open-mindedness among members. Lessons in conformity, the sororities’ programs shaped members minds and bodies to the organizations’ standards.

National sororities sent suggestions of program topics to local chapters. *Chapter Keystones*, a monthly newsletter of the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority, featured a lengthy list of ideas for programs in a 1963 mailing. Kappa arranged the topics under the headings, “academic,” which included art, music, book reviews, drama, travelogues, psychology, philosophy, religion, politics, and vocations, and “non-academic,” which covered home crafts like jewelry, knitting, hat-making, and flower arranging, and “school sponsored activities...that the chapter should attend.” Some of these activities included lectures, operatic or symphony concerts, plays, and school sporting events.⁵⁰ By implementing topical discussions, inviting speakers (or having members of the sorority give presentations), and attending culturally enriching community events, the sororities would immerse their members in opportunities for self-betterment. The ideological slant of some of these sorority programs likely depended on the individual speakers chosen for the events. Without knowing how Kappa’s national leaders desired possible topics such as psychology, philosophy, religion, politics, or vocations to be discussed (or if they voiced an opinion at all), it would seem that different chapters could interpret these topics in a variety of manners, depending on whom they chose to lead the program.

⁵⁰ *Chapter Keystones*, No. 9, September 1963, Delta Beta Chapter Records, Box 1, Printed Material, Chapter Keystones, 1961-1962.

To remind the sorority members of the premium placed on having a “cultured” demeanor, an Alpha Chi Omega handbook asked them, “How is your S.Q.?” Instead of intelligence quotient, the S.Q. stood for “social quotient.” For these women the S.Q. was apparently the preferred goal over sheer intelligence. The book explicitly linked the sorority ideal of “culture” as composed of “elite” appearances by explaining that an individual’s social quotient “improves with culture.” It suggested ways that Alpha Chi Omega chapters might add culturally enriching activities to their existing slate of events. The ideas included making a group trip to a museum, having fireside book reviews on current best sellers, and inviting an investment broker “to speak on the stock market and other related business subjects.” The guide proposed learning about business matters so that the members could be “well-informed wi[ves] someday,” not so that they, themselves, could become shrewd businesswomen.⁵¹ These programs did, however, provide sorority women with opportunities to learn about new topics that could have turned their interests toward a career, further education, or a new hobby.

Educational programming could also supplement sorority handbooks’ lessons in beauty and personal grooming. In 1961 and again in 1967, the Gamma Epsilon chapter of Phi Mu at Duke University scheduled a representative from cosmetics company Merle Norman to be their guest and present a program for the educationally geared Philomathean Hour. The representative would “demonstrat[e] make-up techniques” using members as models.⁵² In 1968, they hosted a beauty advisor who presented a program on the “Koscot Beauty Plan and Products.”⁵³ These types of programs reinforced the impression that a woman’s key objective should be the

⁵¹ *For She’s An Alpha Chi: A Handbook for Collegians*, 1961, Stewart Howe Collection (26/26/30), Alpha Chi Publications, n.p.

⁵² February 2, 1961, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records; April 27, 1967, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

⁵³ November 7, 1968, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records. In a side note, within several years, Glenn W. Turner, the man behind the Koskot Plan was under investigation by thirty state Attorneys General, the Federal Trade Commission, the Securities and Exchange Commission, [and] private suits,” that alleged he was running a pyramid scheme with his cosmetics distribution enterprise. See, Andrew Tobias, “Do You Sincerely Want to Give Glenn Turner Your Money?” *New York Magazine* (February 28, 1972), 34.

cultivation of an attractive physical appearance. The literal *attraction* of attention from the opposite sex, we learned from the message conveyed by Zeta Tau Alpha's *Ladies First* (1966), was supposed to lead to dates and, eventually, a husband. Since marriage was still the ultimate success for young women, that these remained crucial lessons for sorority women is unsurprising.

In addition to lessons in personal beautification, Gamma Epsilon's fraternity education program did extend to current social issues, such as racial integration. Duke had desegregated its graduate programs in 1961 and would desegregate its undergraduate colleges in the fall of 1963.⁵⁴ In February and March of 1963, the chapter devoted three of their educational programs to the issue, which was rapidly enveloping many southern university campuses. At the first meeting, a chapter member presented a program on the National Student Association (NSA). During this period, the NSA was a left-leaning organization with chapters at universities throughout the United States. The group, which I will discuss in further detail in Chapter Seven, frequently directed attacks at Greek-letter organizations because of their discriminatory membership clauses. The chapter minutes do not specify the Gamma Epsilon speaker's slant on the NSA, but her framing of the talk suggests an adversarial tone. A key point of her speech was the announcement that the college's Panhellenic Council was requesting that all sorority chapters ask their nationals for information on their policies on racial discrimination.⁵⁵ Thus, the chapter's discussion of NSA may have taken place within a larger discussion of the sorority's discriminatory policies, and the NSA's involvement in efforts to end racial discrimination on university campuses. As I will discuss in Chapter Seven, the NSA was actively agitating for an end to racial discrimination on campuses and targeting Greek-letter groups as part of their fight.

⁵⁴ Melissa Kean, *Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 193-194.

⁵⁵ February, 21, 1963, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

With sororities' national leaders portraying the NSA as the enemy, it seems likely that Duke's presentation did not portray the organization in a positive light.⁵⁶

The second meeting in the series on racial desegregation included further discussion on Phi Mu's policies for membership. Gamma Epsilon's chapter president read aloud Phi Mu's national policy on membership selection stating that "the fraternity [did] not have an explicit racial discrimination clause, *but* [emphasis mine] reserve[d]the right of selection by democratic vote."⁵⁷ This meant that Phi Mu did not have a written policy of discrimination in its national constitution or bylaws, but that its members could *choose* to discriminate against individuals if they so desired. Ironically, the national policy stressed the "democratic" nature of these decisions, which allowed all current members a vote on whether to allow certain individuals as members. The democratic vote, however operated as a mechanism to ensure that Phi Mu *could* exclude prospective members whom did not meet the organizations' ideals – and that included Phi Mu's ideals for race and religion. So, while not explicitly stating that the sorority endorsed discrimination, they also did not rule it out. The sorority's vague position on the matter left open the possibility of an unwritten policy of discrimination. Participation in Phi Mu's "democracy" then extended only to those individuals whom national sororities deigned rightful citizens.

As Duke moved toward undergraduate integration, Phi Mu stated its policy to assure its members that they would not be forced to invite African American female students to join. While I will further discuss national sororities' stand on discriminatory membership clauses in Chapter Six, the practice of following unwritten rules of discrimination, taken by Phi Mu, was common among other Greek-letter organizations. Gamma Epsilon's educational program for the following month may have already been scheduled through the Woman's College administration or the Panhellenic Council, or it is possible that the February meeting aroused enough concern over integration that it led to the discussion topic for March. At the March meeting, a Gamma Epsilon

⁵⁶ See Chapter Seven, 356-362.

⁵⁷ February 28, 1963, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

member presented a report from a meeting with Mr. Campbell, a “public relations expert” from the National Council of Churches (NCC), on “the problem of integrating the Woman’s College.”⁵⁸ Formed in 1950, the NCC is an umbrella organization of Protestant churches in the United States. Starting in the late 1950s, the NCC took an increasingly social activist stance focused on racial issues.⁵⁹

“Mr. Campbell,” was likely Will Davis Campbell, a southern Baptist minister, and at the time, the director of NCC’s “Southern Project” to foster race relations.⁶⁰ Campbell had served as director of the University of Mississippi’s religious life from 1954 to 1956. He left to take the NCC post after his invitation of liberal speakers to the university’s 1956 Religious Emphasis Week (REW) caused controversy throughout the state.⁶¹ Campbell, who historian James F. Findlay describes as “tolerant and nonjudgmental” but “at bottom...a moderate,” may have visited Duke to lead student discussions about what to expect during the process of integration and how to help it occur with as little difficulty as possible.⁶² The way in which individual students and student groups received this message, however, it is not always easy to discern. Some Greek-letter organizations spearheaded efforts to keep their campuses racially segregated. The fact that the Gamma Epsilon secretary chose to describe the integration of the Woman’s College as a “problem,” suggests a negative perspective on the impending change. What we do know from the Gamma Epsilon minutes, in this instance, is that the chapter *did* sponsor discussion of the racial integration issue facing its members. Whether many of Gamma Epsilon’s members were supportive of integration, were whole-heartedly opposed, or were simply wary of social change, this final presentation likely spurred a lively discussion among the chapter. While

⁵⁸ March 7, 1963, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

⁵⁹ James F. Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 29, 37-38.

⁶⁰ Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, 22-26.

⁶¹ Charles W. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), see Chapter 7.

⁶² Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, 25.

these meetings seem to express the type of citizenship education that sororities claimed to provide, it is important to remember that this particular series of educational programs were devised to deal with what the sorority perceived as a threat to their organization and the way in which they selected their members.

The sororities intended the various fraternity education programs to increase the cultural mettle of their members, but the programs also were intended to clarify that the groups were concerned with things beyond parties and dances. Yet, even these supposedly less frivolous concerns could be presented in such a way as to diminish their educational value. As in the suggestions of *The Tri Delta Hostess*, the recommended readings and attempts at educational activities were often limited to a superficial demonstration of knowledge about a topic, or to a highly classed and gendered interpretation of the daily activities of the “modern woman.” While we can assume that sorority chapters heard divergent opinions from members, particularly at programs such as Gamma Epsilon’s discussion of campus integration, the sororities’ national leaders did not intend the educational programs to promote free-thinking or encourage differences of opinion among members. The sorority leaders’ assumptions that a majority of women were in training to be good helpmates for their husbands showed their limited view of lifestyles appropriate for group members. The promise of “social capital” inherent in sorority membership, meant that sororities’ “educational training” provided an advantageous public relations program built around the supposed production of socially graceful and culturally aware young women.⁶³

⁶³ Pierre Bourdieu defines “social capital” as the “aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.” In this case, membership in a national sorority imparts a significant “volume” of social capital, as the “size of the network of connections” the member can draw upon and the supposition that the connections, themselves, possess high volumes of capital (whether economic, cultural, or symbolic). See Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Anderson (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1986), 248-249.

And in the end, a positive public image was more important to the societies than teaching sorority members how to relate to different people and new ideas.

Enacting Standards

Since the first decade of the twentieth century the NPC had recognized the importance of establishing social standards for collegiate sorority members as a way to make sure that the young women joining the societies would continue to uphold the high ideals of womanhood that the alumnae had set forth as active members when they founded their societies.⁶⁴ In 1919, the NPC had adopted a statement of “standards of ethical conduct” for all sorority women at its biennial meeting. The ruling was primarily concerned with maintaining harmony among the various sororities and assuring that individual members understood the need to “prevent publicity” of internal, organizational problems or of group social events.⁶⁵ By limiting the publicity about social events, the NPC hoped to deter critics who seized on Greek-letter groups’ tendencies to stage lavish parties and other events that highlighted their elevated social status in relation to that of independent students. Individually, sororities created standards committees and other governing bodies within chapters to ensure that members gained instruction in the ideals of their individual group as well as followed its rules for behavior and appearance.

According to the minutes of the Delta Beta chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma at Duke University, the group used the committee as an authoritative body to “discipline” and “make suggestions to pledges.” Instead of having individual sisters responsible for disciplining pledges, the standards committee would “mete out punishment.”⁶⁶ In 1939, the Social Standards Committee of Duke’s Gamma Epsilon chapter of Phi Mu arranged to have a woman visit campus “to hold individual conferences with the girls in order to suggest improvements in their personal

⁶⁴ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 76-79.

⁶⁵ Dalgliesh, *The History of Alpha Chi Omega, 1885-1948*, 481.

⁶⁶ October 13, 1931, Minutes, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

appearance, et cetera.”⁶⁷ In one instance when a member of Gamma Epsilon felt that a pledge’s behavior was inappropriate, she recommended that the offender be called before the Senior Council. The member reported hearing “repeated stories...concerning [the pledge’s] actions.” At the following meeting, the President of Gamma Epsilon announced that after a discussion with the pledge in question, the girl had “decided that it would be better to let her pledge run out and be renewed only when she made her grades and could be initiated.”⁶⁸ It is unclear what specific actions by the pledge led to the sorority’s disapproval, but as I have mentioned previously, possibly damaging behaviors for young women might include public drunkenness or displays of sexuality. In any case, the chapter decided to exercise prudence in extending sisterhood to a woman who might bring disrepute to the entire group by engaging in activities that could be perceived as “misconduct.”

As historian Leisa Meyer has shown in the case of the Women’s Army Corp (WAC), another all female organization, the regulation of women’s behavior was integral in producing an image of “sexual respectability” among the group’s members. By forbidding public drunkenness and extramarital sexual activity, WAC leaders, like those of sororities, sought to control the outward appearance of women’s behavior to ensure that the overall reputation of the group remained untarnished.⁶⁹ For Gamma Epsilon, instead of trying to change a woman’s actions after she was a member, it was often easier simply to refuse her membership from the outset. If a prospective member displayed “inappropriate” behaviors (or if the woman’s current behavior *suggested* that such “improprieties” might occur), then the sorority members would see her as

⁶⁷ April 17, 1939, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

⁶⁸ October 26, 1936, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records; November 2, 1936, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

⁶⁹ Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane*, 68-69.

unworthy of sorority membership Through her actions, the young woman had marked herself as not of the same class or caliber as the sorority chapter she wished to join ⁷⁰

Yet, in cases where the character or appearance of new sisters just needed tweaking, the use of etiquette guides, educational programs, and standards committees could be quite useful Kappa Kappa Gamma's 1944 publication, *Instructions for Pledge Training for Kappa Kappa Gamma* proposed psychological profiling of pledges as a way for chapters to "develop" desired "traits" in the women "by active means" An older sorority member would be assigned to the pledge as her "pledge mother" or "big sister," and was supposed to watch over her, guiding her into productive membership The big sister's goal was to "emerg[e]" from a year of pledge training "with a protégé who [wa]s a healthy specimen of normality" Even behavioral specialists admitted that "normality" was a subjective term, and that individual differences should be taken into account A "normal" woman would be socially mature, able to interact successfully with others while making a positive contribution to society ⁷¹

As I have explained, for a pledge to be a "specimen of normality," within her sorority, she would need to conform to the sorority's standards of middle class behavior and dress, as well as participate enthusiastically in sorority meetings and activities Kappa advised that the big sister use a system of "guidance sheets" to record the pledge's progress throughout the year She would evaluate her assigned pledge by sitting down with her for regular conversations that should

⁷⁰ The WAC leaders, Meyer explains, were less concerned with "whether a Wac had actually engaged in heterosexual intercourse with a male soldier but rather whether there was an 'appearance' of impropriety generated by the actions of a Wac and her soldier date" The WAC's "Code of Conduct" and "strict enlistment standards" were critical components in creating the image of Wacs as "good" women This system contrasted the Wacs with those "bad" women who "acted outside of the bounds of conventional morality" The actions of women who participated in "bad" behavior, Meyer notes, "were largely blamed on their inferior educations and their class and race backgrounds" See Meyer, *Creating GI Jane*, 132, 69

⁷¹ In 1947, the American Council on Education Studies Committee in Personnel Work described "normality, or mental healthiness" as quantitatively, rather than qualitatively, different from the pathological or mentally ill "The reactions of the mentally ill are more exaggerated and unrestrained, but they are the same *kinds* of reactions as for the healthy Further, many of these unrestrained activities are left over from childhood and differ from healthy adult reactions in that they are immature, unsocialized, and not acceptable as behavior for the mature member of society" See "Mental Health and Symptoms of Ill Health," in Kate Hevner Mueller, et al, *Counseling for Mental Health* (Washington, D C American Council on Education Committee on Student Personnel Work, 1947), 24

seem, the booklet stated, like a “casual and confidential chat rather than a prying cross-examination.”⁷² The intent, however, *was* to cross-examine the young woman and to develop specific pledge training to remedy her perceived social deficiencies. The big sisters would facilitate the work of the chapter’s “personnel committee” by giving the committee “a full report on the adjustment of each pledge” to the sorority’s standards for her behavior.⁷³

The Delta Beta Chapter at Duke used the suggested personnel committee to influence desired behaviors in members. While the Kappa standards committee was an “executive body” that saw that the chapter ran smoothly, the personnel committee existed to “make sure that girls [were] happy” and “congenial.” It was “not necessarily” a disciplinary body.⁷⁴ One task of the personnel chairperson was to collect criticisms of members from the other members. At a meeting in 1940, the committee chairperson announced that the committee would delay delivering the criticisms until after the rushing period, “since they are not so constructive that they can be changed over-night.” Her comment suggested that some members had much to improve about themselves and that to bring up sisters’ shortcomings in the emotionally charged environment of rush could do more harm than good for the sorority as a whole.

By 1946, the committee used an awkward arrangement where the personnel chairperson would give the collected criticism(s) to the best friend of the member being criticized. The best friend would then have to decide how to break the news to the girl.⁷⁵ While the personnel committee gave members instruction on how to comport themselves at the sorority’s meetings, it also counseled the membership at large on their everyday behavior, asking the women “to be conservative in action, dress, and speech.” Each week, the committee would post a “watch bird”

⁷² *Instructions for Pledge Training for Kappa Kappa Gamma*, 1944, Stewart Howe Collection (26/30/30), Box F-28, Kappa Kappa Gamma Publications, 15, 17.

⁷³ *Instructions for Pledge Training for Kappa Kappa Gamma*, 18.

⁷⁴ February 13, 1947, Minutes, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

⁷⁵ February 5, 1940, Minutes, Delta Beta Chapter Records; March 6, 1946, Minutes, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

on the bulletin board “telling Kappas what not to be seen doing.”⁷⁶ The Delta Beta chapter had replaced their criticism sheets with the euphemistically entitled *compliment* sheets by 1949, but the basic premise of the personnel committee remained the same. By monitoring the appearance and behavior of the individual members, the sorority could engineer the group’s image to fit their national standards for white womanhood as well as southern, regional standards of white, ladylike propriety.

Dating, Drinking, and Propriety

“Everyone comes to college to achieve something different,” explained the Kappa Kappa Gamma pledge training guide. “Some come to gain an intellectual education, some to build a vocational education. Many come to achieve a husband.”⁷⁷ The carefully controlled sorority member would become, the organizations believed, the successful adult woman, popular among other women and, most importantly, desired by the right sort of men. Since the primary object of sorority training was to prepare women for their expected roles in contemporary society, the groups devoted great effort to readying members for dating and marriage. As I argued in Chapter One, the purpose of social sororities at coeducational schools in the South evolved during the twentieth century, from supportive, women’s-only clubs to organizations that heavily promoted heterosocializing. Even the time devoted to women’s-only educational programming at sorority meetings could focus on questions of female-male relationships. Again, taking the place of the conventional family and the church, the sorority might enlist seasoned experts to offer parental guidance in the areas of dating and adult heterosexual relationships.

In 1939, the Delta Beta chapter hosted Dr. J. Deryl Hart, professor and surgeon at the Duke University Medical School, who gave a talk on “Men and Women Relationships.”⁷⁸ By the early 1950s, when early marriage and the creation of a solid, nuclear family played a critical role

⁷⁶ November 18, 1946, Minutes, Delta Beta Chapter Records; September 29, 1947, Minutes, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

⁷⁷ *Instructions for Pledge Training for Kappa Kappa Gamma*, 19.

⁷⁸ December 3, 1939, Minutes, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

in national civil defense, the Gamma Epsilon chapter of Phi Mu arranged a series of their educational programs to highlight these issues⁷⁹ A Dr Phillips visited the chapter on several occasions to speak on “Catholic-Protestant Marriages,” and “Problems of Marriage ” They also invited Dr James T Cleland, Dean of the Duke University Chapel and Professor of Preaching at the Duke University Divinity School, to speak about “Interpreting the Marriage Vows ”⁸⁰ When experts were not available, the fraternity education chairperson might lead the program At a 1955 meeting, the chairperson facilitated discussion on the topic, “What Qualities You Want in a Husband ”⁸¹ These talks, like the other forms of social education, served to impart knowledge that society believed was part of female students’ necessary preparation for adult womanhood They also established standards for women’s behavior toward the opposite sex and in heterosexual relationships

The programs mirrored efforts at “Family Life Education” (FLE) courses, the precursors of which had become popular on many university campuses starting as early as the 1920s⁸² As historian Jeffery Moran has noted, increasing public acknowledgement of female sexual desire, particularly in the interwar period, intensified efforts by educators, sociologists, and psychologists to establish sex education courses that stressed the danger of venereal disease as a deterrent to premarital sex By the World War II era, trends in sex education had shifted from the use of scare tactics to a focus on marriage education that emphasized preparation for family living (at the expense of frank discussions about sex) Family Life Education courses, Moran explains, were “intensely interested in the question of sex roles ”⁸³ Contrary to conventional understandings,

⁷⁹ For discussion of the perceived importance of strong families as a means of civil defense during the Cold War, see May, *Homeward Bound*, 90-95, Laura McEnnany, *Civil Defense Begins at Home Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties* (Princeton, NJ Princeton University Press, 2000), 4-5, 72-78

⁸⁰ See May, *Homeward Bound*, 17-20, for discussion on importance of marriage in the nuclear family in the Cold War era, November 5, 1951, November 15, 1951, June 7, 1952, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records

⁸¹ November 10, 1955, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records

⁸² Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern*, 116

⁸³ Moran, *Teaching Sex* , 113, 144

social scientists in this period proposed that masculine and feminine characteristics were not biologically determined at birth but, instead, were, as Moran notes, “achieved through individual effort and a supportive environment.”⁸⁴ In addition, as I noted earlier in the chapter, Americans in the post-World War II era sought stability by reaffirming what they believed were “appropriate” gender characteristics in women and men. The “Marriage and the Family” (FLE) courses taught students how to achieve the “appropriate” gender characteristics and to prepare them for marriage and family living where they would ideally be confined to specific behaviors based on their gender.

The implementation of these programs in sorority chapters speaks to Americans’ preoccupation with the achievement of successful marriages in general, and to the magnitude of interest *among* college women of this era in the preparation for marriage. By holding these educational sessions, sororities catered to popular demand among their membership and demonstrated that they could fill the gaps in women’s education supposedly left by the liberal arts curriculum. Sororities worked to help college women in the South ready themselves to become successful housewives, not successful career women.

To reach the socially approved goal of successful housewife, touted by FLE classes and sorority education programs, a sorority woman first had to secure a husband. Again, sororities’ programs of social education facilitated the process. With regularly scheduled social events that offered the prospect of introducing women into heterosocial groupings, sororities became an integral part of the campus dating culture. Deans of women and other campus administrators witnessed the increasing occurrence of dating and heterosocial mixing on coeducational campuses. Here, as with other issues of women students’ behavior, deans appeared to appreciate the role that sororities could play in molding student values in dating activities.

⁸⁴ Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 144.

Dating, which had become a primary part of university student culture during the 1920s, offered the possibility of social acceptance as well as social impropriety for young women.⁸⁵ Through careful instruction, sororities could help ensure that dating was a “wholesome” experience for their members. Like other private clubs and organizations in white, southern society, sororities and fraternities could “provide further insulation,” from those persons that middle and upper class whites saw as socially undesirable partners, “creating social opportunities in which courtship could occur within narrow class circles.”⁸⁶ Yet, instead of occurring completely “under the scrutiny of adults,” as historian Susan Cahn explains of adolescent dating in this period, the practice of sorority dating took place under the watchful eyes of numerous sorority sisters.⁸⁷

With a number of other young women closely observing and judging one another’s dating life, the members had ample opportunity to learn the “do’s” and “don’t’s” of dating in their campus culture and to discuss proper dating rituals with their sisters. In her discussion of the development of treating among working class women and men, Elizabeth Clement has argued that young women learned from each other what behaviors were considered “respectable,” noting that, “girls looked to each other to define acceptable and unacceptable modes of exchange.”⁸⁸ Clement’s working class girls attempted to push the limits of sexuality and receive “treats” (in the form of entertainment, material goods, or rent payments) without being publicly branded as prostitutes. While many sorority members (along with middle and upper class college women not in sororities) had spending money and did not actually need men to pay for their entertainment, Clement explains that, by the 1930s, the dating system absorbed the treating model, along with the expectation that women should repay their male dates with sexual favors.⁸⁹ In the cases of

⁸⁵ For sources, see discussion on dating in Chapter One.

⁸⁶ Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings*, 38.

⁸⁷ Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings*, 38.

⁸⁸ Clement, *Love for Sale*, 56.

⁸⁹ Clement, *Love for Sale*, 227, 223, 212.

both the working class women and the middle class college women, the discussions about these systems of exchange began in homosocial spaces. Within these discussions, she explains, “young women negotiated and renegotiated the boundaries of respectable behavior.” Like working class women in all-female settlement clubs, the sorority women also used their group “as a forum to work out their own ideas about sexuality.”⁹⁰

For sorority sisters and pledges, taking part in these discussions about their dating adventures served as a means of group bonding (through the sharing of secrets) and as a tool for educating the younger women about “appropriate” dating practices as well as which men they should view as potential dates. Beyond offering friendly advice and room for discussion of respectable dating behavior, sororities also moved to control members’ dating habits when they threatened to bring embarrassment to the group as a whole. Again, sororities’ pledge handbooks and etiquette manuals provided women students with behavioral guidelines. In this case, by offering suggestions for heterosexual dating practices, sororities hoped to head off any behavioral improprieties before they might occur.

The 1927 *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book* recommended introducing pledges to “the college social world at one or more formal parties.” At coeducational universities, the guide explained, this introduction was paramount. It would give pledges a chance to “know the chapter’s friends and the most worthwhile men students.”⁹¹ The sorority was making the decision for members about which men on campus were supposedly worth their time and which ones were not. In cases where sorority chapters disliked their pledges male friends, the book’s authors suggested that the sorority could easily overcome the issue by introducing pledges to the “preferred type” of men. While the guide did not detail the characteristics of the “preferred type” of men, sororities typically pressed their members to date fraternity men. Thus the authors most likely assumed that that the “preferred type” of men would be the highly desirable, white, middle

⁹⁰ Clement, *Love for Sale*, 57.

⁹¹ *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 14.

to upper class fraternity men – involved in campus activities, well-dressed, well-mannered, possessing ample spending money and perhaps a car, and known and liked by other sorority sisters.

To accomplish the introductions between pledges and potential suitors, the authors explained, “informal social events should be frequent.” In order for sorority sisters to meet the pledges’ male friends and check up on the women’s dating conduct, Kappa Alpha Theta recommended that sisters accompany pledges on “double dates.” Sisters could use the knowledge gained during these outings to help the pledges “correct any shortcomings in social matters,” or in some cases, like that of the Gamma Epsilon pledge mentioned earlier in the chapter, to decide they no longer wished to invite the girl into the sisterhood.⁹²

Just as they influenced members’ basic social abilities, the sororities also used peer pressure to affect necessary changes in a pledge or active member’s dating habits or perceived moral rectitude. Katherine Kennedy Carmichael epitomized this viewpoint in a speech to the Alpha Epsilon Chapter of Alpha Chi Omega sorority at the University of Alabama in 1956. She praised sorority life for helping young women to “develop wholesome attitudes, through group pressure, toward the opposite sex.” For Carmichael, it seemed, group pressure exerted a positive force in these situations. Carmichael admitted that she might “worry about the inward manifestation of morality” in sorority women, but knew that she would not have to worry about the members’ “outward manifestation” of morality.⁹³ Her frank comment implied that she suspected that many young women harbored thoughts about and desires to participate in sexual activity. Carmichael expressed an understanding of women’s sexual expression on par with what proponents of companionate marriage had advocated in the 1920s and 1930s when she, herself, had been a college student. Yet, she believed that most young women, and certainly sorority women, would abide by middle class social standards for their sexual behavior. She

⁹² *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 14.

⁹³ Carmichael, “The Sorority Woman Moves Into the World of the Future,” 17.

acknowledged that women had sexual impulses, but also that these impulses could be controlled by sorority training. The sorority woman, Carmichael stated, would exhibit proper behavior in her interactions with the opposite sex. “I know that she won’t sit on a young man’s knee in public places,” she explained, as “sorority sentiment forbids this.”⁹⁴ In Carmichael’s mind, it was not “immoral” for a young woman to think or wonder about sex, but any *behavior* that publicly suggested that a woman *was* thinking about sex or engaging in sexual activity would cast doubt on her moral standards. Again, physical control and self-restraint were the hallmarks of a model, southern, sorority woman.

Sorority social events in public places, carefully chaperoned by college professors and their spouses or sorority alumnae, allowed women to meet with, and possibly date, the “preferred” men in respectable settings. When sorority chapters arranged such events, they strongly encouraged all members and pledges to attend. In 1932, Duke’s Delta Beta Chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma passed a motion that attendance at their upcoming dance be compulsory unless the president excused the member’s absence.⁹⁵ Sorority members who did not attend the heterosocial, Greek-letter events missed opportunities for social instruction and for introduction to prospective dates. Additionally, if a group did not produce a large turn out for social events it might be poorly received, or not invited, by fraternities in the future. To remain among the popular women on campus, a sorority needed to show that its members were fun loving, sociable, and attractive as dates.

The *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book* suggested that the “too studious” type of pledge, and subsequently, sister, would “miss half the joy of college life if she [did] not develop contact with people in a social way.”⁹⁶ The guide warned that if the pledge remained “too studious,” she could suffer from social maladjustment that would damage her successful

⁹⁴ Carmichael, “The Sorority Woman Moves Into the World of the Future,” 17.

⁹⁵ April 26, 1932, Minutes, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

⁹⁶ *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 1.

navigation of adulthood. To foster proper social adjustment, the guide advised that the sorority chapter assign duties to the overly studious pledge that would force her into social situations, preparing her for in the highly social worlds of both the college campus and adult life. By giving the studious girl a chance to leave her books and interact with others (most notably, men) the sorority would help assure that she emerged from college as what contemporary psychologists, sociologists, and educators would term a “well-adjusted” young lady. While it was admirable to appear serious about grades and study habits, sororities found “book worms,” undesirable.⁹⁷

Most of the sororities’ lessons for their members addressed issues of appearance, personality, and overall attractiveness, all of which could affect sorority chapters’ popularity with the fraternities on their campus. Sorority women realized that being popular with the top fraternities on their campus meant that the women in their chapter must be appealing to these fraternity “big men on campus” (“BMOCs”) who appeared to have their pick of sorority women for socializing and dating. On each campus, sororities were in competition with one another to attract the attention of the top fraternities and vice versa. The top tier sororities and fraternities on a campus typically mixed socially and dated one another’s members, the second tier groups, likewise, mixed together and so forth on down the ratings.⁹⁸

Still, within each tier, there were heated rivalries to establish group prominence. In these power struggles, the fraternities held the upper hand. While sororities could invite fraternities to

⁹⁷ During the 1920s and 1930s, educational psychologist Luella Cole Pressey of The Ohio State University, chronicled “problems” of health, sociability, study habits, family background, morality, and vocational choice of college students. If left untreated, she believed, these problems would lead to “habits of work grossly inefficient and inadequate, personalities painfully warped by emotional maladjustments, character traits inadequate for the stresses of adult life, training so irrelevant to vocational aptitude and opportunity that they become permanent occupational misfits.” See Pressey, *Some College Students and Their Problems*, 1-3. For more on the field of educational psychology and the work of Luella Cole and Sydney Pressey, see Stephen Petrina, “Luella Cole, Sydney Pressey, and Educational Psychoanalysis, 1921-1931,” *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 44, no. 4 (Winter, 2004), 524-553. In her 1958-1959 annual report as Dean of Women at the University of Georgia, Edith L. Stallings reported a number of excellent women students, with “good manners and personal appearance above the average,” and with a “minimum of ‘book-worms.’” See “Annual Report, 1958-1959, Edith B. Stallings and Louise McBee (Dean of Women, 1947-1968) Papers (UGA 97-119): 1, Box 1, Folder 15, 56.

⁹⁸ Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 191.

have a mixer with them, it was common to rely upon a pre-existing friendship or romantic relationship between a woman and a man from each group as a go-between. For the most part, social convention held that men were the active pursuers in these relationships. Women, on the other hand, were to remain passive and wait for the men to express interest. As a result, fraternities maintained an advantage over sororities in determining various chapters' popularity on campus. The strict control sorority chapters sought to exercise over their members was directly influenced by their need to achieve a group image that was attractive to the men in their fraternity equivalents, if not the top fraternities, at their school. Each year, sororities sought new attractive members to reinvigorate the interest of campus fraternities. While this criteria had to figure prominently in the selection of pledges during sorority rush, fraternities, who could "call the shots," so to speak, in the areas of dating and mixer invitations, did not have to seek out their pledges for the express purpose of appealing to sorority women.

While a fraternity chapter would *prefer* that every member be a handsome "BMOC," the issue of *physical* appearance was not as important a factor in choosing new fraternity members as it was for sorority chapters selecting pledges. In the case of fraternity pledges, shortcomings in physical attractiveness could be offset by sophisticated clothing, ample spending money, or an elite family background. In short, a man's physical appearance was not so explicitly linked to his social success as it was for a woman. Since public expectations for white women placed a premium on finding a husband (preferably one with financial means, or promise thereof, to support a family), women may have been less concerned with potential male partners' physical attributes than with their potential to be a good "provider." Also, as coeducational college populations in this period remained majority male, more male students could afford to be discriminating in the women whom they chose to see socially. So even if a sorority chapter was not highly impressed with all of the members of a fraternity that invited them for a mixer, the women were not necessarily in a position to turn down the fraternity's invitation. For women,

receiving attention from white, middle or upper class, college men – even if they were not the most desirable on campus – was better than failing to attract *any* suitable male interest. Since a white woman’s status in society depended on her success in gaining the attention of a white, middle or upper class man who could support her, these men retained the power in social relationships both on campus and in society at large.

Sorority literature made clear that women students should be interested in heterosexual dating as part of preparation for “well-adjusted” ladyhood. “Throughout her college career,” the authors of *For She’s an Alpha Chi*, a 1961 Alpha Chi Omega etiquette publication, revealed, “dating is one of the concerns uppermost in every girl’s mind.” “Whether you are a new arrival on the college scene or an upperclassmen, the main concern for girls is where to meet the dates [they] desire.”⁹⁹ Tellingly, the book ascribed a strong interest in dating to *all* girls, not just those in sororities. All women students arrived at college receiving the message that they should make heterosocializing and dating a primary goal. Particularly salient in the Cold War era was the idea that college aged women should have marriage and family as their primary goal after graduation and be readying themselves for that eventuality. As the nation sought a return to normalcy in the wake of the Depression and World War II and national leaders urged white, middle class women to fulfill conventional social expectations by remaining in the home, college aged women increasingly saw their adulthood mapped out as wives and mothers. While heterosocializing and dating had also been key objectives for sorority women in the 1910s through the 1930s, the practice of dating in these decades was less likely to lead women directly into marriage than in the post-WWII period. Marriage was still a socially prescribed goal for women in the interwar period, but wifedom might take a backseat to further education or a career immediately after

⁹⁹ *For She’s an Alpha Chi: A Handbook for Collegians*, 1.

college. Or, if a woman did marry and continued to work outside the home, she and her partner might choose to delay or forego starting a family.¹⁰⁰

The Alpha Chi Omega guide recommended extracurricular activities as excellent places to meet “the young men who share interests similar to your own,” and explained that as Alpha Chi sisters they had “an extra special opportunity to pursue that fellow quite undetected at [their] *open houses* [their emphasis].”¹⁰¹ This bit of advice seems to suggest that sorority women were free to mingle with (and possibly date) men who shared their interests, but were not necessarily members of a fraternity. Yet, on the other hand, the phrase, “young men who share interests similar to your own” also reminded a woman that she should be seeking partners from similar socioeconomic backgrounds and with compatible ideals for adult living – aspects which may have led her back to a fraternity man – even in non-Greek extracurriculars. Furthermore, the authors note that “open houses,” at which most invitees would likely be fraternity men, provided “an extra special opportunity.” So while the sorority did not appear to prohibit its members from taking an interest in non-fraternity men, there was, again, a hint at what the 1927 Kappa Alpha Theta pledge book had termed “the preferred type” of men.¹⁰²

Women also had the chance to meet eligible men through blind dates. *For She's an Alpha Chi* authors cautioned against accepting a blind date, however, with “someone whom none of your sisters have ever heard of or you can't seem to place at all.” An unknown man, they warned, also had unknown “intentions,” which meant that there was a chance that he might not have the same standards for respectable behavior ostensibly held by a sorority woman or a man known by her sisters.¹⁰³ In reality, an unknown *or* known man might have “intentions” of having sex with a woman, and perhaps having it against her will. It was up to the elder sorority sisters to advise new members about the men on campus they perceived to be “fast,” (meaning that these

¹⁰⁰ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 172-176.

¹⁰¹ *For She's an Alpha Chi A Handbook for Collegians*, 1

¹⁰² *Kappa Alpha Theta Pledge Training Book*, 1927, 14.

¹⁰³ *For She's an Alpha Chi A Handbook for Collegians*, 3.

men expected their dates to engage in petting and other forms of sex play without establishing a firm romantic commitment beforehand). By guiding the pledges and younger members away from men who would not understand and respect the women's need to abide by middle class standards for their sexual behavior, the elder sisters were also safeguarding the sorority's reputation. If they did not educate their members about the hazards of overtly sexual behavior or publicly flaunted promiscuity, the entire group could suffer as a result. The whole chapter could be damaged by gossip suggesting that all members condoned the young woman's sexual behavior, or perhaps followed her example. In the worst-case scenario for a chapter, a member might become pregnant after a sexual encounter. In that case the woman would be banished from school and the sorority but other students would likely assume that the reason for her disappearance was an unwed pregnancy, which would reflect poorly on the other sisters' standards of behavior.

Of course, the sisters did not always share these warnings about sexually aggressive men. In some instances, male sexual aggression, particularly fueled by alcohol, was seen by the sorority women as a "normal" occurrence.¹⁰⁴ This type of behavior by fraternity men may have been an increasingly commonplace issue for sorority women. According to historian Nicholas Syrett, by the 1920s, fraternity members regularly relied on stories about and exhibitions of their sexual prowess as a way to prove their masculinity among their fellow fraternity brothers.¹⁰⁵ Sometimes information about a potentially dangerous man might be overlooked if he was from a top fraternity and took an interest in one of the sorority's members, especially if a sorority chapter hoped to secure their reputation with the man's fraternity as good all-around girls, desirable as dates. *Take Care of My Little Girl* (1950), Peggy Goodin's novel about a woman's experience of

¹⁰⁴ Christina Simmons discusses the public belief in "male sexual necessity" during the pre-World War II period and a tendency for marriage manuals of this era to rely on the convention of "male initiative" in sexual activity. The normalization of a dominant male sexuality could teach young women to expect, or resign themselves to, boorish male behavior, which today would be recognized as sexual harassment or assault. See Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern*, 205-209.

¹⁰⁵ Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 183-186.

pledging a sorority during her freshman year of college, illustrates how sororities pressured their members to date the “preferred type” of men. The sorority pushes the novel’s protagonist, Liz, to date Chad, a “BMOC” from a popular fraternity. Liz is not greatly interested in Chad, but she agrees to be his date to his fraternity’s formal after one of her sisters notes that he’s “good advertising” for their sorority. She explained to Liz that Chad “always dates the smoothest sororities...last year he had his pin on a Kappa and an Alpha Chi at the same time.”¹⁰⁶ Ironically, an individual woman might have her reputation sullied by either submitting to or fighting off, an unwanted sexual advance by a popular male student, as the men would brand her a “slut” for submitting and a “tease” if she did not. Either action would mark the woman as a less desirable as a future date.

The *For She’s An Alpha Chi* section on dating culminated with the goal of many college aged women of the 1950s and 1960s: “going steady” and “perhaps being pinned.” They advised that a sister give serious consideration before agreeing to this step. “[B]e sure you are ready to give up the dating merry-go-round for that one fellow. Going steady or being pinned brings with it a great deal of responsibility and maturity that is best to be sure you have.” “But if you do choose to accept,” the authors assured their readers, “the pinning ceremony can be one of the happiest and most momentous times of your college days.”¹⁰⁷ Historians have noted that “going steady” with someone did not necessarily lead to marriage. Instead, having a “steady” provided social security and allowed young couples to mimic marriage without actually being married. This 1950s and 1960s dating fad also further pressed boundaries for sexual activity before marriage, as going steady or being pinned suggested a deeper commitment by the couple, even if, in reality, that was not always the case.¹⁰⁸ The Alpha Chi Omega guidebook seemed to acknowledge that going steady was likely a step toward increased sexual activity for both

¹⁰⁶ Goodin, *Take Care of My Little Girl*, 59.

¹⁰⁷ *For She’s an Alpha Chi A Handbook for Collegians*, 1961, 3.

¹⁰⁸ See Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 49-55; Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable*, 115-124.

partners. By cautioning members to exercise “responsibility” and “maturity,” the authors may have been tacitly suggesting that going steady was a euphemism for sexual activity, including sexual intercourse.

By providing a social skill set and an apparent entrée into the campus dating scene, sororities enticed women looking to meet the cultural expectations for heterosexual relationships and their lives as adult women. A survey of students at the Woman’s College of Duke University during the 1952 school year, and again in 1961, showed that many women entered college with the perception that sorority women received more dates than non-sorority women. In the 1952 survey, 311 sorority girls and eighty-nine independents believed that sorority membership increased dating opportunities while 196 sorority girls and 143 independents did not think membership helped in dating.¹⁰⁹ Although the majority of women surveyed in 1961 did not cite the increased opportunities for dating as their deciding factor in joining a sorority, a majority did believe that membership increased dating opportunities. Significantly, the surveyed women who fell into the category “freshmen pledges” were, by far, the most likely to answer that sororities offered greater chances for dating (seventy-seven answering “yes,” forty-nine “no”).¹¹⁰ It is unknown whether or not sorority membership actually increased a woman’s chance of getting a date, but it likely increased her chances of meeting men. The power of perception surrounding sorority membership and dating reveals the extent of the cultural emphasis on dating during this time and the pressure on the college woman to be an active part of the heterosocial dating scene.

An increasingly important component of the heterosocial dating scene for both women and men was the consumption of alcohol. Drinking had long been a pastime for male students but, as Paula Fass explains, it was less-typically an issue for “respectable” women students in the 1920s, who, “were effectively barred from indulgence by tradition.” Drinking, however, was

¹⁰⁹ “Report of the Sorority Evaluation Committee,” 1951-1952, Duke University Panhellenic Council Records, 1938-1996, University Archives, Duke University, Box 1, Reports and Evaluations, 1949-1959.

¹¹⁰ “Panhellenic Questionnaire,” Fall, 1961, Duke University Panhellenic Council Records, 1938-1996, Box 1, Reports and Evaluations, 1960-1969.

most pronounced among fraternity men.¹¹¹ As sorority women became more frequent guests at fraternity houses and dates for fraternity men, they, too, became a part of the drinking culture.

In spite of Prohibition, 1920s socialites promoted social drinking as the acceptable, even “smart” thing to do, opening the door for drinking by women desiring to appear “modern.”¹¹² The popularization of the alcoholic cocktail, to make the most of low-quality, bootleg liquors, diluted the potency associated with hard liquor, introducing a suitable beverage choice for women drinkers.¹¹³ Furthermore, the wording of the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act, which outlawed transportation and sale of liquors, but provided for some domestic production and consumption of wines and beers, repositioned private establishments over saloons as the province of drinkers.¹¹⁴ The serving, and responsible drinking, of alcohol thus became “domesticated” among Americans of all social classes and young women more easily became equal partners in the youth, drinking culture.

While women student’s drinking did not become a noted concern for deans of women or sorority officials until World War II, a number of women did choose to drink socially during their college years. Nevertheless, sorority guidebooks and educational programs did not discuss the drinking habits of the ideal member, suggesting that sorority officials either believed that not enough drinking was going on to be of concern, or had decided to turn a blind eye to the activity. By addressing even the possibility that members might regularly be found in the presence of alcohol or taking part in a campus drinking culture could set off alarms among educators and parents, as well as critics of Greek-letter groups.

¹¹¹ Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 310, 318-319.

¹¹² Lori Rotskoff, *Love on the Rocks: Men, Women, and Alcohol in Post-World War II America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 39-40.

¹¹³ Rotskoff, *Love on the Rocks*, 38-39; Catherine Gilbert Murdock, *Domesticating Drink Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870-1940* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 109-110.

¹¹⁴ Rotskoff, *Love on the Rocks*, 38.

At the University of North Carolina between 1928 and 1936, a number of female students appeared before the Women's Council (the executive and judicial arm of the university's Women's Association) for drinking offenses. Several of the instances took place in fraternity houses, and all led to social probation for the women involved.¹¹⁵ While most of the women were contrite and owned up to their drinking when brought before the council, one particular case exemplified just the type of behavior that parents, sorority alumnae, university administrators, and psychologists increasingly saw as cause for public fear about the direction of female students' moral standards. In 1936, a UNC housemother reported to dean of women Inez Koonce Stacy that a female student, Sallie Gray* had been "staying out and not observing rules."¹¹⁶ Stacy requested that Sallie not return the following semester, but she ignored the dean's warning. In the process Sallie intercepted a letter to her father, written by Stacy, which detailed the reasons for her expulsion. When Sallie reappeared at the start of the spring term, she continued her unruly ways, drinking and visiting men's apartments. The council reported that, eventually, someone brought Sallie to the dean's office while she was intoxicated. There she admitted to drinking and "lik[ing] it" and to "immoral relations" with one of the men whose apartment she visited. The university expelled Sallie and the Women's Council closed her case by noting, "There is some question as to whether she is pregnant." The men involved with Sallie do not appear to have received any punishment as the Women's Council did not mention any corresponding action being taken by the men's council. Two of the men had reported to the Women's Council, that

¹¹⁵ I surveyed the minutes for these years and noted five instances of reported drinking. Two of the instances took place at fraternity houses. One woman in 1931-1932 appeared before the association on several occasions for repeated drinking offenses. See November 12, 1928, February 6, 1929, Volume 3: Minutes of Student Council, 1928-1929; December 6, 1931, May 12, 1932, Volume 4: Minutes of Woman's Association, 1929-1933; November 27, 1934; January 6, 1936, Volume 5: Minutes of Woman's Association, Student Government of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Records, 1919-2000 (#40169), Series 4.

¹¹⁶ The asterisk denotes my use of an ethnically matching pseudonym for the name of the student in the case described. See January 6, 1936, Volume 5: Minutes of Woman's Association, 1933-1936.

Sallie “threw herself at boys,” and that they had “felt sorry for her.”¹¹⁷ The men’s comments suggested a belief that Sallie had problems of “social adjustment” that led her to behave as she did. The men chose, however, to keep their concerns for her mental well being to themselves until they had taken advantage of what they saw as her “insecurities” (or, her willingness to engage in heterosexual sex) and were forced to answer to the Women’s Council. Significantly, the Council did not appear to find the men at fault for their actions – society “understood” and excused men for acting on their heterosexual desires, but medicalized the same actions when engaged in by women. The Council may have seen Sally’s actions as stemming from “immaturity” or “improper socialization” – “problems,” that behavioral experts argued, could have been corrected with attention from trained student personnel workers or school psychologists or psychiatrists. Thus, while the university and the Women’s Council punished Sallie for her behavior, they left open the possibility that she was not inherently “bad,” but had been a victim of social “maladjustment” who failed to receive treatment for her “disorder.”

In each case, aside from the episode in 1936, other female students made the reports against the women and the decisions on the offenders punishments seemed completely up to the members of the council. Even as a number of female students violated rules of conduct, just as many were ready to report their peers’ “substandard” behavior. The example of Sallie Gray, who drank in public and had sex with men, shows the type of behavior that the university saw as beyond the reach of peer policing and perhaps beyond the reach of correction. While she would have still faced shaming and expulsion, Sallie’s behavior would likely have seemed less alarming

¹¹⁷ January 6, 1936, Volume 5: Minutes of Woman’s Association, 1933-1936. Historian Leisa Meyer notes a similar case in her study of the Women’s Army Corp in 1944. Two male soldiers reported a white Wac officer to her superiors for her alleged “sexual promiscu[ity].” They reported that officer in question had engaged in sexual intercourse with both of the men and they claimed to be concerned about her “mental, moral, and emotional health” as well as that of other servicewomen. Significantly, while the two male soldiers did not blame the Wac officer for her “transgressions,” they instead “declared her a victim of the social disorder attendant in wartime mobilization.” Since the Wac officer was an educated, white woman from the middle or upper class, the men did not view her as a “bad” woman “whose sexual promiscuity was to be expected.” This differentiation allowed soldiers to “support a double standard that condemned [the officer’s] behavior but also allowed her the possibility of reclaiming her good woman status once she submitted to the control of psychiatrists.” See Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane*, 123-126.

to the members of the Women's Association and the dean's office had she cited her drinking as unintentional or coerced, and her sexual activity as a drunken indiscretion. By declaring her enjoyment of these "inappropriate" activities, Sallie assured herself the reproach of her peers. She also issued a stark warning for the dean's office. Some women students were *choosing* to behave in what the women's administrators saw as an "unladylike" fashion and these instances should be quietly controlled.

The following example from the Woman's College of Duke University shows the evolution of college administrators' awareness of drinking by women students (or, perhaps, the administrators finally turning their attention to a known issue). In a 1952 letter to Katherine Warren, dean of women at Florida State University, Duke's dean of women, Mary Grace Wilson, gave a history of drinking regulations at the Woman's College. She reported that the school did not have "any printed regulation with regard specifically to drinking" until the administrators were "face to face with the social problems presented by World War II and the plan to establish an Army camp near Durham." The administration feared that women students with access to alcohol and in close proximity to the army camp might make poor decisions regarding sexual behavior while under the influence. Thus, administrators "adopted a strict prohibition measure" in May of 1943. Wilson noted that no regulations had been needed for years beforehand because "drinking among women was not an acceptable social custom," and North Carolina was a dry state.¹¹⁸

Historians have noted that during both World War I and World War II some young women sought to entertain and date servicemen as part of what they perceived to be their patriotic "duty" on the home front.¹¹⁹ In addition, some women engaged in sexual activity with these men

¹¹⁸ Mary Grace Wilson to Katherine Warren, January 18, 1951, Woman's College Records, 1928-1974, Box 29, Drinking Regulations, 1942-1958, Universty Archives, Duke University

¹¹⁹ Clement, *Love for Sale*, 145-147; Marilyn E. Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki Wackies, and Patriotutes The Regulation of Female Sexuality During World War II* (New York, NY: New York University Press,

in a symbolic effort to repay them for fighting (and possibly dying) to protect American womanhood.¹²⁰ Historians have also observed that military and public concerns over the physical health and the fighting ability of servicemen in military encampments during World War I and World War II led to heightened attentions to the potential dangers of venereal disease. Military doctors and government officials sought to control servicemen and young women (both working prostitutes and “good girls”), the latter of whom they painted as the source of VD around military bases, from coming into contact.¹²¹ As Elizabeth Clement has pointed out, on the flipside of the coin, soldiers also “accosted” women, expecting them to consent to sex as a sort of patriotic duty.¹²² Historian Marilyn Hegarty notes that popular magazines influenced public understandings of “appropriate” women’s behavior during WWI including “notion[s] of patriotic sexuality as a female wartime obligation.”¹²³ Within this context, we can view Duke Women’s College administrators’ enacting of stricter rules for women students during the war as a measure to protect both the women *and* the servicemen from coming into contact in spaces that might lead to sexual activity. While the administrators likely saw sexual activity as “dangerous” to both parties involved, they also wanted to safeguard the college from any liability it could face if women students were found to be exhibiting sexual behavior or engaging in sex with servicemen.

Duke students were generally receptive to the 1943 prohibition regulation until after the war, “when the GI’s returned to campus,” and women requested a modification of the rules.¹²⁴ In the years following World War II, the G.I. Bill enabled many returning veterans (the majority, white males) to attend universities throughout the country. While, on average, returning veterans

2008), 112; Megan K. Winchell, *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses During World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 76, 86-87.

¹²⁰ Clement, *Love for Sale*, 151; Hegarty, *Victory Girls*, 114.

¹²¹ On World War I, see Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, Chapters Two and Three; Clement, *Love for Sale*, 114-125. On World War II, see Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, Chapter Five, Hegarty, *Victory Girls*, 50-52, 56-58; Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane*, 101-104.

¹²² Clement, *Love for Sale*, 151, 153.

¹²³ Hegarty, *Victory Girls*, 112.

¹²⁴ Mary Grace Wilson to Katherine Warren, January 18, 1951, Duke Woman’s College Records, 1928-1974, Box 29, Drinking Regulations, 1942-1958.

had drinking habits similar to those of their non-veteran, collegiate peers, the war had helped change the culture of alcohol consumption.¹²⁵ American advertising had positioned beer drinking as an integral part of the national war effort and a basic right for Americans. Through the work of advertisers, consumption of alcohol became part of the post-war “American way of life,” defined by an abundance of goods and “bountiful domestic pleasures.” As historian Lori Rotskoff explains, changes in the drinking culture by the 1930s and 1940s had enabled heterosocial settings for drinking but had not entirely removed the masculine connotation of hard liquor.¹²⁶

The Woman’s College at Duke relaxed the total prohibition of drinking in 1947. While Wilson noted that women’s drinking increased with this measure, she also admitted that if the administration had left the drinking rules as strict as they had been during the war, deceitful students would have abused them regularly. Furthermore, she added that cases of intoxication were “very rare indeed,” as “men and women disapprove[d]” of drunkenness.¹²⁷ Thus, women became accessories in the drinking culture but not necessarily active participants. Drinking by male students, and in particular, fraternity men, on college campuses provided opportunities for sorority women to find themselves in the midst of parties where heterosocial drinking was expected.

Women students increasingly came under scrutiny simply for being in the presence of male drinking, even if they, themselves, did not imbibe. The annual report of the Women’s Honor Council at UNC in 1944 documents four cases of women students’ drinking-related misconduct. In two instances, coeds “were found in a fraternity house in which alcoholic beverages were being consumed in their presence.” One of the girls drank with the boys while the others abstained. All were served with nearly identical social probations. In the other cases

¹²⁵ Robert Straus and Selden D. Bacon, *Drinking in College* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953), 146-155.

¹²⁶ Rotskoff, *Love on the Rocks*, 51, 59.

¹²⁷ Mary Grace Wilson to Katherine Warren, January 18, 1951, Duke Woman’s College Records, 1928-1974, Box 29, Drinking Regulations, 1942-1958.

women received social probation for storing and drinking beer or liquor in their dorm rooms.¹²⁸ Women's regulations at UNC in 1944 forbade drinking in the dormitories.¹²⁹ The reports do not say if the women students were sorority members or not.

At the University of Georgia (UGA) in the early 1950s, the Women's Student Government Association (WGSA) wrote a "no-drinking" rule into their regulations.¹³⁰ A survey of students from one women's dormitory at UGA found that a number of women considered the no-drinking rule restrictive and out of touch with current cultural standards that endorsed moderate consumption of alcohol in social settings. "Why is drinking prohibited if you have your parent's permission? If you drink in your home?" asked one student, "it is obvious...that seventy-five percent (probably an over estimate) of the girls disobey this rule." Relating moderate drinking to sophistication and "ladylike" behavior, the woman continued by saying, "certainly if you aren't old enough to conduct yourself as a lady by the time you are in college it is a pathetic and hopeless situation." Another female student also followed this logic, suggesting women be "allowed to indulge in a cocktail as long as [they] conducted [themselves] lady-like."¹³¹

By 1958, the Duke Woman's College Judicial Board requested that the administration reevaluate and further relax the drinking rules, to leave the choice of drinking up to the individual woman student. To avoid the current drinking rule, the fraternities often held unapproved parties and by attending the parties, female students would be committing an honor code violation. The Judicial Board explained that they did not want the rules relaxed because more women wanted to

¹²⁸ "Honor Council Report for 1944," UNC Records of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Woman's Association, 1935-1945.

¹²⁹ "Rules and Regulations for Women Students of the University of North Carolina," 1944-1945, UNC Records of the Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Woman's Association, 1935-1945.

¹³⁰ "Annual Report, 1952-1953," Edith Stallings and Louise McBee (Dean of Women, 1947-1974) Papers (UGA 97-119:1), Box 1, Folder 7, 26. A tally of the WGSA court offenses showed that while no one broke the drinking rule during 1952-1953 or 1955-1956, two women in 1953-1954 and seven in 1954-1955 were found guilty. See, "Annual Report, 1954-1955," Edith Stallings and Louise McBee (Dean of Women, 1947-1974) Papers (UGA 97-119:1), Box 1, Folder 11, 35-36.

¹³¹ "Comments from Survey of Lucy Cobb Dorm Residents," February, 11, n.d., Edith Stallings and Louise McBee (Dean of Women, 1947-1974) Papers (UGA 97-119:1), Box 2, Folder 6: 2, 2.

drink but rather because young women wanted to attend parties held by the Duke fraternities. By relaxing the drinking rules, fraternity men could host university-approved parties with alcohol and female students could attend without fear of violating the honor code. A survey of the Woman's College student body showed that, of the women who drank (503, to the 527 who did not drink), more drank at illegal parties (299) than at legal ones (257) and more women (896) did not object to attending parties where others were drinking.¹³²

While university administrators of the 1920s and 1930s may have chosen to conceal instances of women students' drinking and public drunkenness to the best of their ability, by the 1950s and 1960s, deans of women and advisory committees for campus Greek-life began to note the problem of increased drinking by sorority women.¹³³ At UNC in 1955, and again in 1962, administrators cited concerns over instances of drinking at parties and at off-campus, sorority pledge dances.¹³⁴ In 1964, the dean of women's office at William and Mary reported that the Judicial Committee of the Women's Dormitory Association dealt with two "major" cases regarding drinking at off campus parties. The report of the dean of women noted that, on one night, "approximately twenty-five girls who came in from parties" required the help of the [dormitory, or sorority house] counselors to "sober" them up.¹³⁵ To further complicate matters, often times the drinking took place at the apartments of young college faculty members. The dean of women's office wished to carefully consider whether they would allow "freshmen

¹³² Duke Woman's College Judicial Board to Mary Grace Wilson and attached survey, March 20, 1958, Duke Woman's College Records, 1928-1974, Box 29, Drinking Regulations, 1942-1958

¹³³ *Handbook for Women Students at the University of North Carolina, 1924-1925*, NCC, *College of William and Mary Women's Student Government Handbook, 1931-1932*, Frances C. Cosby Nettles Papers, 1931-1935, SCRC. By 1948, UNC mentioned the prohibition of drinking in the dormitories. Women who needed to keep liquor in their rooms "for medicinal purposes," however, could do so, but had to report it to the house president. See *Handbook for Women Students at the University of North Carolina, 1948-1949*, NCC, 20

¹³⁴ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to Dr. Loren C. McKinney, February 11, 1955, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Records, 1920-1991 (#40124), Series 12, Subseries 1, Box 1, Fraternities and Sororities, Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, March 8, 1962, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Subseries 1, Box 1, Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, 1956-1964

¹³⁵ Annual Report, 1964, 5, William and Mary Office of the Dean of Women Records, 1928-1974 (UA 24), SCRC

women and others to go to young Faculty person's apartments to participate in drinking, etc.” The dean noted that “some of the student leaders felt that the Dean of the Faculty should tell young, single men faculty members that if they have women students the party will have to conform to college standards.” This suggested that some of the students, themselves, felt uncomfortable in these “informal” drinking situations hosted by single, male faculty members. The dean of women reported that, “some students are flattered and others feel that if they do not go they will get the ill will of the instructor.”¹³⁶ The female students recognized that the power dynamic in these situations was heavily in the favor of the male faculty and that it would be easy for these social spaces to lead to abuses of this power by the male faculty members. Out of concern for their grades, female students might feel obligated to indulge in more drinking than they felt comfortable with, or to submit to male faculty members' possible sexual advances.

During the 1950s and 1960s, national sorority officers reminded members about regulations against drinking. In 1957, the Grand Council of Kappa Alpha Theta requested that Theta Alumnae Chapters and Mother's Clubs assist them “in dealing with the greatest problem of [the] times, the problem of drinking.”¹³⁷ Rotskoff has argued that the medicalization of the “problem drinker” by the mid-twentieth century fueled Americans' concern with alcoholism, and primarily the alcoholic male.¹³⁸ In the Cold War climate any behaviors deemed possibly damaging to individual Americans' stability and to the collective national security heightened public fears. An increase in drinking among college students – the future generation of American citizens – caused alarm.¹³⁹ The Grand Council also alluded to the problem of drinking by individual members reflecting poorly upon the entire sorority. “We all know that drinking, too frequently, is accompanied by the relaxing of normally good conduct and sometimes the

¹³⁶ Annual Report, 1964, 5; William and Mary Office of the Dean of Women Records, 1928-1974 (UA 24), SCRC.

¹³⁷ Grand Council of Kappa Alpha Theta to Thetas and friends of Theta, December 11, 1957, Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs (AU RG-793), Box 2, Folder 4, Auburn University Special Collections.

¹³⁸ Rotskoff, *Love on the Rocks*, 85-86.

¹³⁹ “Student Drinking Seen on Increase,” *New York Times*, January 26, 1947, 16.

abandonment of high standards, which affect the reputation of those involved far beyond their ability to realize.”¹⁴⁰

Control of drinking went hand in hand with control of dating and morality. By overindulging in alcohol, alumnae suggested, women might lose their inhibitions and engage in behavior that they, and their sorority, might regret. As implied by the women students at UGA, drinking should be a ladylike endeavor. From the late 1920s onward, drinking had become a central part of socializing among the middle and upper classes and was a mark of educated people. As Rotskoff explains, by the late 1940s, studies showed that, “the percentage of drinkers increased from lower to higher economic levels and that citizens with advanced schooling drank more, and more often, than those with less than a high school education.”¹⁴¹ As a hostess in her own home, a sorority woman would be expected to know about serving alcohol and drinking it in “ladylike” moderation. Like other social lessons engendered by the sororities, social drinking would also denote an air of sophistication.

While still a student, however, she was expected to abide by university and sorority regulations against drinking. In 1950, the Kappa Kappa Gammas at Duke reminded their members not to drink before rush parties or initiation.¹⁴² This warning probably stemmed from the fact that rush and initiation were often attended by alumnae members who monitored the collegiate members’ behavior. The events also marked times when the chapter would be in competition with other sororities on campus and trying to make a good impression on women with whom they were unfamiliar. The following year, one of the “pet peeves” turned in to the Delta Beta Chapter’s personnel committee concerned the chapter’s “drinking reputation.”¹⁴³ Unfortunately, the personnel committee did not comment on whether members felt the chapter drank too much or too little, or who outside the group had passed judgment on the overall amount

¹⁴⁰ Grand Council of Kappa Alpha Theta to Thetas and friends of Theta, December 11, 1957.

¹⁴¹ Rotskoff, *Love on the Rocks*, 198-201.

¹⁴² April 13, 1950, Minutes, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

¹⁴³ March 1, 1951, Minutes, Delta Beta Chapter Records.

of drinking. The chapter had cautioned its members *against* drinking before important events when they needed to appear composed among other women. Yet some Delta Betas might have felt that gaining a reputation among fraternity men as a group of teetotalers would jeopardize their ability to be seen as “fun” girls for fraternity parties and dates.

Sharon Sullivan Mujica, a Kappa Kappa Gamma at UNC from 1958 to 1961, remembered that women on campus “drank a lot.” “Back then,” she explained, “you [were not] supposed to get drunk; ...you could drink socially, but you were not supposed to get drunk.” The sororities were not allowed to have alcohol in their houses and Mujica believed that Dean Carmichael and the sorority housemothers probably “prefer[ed] that the women didn’t drink at all.”¹⁴⁴ Carmichael believed that, generally, parents did not “voice their concerns” with their daughters’ behavior. Instead, they spoke “prudently” of their daughters’ “fine discernment, [and] of their trust in her.” Yet, she noted that, “all American colleges enroll a large group of substantial young women who rapidly are metamorphosed into what [the] student generation calls the ‘party girls.’” Carmichael appeared ready to place blame on the “party girls,” in cases of student sexual misconduct involving alcohol, while leaving the conduct of their equally rowdy male counterparts unmentioned. At the very least, she understood that it was young women who would have to answer for any socially perceived wrongdoings so far as standards of sexual propriety. Issuing a stark warning, Carmichael wrote that she could tell of a young woman who “ran into difficulty when, after an extra drink, she considered only the lily of the field, and divorced herself from customary raiment.”¹⁴⁵ In this case the woman’s “difficulty” may have been a euphemism for a loss of reputation, consensual sexual relations with a man, an unplanned pregnancy, or rape. If a young woman let down her guard and became drunk, Carmichael believed, she might ignore conventional behavior, cast off her clothing or undergarments, and

¹⁴⁴ Sharon Mujica, interviewed by Nancy Warren, March 7, 1991, Southern Oral History Project (SOHP 4007/L-0056), UNC, 16, 50.

¹⁴⁵ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, “Why Educate Your Daughter?” n.d., UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.2., Box 5, 8.

perhaps appear to invite sexual activity with a partner. By failing to maintain a sober awareness, Carmichael cautioned, female students left themselves open to unwanted male sexual advances. In her opinion then it was public drunkenness that transformed a sorority woman's appearance from one that attracted male attention to one that invited sexual activity.

Fraternity Parties as a Challenge to Standards

Ironically, the social events of Greek-letter life promoted heterosocial drinking and increasingly ran contrary to drinking regulations enforced by national sorority leadership and campus administrators. As previously explained, sororities relied on their campus popularity in heterosocial mixing as a signifier of their overall campus status. With alcohol playing a major role in many all-male fraternity gatherings, it was natural that it also should make its way into mixers with sororities.¹⁴⁶ Between the drinking by male students, the example set by some students' parents, and the contemporary, public, messages in advertising and movies, drinking could seem increasingly acceptable to women students.

Much of the drinking took place at fraternity sponsored social events, including house parties, cabin parties, and beach weekends. While the fraternity brothers typically hosted the sorority women, and procured and provided the alcohol, the women also became accessories to the party planning. A 1961 national newsletter for chapters of Kappa Kappa Gamma reminded the groups that in planning social functions, "no chapter funds may be budgeted for alcoholic beverages."¹⁴⁷

Raucous fraternity parties, as well as university administrators' concerns over the activities that took place there, were on the rise in the 1950 and 1960s. Of the fraternities' high-jinks, Nicholas Syrett has noted:

¹⁴⁶ Syrett discusses the prevalence of drinking among fraternity members, noting that by the 1920s, the consumption of alcohol was often carried to the point of excessive drunkenness. He also points out that by the post-World War II era, fraternities had begun using alcohol in their hazing rituals to a much greater extent than in previous decades. See Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 156-157, 200-201, 246-247.

¹⁴⁷ *Chapter Keystones*, No. 7, September, 1961, Delta Beta Chapter Records, Printed Material, *Chapter Keystones*, 1961-1962, 5.

When they broke the rules, most fraternity men apologized for their antics, explained that things had gotten out of hand, promised never to do it again, and claimed that the rule breaking was the result of only a few out-of-control members. Administrators debated why the brothers broke the rules, and they duly punished them. The national offices bemoaned the injury done to their reputations and threatened national disrecognition while also secretly faulting the universities for being too strict in their regulations.¹⁴⁸

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, college administrators who saw sororities as benign, or even beneficial, additions to their campuses' atmosphere, typically did not extend these feelings toward men's fraternities. Whereas the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) and the individual sororities' national leadership used a firm hand to regulate sorority members' behavior and actively cultivated working relationships with deans of women, the National Interfraternity Council (NIC) seemed less devoted to controlling their member organizations or to building a cooperative system with deans of students or other university officials. That left the individual university administrations to deal with the campus Interfraternity Council and the fraternity chapters largely as they saw fit.

While the fraternity chapters had advisers, usually either an alumni faculty member or a local alumni of the chapter, it did not mean that the groups always abided by the rules. In 1961, Dr. Henry T. Clark, Jr., head of UNC's Division of Health Affairs, reflected upon some of his experiences as an advisor for the university's Psi Chapter of Sigma Nu fraternity, his alma mater, over the previous decade.¹⁴⁹ He explained that he met with the chapter's officers and new members at the beginning of each year to "outline basic objectives" for the year. Clark also made "occasional visits" to the chapter house throughout the year and established a tradition of hosting an end of the year buffet supper for the new and old officers of both Sigma Nu and the sorority for which his wife served as adviser. As a faculty advisor, he had seen it as his purpose to "make his interest and availability known to all [the] fraternity members." Clark admitted, however, that the fraternity members "seldom sought" his advice on "anything important." After he helped the

¹⁴⁸ Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 241.

¹⁴⁹ "Biographical Information," Henry T. Clark Papers, 1920s-1996 (#04791), SHC, UNC, http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/c/Clark, Henry_T.html#d1e227, website accessed February 22, 2010.

chapter get their finances in order and find alumni support to renovate the then forty year old fraternity house, Clark felt that he had built sufficient trust with the chapter to be able to “make some qualitative changes in and additions to” the fraternity’s program.¹⁵⁰

The program he hoped to launch echoed the citizenship training of national sororities at the time. Clark lamented what he saw as a lack of attention by the fraternity members beyond their own group interests. He wanted the fraternity program to teach the men to look “outward rather than inward, and to emphasize the values and satisfaction of service to others.”¹⁵¹ He was also disappointed that in the past decade, the Psi Chapter’s only “programs” to build student-alumni relations consisted of cocktail parties, football games and game day parties, and the occasional newsletter. We are unable to know if Clark succeeded in bringing about the changes he desired at the Psi Chapter, but it is unlikely that he was able to get the group to completely overcome what he felt was a “superficiality of the over-all...program.” He defended the chapter’s superficiality as concerned with “trivial matters...the quest for amusement and entertainment rather than understanding,” and “for ‘getting’ rather than ‘giving.’”¹⁵² While he suggested that all fraternity faculty advisors press for a similar reassessment of values and activities in their chapters, making a shift in momentum would not be easy.

At schools where university administrators and chapter advisers were less aggressive in monitoring fraternity activities, the lack of guidance allowed the groups greater latitude in the conduct of their members. Particularly at UNC in the 1940s and 1950s, where the Interfraternity Council (IFC) enjoyed what Dean Carmichael and dean of students Fred Weaver believed were some of the most lenient restrictions on any university campus.¹⁵³ Of distress to both Weaver and

¹⁵⁰ Dr. Henry T. Clark, Jr. “Some Observations of a Fraternity Advisor,” January 10, 1961, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 32, Fraternities and Sororities, Correspondence, 1961, 2,4.

¹⁵¹ Clark, “Some Observations of a Fraternity Advisor,” 4.

¹⁵² Clark, “Some Observations of a Fraternity Advisor,” 4, 2.

¹⁵³ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to IFC Chairman, February 27, 1958, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 32, General: Parties, 1955-1962, 7;

Carmichael, the IFC fraternities seemed unwilling to abide by their own agreement regarding women's visitation in the fraternity houses.

The Visiting Privileges Agreement, first put into place at UNC in the early 1930s, was a written agreement between the dean of students and the fraternity leaders to form a "basis for entertaining women in the fraternity houses without chaperones."¹⁵⁴ Prior to the agreement, the university had required chaperones at the parties. Apparently, however, the fraternities frequently violated the chaperone rule. In its stead, the written agreement attempted to solve the issue by "placing responsibility on the fraternity men for maintaining good standards of conduct without chaperones." The written agreement was supposed to set out what the fraternities considered good standards of conduct.¹⁵⁵ The 1940 version of the agreement's standards included limiting women to the first floor of the houses, limits on the men serving alcohol in the presence of their female guests, and on hours that the houses would be open to women (from 1:00 p.m. on weekdays, and 10:00 a.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, until fifteen minutes before the university required that women be in their own rooms). The agreement also required fraternities to apply to the IFC three days prior to the date they wished to hold a house party and to use chaperones from a list of IFC approved chaperones for after-dance parties at the house.¹⁵⁶ While this set of standards may have resulted in what the fraternity men felt were better parties, the lack of supervision could put partygoers in danger if activities got out of hand. Female guests might find themselves drinking more than they had intended, or fending off unwanted sexual advances from

Fred Weaver to Committee Members, January 2, 1940, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 32, Fraternities: Interfraternity Council (IFC): IFC Visitation Agreement, 1936-1950, 3.

¹⁵⁴ Fred H. Weaver to Chancellor R.B. House, January 21, 1952, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 32, Fraternities: Interfraternity Council (IFC): IFC Visitation Agreement, 1951-1953, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Fred H. Weaver to Chancellor R.B. House, January 21, 1952, 1.

¹⁵⁶ University of North Carolina Interfraternity Council Visiting Agreement, 1940, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 32, Fraternities: Interfraternity Council (IFC): IFC Visitation Agreement, 1936-1950.

fraternity members. Meanwhile, the fraternity members could also end up seriously intoxicated, posing a danger to themselves as well as other guests.

Still, the arrangement likely suited the fraternities as it allowed for greater freedom in what activities could take place at the parties. In 1958, Carmichael noted that the standards of the visiting agreements had actually become more lenient over time. She cited reports that the fraternity men were regularly violating nearly all of the agreed upon “standards of good conduct” at their events. The problematic activities listed by Carmichael included “gambling in the houses, women passing beyond social rooms, women present in houses at strange hours, unchaperoned women drinking with men, [and] off-campus parties held in questionable surroundings.” All of these added up to “bad publicity” for the university.¹⁵⁷ She explained that several people had recently expressed to her their intent to keep their daughters and sisters from attending UNC because of the behavior exhibited by fraternity men on campus.¹⁵⁸

Fraternity men did not help matters by regularly staging weeknight parties, at which they expected to receive sorority women as guests. At UNC in the 1950s, fraternities often held parties on weeknights, much to the chagrin of Dean Carmichael *and* the women who attended the parties. Some of these parties began at 5:00 p.m. and ran until 11:00 p.m. The sororities were, in fact, interested in socializing with fraternities on weeknights, but they requested that the activities be limited to around the dinner hour, instead of being allowed to turn into marathon events. Carmichael reported that women of the Panhellenic Council had repeatedly asked the fraternity men on the IFC for cooperation in staging parties at times that still allowed ample time for schoolwork during the week. She explained that the IFC had “annually refused to take action,” saying that they saw no problem with the current party scheduling.¹⁵⁹ Sorority women may have had little choice in whether to attend these weeknight events. While the social schedule could

¹⁵⁷ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael IFC Chairman, 7.

¹⁵⁸ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to IFC Chairman, 2.

¹⁵⁹ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to IFC Chairman, 2.

easily derail a woman's academic requirements if evening study took a backseat to fraternity parties, the sorority chapter, as well as the host fraternity, expected their presence at mixers.

The lack of resident housemothers at fraternities was also a subject of contention at UNC during the 1940s and 1950s. In the spring of 1958, only five of the twenty-four fraternity houses at UNC had housemothers and not all of those were resident housemothers.¹⁶⁰ Fraternity housemothers in residence might act as social chaperones and house managers. A 1933 study of fraternity and sorority house management issues suggested that a housemother "should have opportunity not only of improving the commissary and housekeeping but of helping to raise the moral and social standards of the house." When the housemother was not a resident of the fraternity house, she might act as a "mere figurehead to chaperon the girls who are guests in the houses."¹⁶¹ If a housemother resided in the home, then she could advise against parties on weeknights and (supposedly) could ensure that women were not served alcohol and that they left the pre-approved parties at the prescribed times. Carmichael believed that requiring all fraternities to have resident housemothers would help control the groups' drinking and behavioral problems that had been giving the campus negative publicity.¹⁶² Resident housemothers at sororities and fraternities were usually older women who were widowed or who were single and had no family to rely on for finances. Women who had been forced to take the positions out of financial need, however, may have been less willing to discipline the students for fear of losing their job and "home." So, even a resident housemother's constant presence may have been as a "mere figurehead" if she chose to "look the other way" when students engaged in questionable or dangerous behavior, or broke university rules regarding alcohol and house closing hours.

In Anne Rivers Siddons's novel *Heartbreak Hotel* (1976), the housemother at the "Kappa" sorority in 1956, Mrs. Myra Cutler Kidd, is the widow of a judge, described as "a

¹⁶⁰ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to IFC Chairman, 1.

¹⁶¹ Barbara Reid Robson, *House Management Problems of Fraternities and Sororities* (New York, NY: Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1933), 24.

¹⁶² Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to IFC Chairman, 5.

gentlewoman in suddenly reduced circumstances and left with no close, encumbering family.” While at first Mrs. Kidd hoped to be a confidant of, and counselor to, the sorority women in the house, she soon found herself “shocked and frightened” by the “troubles that were aired in her salon in her first year of residency.” When the women became aware of this fact, they stopped visiting Mrs. Kidd and soon “Elvis Presley and Kitty Kallen overpowered her Beethoven, and she drank her coffee and tea increasingly alone, liberally laced with Jack Daniels.”¹⁶³

The dean’s office was not alone in requesting housemothers. Carmichael cited a number of requests over these years, from individual female students as well as the Women’s Honor Council, to require housemothers at UNC fraternities. While the women acknowledged that the presence of housemothers probably would not solve the drinking problems at fraternities, they hoped that the housemothers would, as the president of the Women’s Government Association wrote in 1946, “create the appropriate social atmosphere in the fraternity houses.”¹⁶⁴ Following her lead, the Women’s Honor Council was even more insistent. They issued a recommendation that the university administration “take the immediate necessary steps to provide proper supervision in the fraternity houses, so that Carolina students can be assured of the highest standards possible.”¹⁶⁵ Instead of trying to duck the university’s rules of behavior, these women were demanding stricter enforcement of the current rules as a way to maintain the “highest standards” of behavior *and* to safeguard their own reputations and those of other women. Women students realized that attending a party at a UNC fraternity house meant that they risked being subjected to lewd and drunken behavior by their hosts, or being treated in an inappropriate, even sexually aggressive, manner. They also realized that being party to these situations could

¹⁶³ Siddons, *Heartbreak Hotel* (1976, Reprint, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 31-33.

¹⁶⁴ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to IFC Chairman, 5; Women’s Government Association President to President Frank P. Graham, March 15, 1946, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 32, Fraternities: Interfraternity Council (IFC): IFC Visitation Agreement, 1936-1950, 2.

¹⁶⁵ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to IFC Chairman, 5.

jeopardize their virtue in the eyes of the local community and in towns throughout the state and were willing to take steps to keep the party activities in check.

Until 1945, a visiting committee of students routinely made rounds of parties at UNC to report violations of the visiting agreement.¹⁶⁶ With the demise of that practice, and the continued lack of chaperones at the majority of the fraternity-sponsored parties, it became the onus of the guests to report any infractions of the visiting agreement. That put the female visitors, Carmichael contended, in a difficult position. To report a fraternity often meant that the women had to admit some wrongdoing on their own part (typically that of being in the presence of men drinking alcohol). Conventional wisdom dictated that women should be responsible for upholding standards of behavior. The “boys will be boys” mentality that served to excuse bad behavior by men simultaneously reinforced the social expectation that women should act as good influences to quell men’s misbehaviors.¹⁶⁷

In the aftermath of an infamous 1961 Halloween party hosted by UNC’s Upsilon Chapter of Zeta Psi fraternity and attended by the Alpha Sigma Chapter of Tri-Delta sorority, Panhellenic advisers commented that sorority women did not live up to their responsibility to make sure that partygoers conducted themselves properly.¹⁶⁸ At the party members of Zeta Psi wore questionable costumes – one brother dressed as a prophylactic-dispensing machine, another made “suggestive use of the end of a rubber crutch,” several wore diapers, and one wore nothing at all as he streaked through the house – and the group served the Tri-Delts a punch containing grain alcohol and the Panhellenic advisers expressed disbelief that the women consented to be guests at the party at all. They felt that the women should have “spoken to their dates” about the “tone” of

¹⁶⁶ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to IFC Chairman, 4.

¹⁶⁷ Historian Leisa Meyer describes a similar situation for women in the Women’s Army Corp during World War II. She explains that the “norms of ‘appropriate sexual behavior’” for women in this period “allow[ed] for the presence of active sexual desire in women” but “continued to rest on the idea that men had a greater sex drive than women and characterized women as having a special responsibility to ‘curb male lust.’” See Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane*, 125.

¹⁶⁸ Panhellenic Court Judicial Board Minutes, November 9, 1961, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 33, Sororities: Panhellenic Court, 1961-1965, 4-5.

the party and left the premises.¹⁶⁹ While there was some dissension among the female students on the Judicial Board as to the culpability of the sorority women, the group voted to place the Tri-Delts on social probation, prohibiting their participation in fraternity-sorority mixers for the rest of the semester.¹⁷⁰ In this case, Zeta Psi also received punishment for their antics. The chapter was placed on “Indefinite General probation,” for the remainder of the 1961-1962 school year.¹⁷¹

The aftermath of the Zeta Psi-Tri Delta Halloween party did not bring an end to the issues with alcohol at fraternity parties. In 1962, Katherine Carmichael received word from some women students that, “drinks with high-alcohol content” were served at Thursday night fraternity parties. She wrote to the chairman of the IFC recommending that the fraternities serve drinks with lower alcohol content and that non-alcoholic beverages should also be made available to their guests.¹⁷² Nicholas Syrett has shown that heterosocial drinking often aided fraternity men in coercing women to have sex with them, and that increasingly by the 1950s, these women were their classmates and not working class, off-campus, “pick-ups.”¹⁷³ Carmichael’s note did not include any further indication of how these women reacted to being served only stiff drinks by the fraternity men. Yet, again, the fact that it concerned them enough to contact the dean meant that they feared being put in a position where they might lose their inhibitions and perhaps participate in some form of sexual misconduct, or other behavior, which could mark them as “unladylike” or leave them vulnerable to sexual predation by the fraternity brothers. Their self-policing, which might also be seen as a form of self-preservation, suggested that the women had heard stories or witnessed other instances of fraternity men sexually assaulting inebriated female students.

¹⁶⁹ Panhellenic Court Judicial Board Minutes, November 9, 1961, 4-5.

¹⁷⁰ Panhellenic Court Judicial Board Minutes, November 9, 1961, 6.

¹⁷¹ Dean Charles Henderson, Jr. to Mel Underhal, General Secretary, Zeta Psi Fraternity, December 14, 1961, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 2.

¹⁷² Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to IFC Chairman, December 14, 1962, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Records, 1920-1991 (#40124), Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 32, Fraternities: Interfraternity Council (IFC): Correspondence, 1951-1971.

¹⁷³ Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 184-185, 277.

The fact that drinking was becoming a popular heterosocial lubricant alarmed some sorority alumnae. Delivering a talk on “Techniques for Education in Standards,” at the 1950 joint NADW-NPC committee meeting, Mrs. William Owen of Gamma Phi Beta claimed, “Our sorority definitively discourages the drinking of alcoholic beverages.” She also noted that Gamma Phi Beta recommended that members should seek out men who also adhered to these standards, or at least respected the woman’s choice to abide by drinking rules. Owen’s recommendation also seems to suggest that by choosing, “men who respect our standards of conduct,” members might be able to eliminate as possible escorts, men who might seek to extract sexual favors or place them in sexually compromising positions when one or both were under the influence of alcohol.¹⁷⁴

As campus mores changed over the years, the sororities’ leaders appeared to expect that some members would choose to make drinking a regular part of socializing. Zeta Tau Alpha’s *Ladies First* (1966) explicitly addressed the fact that sorority women would likely face the issue of whether or not to drink alcohol at social gatherings. The guidebook suggested caution in these situations, but left the ultimate decision up to the individual woman. No longer preaching temperance, the authors of *Ladies First* provided a more realistic outlook on the matter. After noting that “one in every fourteen persons who drink will eventually contract alcoholism,” they turned their attention to the more immediate, possible consequences of drinking, which included “automobile accidents and the lowering of inhibitions which,” they explained, “are especially significant in ‘boy-girl’ relationships.” The authors referred, albeit in a circumspect manner, to concerns about members’ sexual misbehavior. At the same time, they maintained the opinion that young women should be the responsible parties in all interactions involving alcohol. “The casual, unthinking decision under such circumstances,” they warned, “can permanently mar your life.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ NADW-NPC Joint Committee Meeting Minutes, March, 1950, NPC Archives, Committee File (41/82/50), NPC-NAWDAC Liaison Committee, 1947-1957, 14-15.

¹⁷⁵ *Ladies First*, 46.

With these messages, sororities voiced their concerns with the possibility that an individual member's choices would reflect poorly on the perceived morality of the entire organization. "Upon joining a sorority," Owen stated, "[a woman] is always, thereafter, linked with that group in the public mind." As such, Owen instructed that women "must remember that the policy of our sorority is to be conservative in action, dress, and speech and to avoid unfavorable publicity of any kind." A member "must understand her responsibility to her chapter and act at all times in a manner to enhance the reputation of her sorority. We are all striving for perfection although we know it can never be attained."¹⁷⁶ In this pursuit of perfection, sorority leadership, following middle and upper class standards of the day, would view any sexual impropriety in which a sorority sister engaged as *her* fault, or failing, and not that of the other party involved. For a sorority woman, getting drunk and possibly engaging in sexual activity would clearly lie outside the sororities' boundaries of conservative behavior and could stand to jeopardize the groups' claims to elite status. Thus, for the sororities' national officers, control of members' drinking increasingly became a point of emphasis.

Sororities proved valuable to university administrators not only for helping mold the behavior of women students but also for controlling the, at times, offensive actions of the fraternity men with whom they socialized. National sororities were able to establish themselves as purveyors of social class and cultured living. At the same time, however, they geared the lessons in their guidebooks and educational programming to white, middle and upper class standards of appearance and behavior and taught their members to appreciate individuals and groups who conformed to these norms. By conforming to these norms, the sorority women hoped to attract the attention of fraternity men, which would increase their sorority chapters' status on campus. In allowing the desires of campus fraternity men to influence how the sorority women

¹⁷⁶ NADW-NPC Joint Committee Meeting Minutes, March, 1950, NPC Records, NPC Committee File (41/82/50), NPC-NAWDAC Liaison Committee, 1947-1957, 15.

behaved, however, the women reinforced a gendered power structure in which men controlled social interactions.

Sorority rush (when the chapters chose their new pledges) played a great role in the maintenance of chapters' overall standards of appearance. As such, rush could become a heated event where college members, as well as alumnae, exhibited harsh, if not blatantly discriminatory, actions in attempts to ensure that their organization was filled with the types of women whom, they believed, would convey the group's ideal image. Some deans of women found that the problems associated with rush outweighed the benefits of national sororities' social education programs. In the following chapter, I discuss some of these situations where deans of women find fault with sororities and I examine rush "behind the scenes," to illustrate the hurtful ways sorority women assessed one another in their quest to build or maintain group prestige on campus. The negative feelings generated by rush on the part of some campus administrators, as well as some sorority women and independent students, foreshadowed the changes that would occur in the relationships of national sororities, university administrators, and students by the 1950s and 1960s – an issue which I continue to examine in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight.

CHAPTER FIVE: RUSH TRIUMPHS, RUSH TRAVAILS: SORORITIES AND MEMBER SELECTION

At the 1963 meeting of the Southeastern Panhellenic Conference, Helen Glenn, dean of women at Mercer University and an alumna of the university's chapter of Alpha Delta Pi sorority, reminded attendees that "rush is a tremendous public relations job." She explained that, "everything that goes on during rush is a reflection, not just on individual groups, but on the whole sorority system." Glenn hoped that college panhellenics could work toward a rush program that would eliminate "'superficial' qualities as the basis for [member] selection [and the] too elaborate production-type parties" that led to the "pressure and tension" that characterized "rush week."¹ Even as Glenn and other women within the ranks of national sororities sought to reform the undesirable aspects of rush, the system remained a lightning rod for critics of sororities.

In the previous two chapters, I have shown that while sororities found advocates in many deans of women and other university administrators, the organizations still found it necessary to take active measures to maintain their image as elite societies serving a needed role in university life. The groups' efforts at this purpose were twofold. While the sororities sought to present themselves as beneficial additions to college campuses, they also hoped to craft a positive image that could help their efforts at recruiting personable, popular new members, thus strengthening their sorority's reputation among the other National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) groups.

In this chapter I explore the ways that the national sororities' attempts to engineer and sustain a publicly pleasing, yet superficial, appearance could breed ill-will among some deans of women as well as the general public. To underscore one of the main complaints about sororities by deans of women, I discuss sorority rush and some of the more controversial aspects of this annual rite. Typically rush was a period of one to two weeks at the beginning of the school year

¹ "Southeastern Panhellenic Conference," February 22-23, 1963, Panhellenic Council Records, Box 3, Southeastern Panhellenic Conference, 1957-1969, University Archives, Duke University.

when sorority chapters would hold parties, including teas, skits, and dinners, for prospective members, or rushees. The length of rush and the number and types of parties varied from campus to campus. These social events allowed the sorority sisters to view and meet the women who hoped to join their ranks, while it gave the rushees a chance to see the different sororities and tour their houses or chapter rooms (these were used by sororities at schools where the groups did not have individual houses). After each round of parties, the sororities would hold meetings to decide which women to invite back and which women they wished to “cut” from their invitation list. The rushees also chose which sororities they did not want visit again as well as the ones they wished to continue to accept invitations from, in the hopes that they would receive a “bid,” or an invitation to pledge the group that they had most liked. Problems arose when the sororities’ choices of whom to invite back for the next round and the rushees’ choices of which sororities they wanted to pledge did not match up. In such instances, hurt feelings were possible on both sides.

Examining rush, which was the most important event of the year for sorority chapters, allows a better understanding of one of the most critical aspects of these groups that attempted to present themselves as the standard bearers of high ideals and as close-knit, family-like societies. In my study of alumnae recommendations letters for prospective rushees, both collegiate members *and* alumnae participated in the activities surrounding rush. I also consider the rush experiences of Jewish women at white, southern coeducational universities. Many NPC sororities would not accept Jewish members, and not all campuses had chapters of Jewish sororities, so rush could be an even more disappointing time for Jewish women students who were interested in sorority life.

A number of deans, including Alice Mary Baldwin at Duke’s Women’s College, seemed to accept sororities’ continued presence on campus as the cost of maintaining ties with alumnae.²

² Baldwin, “The Woman’s College As I Remember It,” 36.

And yet, some deans at southern colleges and universities expressed misgivings about the groups. In most cases, it was the division between sorority and non-sorority women on campus that caused deans to be wary. In others, the effect of the often-insensitive rush system on first-year female students gave them pause.

Arney R. Childs, dean of women (1935-1957) and professor of history at the University of South Carolina, felt that the sorority system on her campus led to a number of troubles.³ In a letter to a fellow dean of women in South Carolina that discussed plans for the spring 1943 meeting of the State Teachers Association, Childs stated that she would “very much like help on sorority problems,” but felt that she was “the only dean of women in the state with sorority headaches.”⁴ At the University of South Carolina, Childs continually dealt with the issue of a top-heavy sorority system. Three of the groups dominated the campus, she explained, “practically divid[ing] the desirable material among them.”⁵ Childs was attuned to the difficulties of women students who were left out of sorority membership and of small sorority chapters that were driven off of campus by competition from the school’s “better” chapters. Yet, her description of a segment of the female students at the university as the “desirable material” suggests that she, herself, viewed a number of these women as unsuitable for membership in a well-regarded, as well as heterosocially-popular, club. Even though she was not a sorority alumna, Childs appeared to express the belief that some women, for whatever reason, were not fitted for sorority membership, and not just by their own choosing.

Meanwhile, Childs observed, the smaller sororities were “steadily” decreasing in size. She noted that the school’s chapter of Alpha Omicron Pi “went out by default” after they could

³ Arney R. Childs, Biographical File, Dean of Women Records, 1926-1945, University of South Carolina Archives, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

⁴ Arney Childs to Elizabeth Nickles, February 13, 1943, Administrative, 1943-1945, USC Dean of Women Records, 1926-1945.

⁵ Arney Childs to Helen Barbour, n.d., Sororities, USC Dean of Women Records, 1926-1945.

gain no new pledges in September of 1937.⁶ She advocated a quota, or chapter limitation, system for the sororities at South Carolina. Quotas would limit the number of members in each sorority in order to equal out the size of the groups. That way the smaller, newer, or less popular sororities on campus would have a chance to gain a foothold while the established, and generally more popular, sororities would be prohibited from taking in a disproportionate number of the rushees. The smaller groups, Childs explained, were often left with pledges who “for scholastic or financial reasons would probably never be initiated.”⁷ As I have discussed in previous chapters, men’s fraternities designated which sorority chapters were the “best” on a campus. So while a quota system might keep the popular sororities from extending bids to all of the best rushees, it would not necessarily make a less popular sorority appear favorably in the eyes of the top fraternities.

NPC delegates in this period were in disagreement over the suitability of quotas. In the case of the unequal distribution of members among the University of South Carolina sororities, some sororities’ NPC representatives felt that they should help keep weaker sorority chapters on campus by instituting a quota, while others were against the system. At the 1935 NPC meeting, the Alpha Omicron Pi representative, Mrs. Glantzberg, described the situation at the university, located in her hometown of Columbia:

Fifty women are admitted to the University of South Carolina each year and this past year – I may be wrong on the figures, but not the idea – , of those fifty women Alpha Delta Pi got thirty-two. Pi Phi has a chapter there, and Chi Omega has a chapter there, I don’t know what they got, I know Alpha Omicron Pi was given two of that group. Now, has Alpha Delta Pi – meaning all of us – ever made an attempt to rectify that?⁸

Glatzenberg posed this situation as “the challenge to the NPC... what can the strong sisters do for the weak sisters.”⁹ Amy Onken, the Pi Beta Phi representative, spoke up as a member of one of the “weaker sisters” at South Carolina. While she admitted that the Pi Phi

⁶ Arney Childs to Helen Barbour, n.d., Sororities, USC Dean of Women Records, 1926-1945.

⁷ Arney Childs to Helen Barbour, n.d., Sororities, USC Dean of Women Records, 1926-1945.

⁸ NPC Proceedings (41/82/10), 24th Congress, 1935, NPC Archives, Box 1, 1902-1949, 51.

⁹ NPC Proceedings (41/82/10), 24th Congress, 1935, NPC Archives, Box 1, 1902-1949, 51.

chapter there would “be helped by the quota system,” she also claimed that she had “never felt that it was the responsibility of any other fraternity to take care of [her] chapter.” She thought that instead of blaming another sorority chapter for her chapter’s troubles, it was her own “business to go in and make a chapter strong enough to attract its share of the best material on the campus.”¹⁰ From this mildly contentious discussion we can see that even as the NPC meetings were supposed to help the national sororities find commonality in working together there was always a competitive mentality that arose between the members of the different groups concerning the perpetuation of the status of their own sorority.

During World War II, Dean Childs hoped that sororities would fall out of favor among students. In 1941, she reported that the “non-sorority element is growing because girls more and more are questioning the value of sororities.”¹¹ As many male students left school to enter the military, historian Amy Thompson McCandless explains, those remaining adopted a new seriousness of purpose, focusing their attention on current events beyond the campus.¹² In light of the civilian war effort that included the rationing of goods, the inwardly focused, expensive parties and social events of Greek-letter groups no longer seemed appropriate to many individuals.¹³ Childs noted, with some satisfaction, the creation that year of a new organization, called “Independent Women,” which “plann[ed] to bring the non-sorority girls together to do for them some of the things the sorority does for its members.”¹⁴ It is unclear which facets of sorority life the Independent Women’s group hoped to preserve and what they planned to dismiss. The irony of a group that would function *like* a sorority for independent women seemed lost on Childs. If her only qualms with sororities were the rush process and the inequality of chapter size, she may have believed that the Independent Women’s club could ameliorate those problems

¹⁰ NPC Proceedings, 24th Congress, 1935, NPC Records (41/82/10), Box 1, 1902-1949, 51-52.

¹¹ Report of the Dean of Women, 1940-1941, USC Dean of Women Records, 1926-1945, Dormitory Reports, 1939-1944, 1.

¹² McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 206-207.

¹³ Hartmann, *The Homefront and Beyond*, 3, 211; Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 234.

¹⁴ Report of the Dean of Women, 1940-1941, USC Dean of Women Records, 1926-1945, 1-2.

while also providing a source of group identification and a social outlet for the non-affiliated women. The trend toward decreased interest in sororities did *not* continue into the postwar era, however, and it is unknown how the Independent Women at the University of South Carolina fared in that environment.

Other university campuses also offered non-Greek-letter, women's social clubs like the Independent Women. At the Woman's College of Duke University, Katherine R. Jeffers, professor of zoology, advised an independent women's organization called Isotes. Dean Baldwin recalled that the group was not very successful, however, lasting only for about one year.¹⁵ The Triquetra Club at the University of Georgia (UGA), which formed in 1940 found a strong supporter in dean of women Edith Langdale Stallings (1948-1963), and served to organize non-sorority women on campus. Triquetra invited all non-sorority women to "participate in its well-rounded program, which include[d] social and cultural activities."¹⁶ The group's purpose was to "create interest among the non-sorority women in the social, political, and educational affairs" of the university.¹⁷ The group's formation suggests that female students had difficulty gaining leadership in university activities without the backing of a sorority-type organization. Banded together, however, the members of Triquetra could claim "a voice in all major representative bodies on campus."¹⁸

Although Stallings was a member of Alpha Xi Delta sorority from her college years at the University of New Hampshire, she and her staff believed it was important to have organized social activities and associations for *all* women students on campus.¹⁹ Triquetra, and similar groups at other schools, replicated some aspects of sorority membership by holding dances and

¹⁵ Alice Mary Baldwin, "The Woman's College as I Remember It," 77.

¹⁶ *Pandora*, 1953, 221.

¹⁷ *Pandora*, 1956, 167.

¹⁸ *Pandora*, 1956, 167.

¹⁹ "Dean Stallings Honor Day Set," *Athens Banner Herald*, May 10, 1963, Edith Stallings Clipping File, Georgia Room, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia; Report of Women's Activities, 1946-1947, Box 1, Folder 1, Edith L. Stallings and Louise McBee (Dean of Women, 1947-1974) Papers (UGA 97-119), 1.

other social events and issuing membership pins. Independent women's groups did not, however, limit their membership or stage "rush" as did sororities. In addition, the fact that the groups were not part of a nationally affiliated society meant that they were freed from having to follow a nationally standardized plan of operation. Like all NPC sororities, Triquetra bestowed upon its members a pin, publicly signifying their membership. The pin was sterling silver and "composed of three independent arcs fused into one center." Some members also received the "'T' guard of the 'Triangle,'" which the group gave to honor "outstanding leadership, ability, achievement, and individuality."²⁰ Independence and individuality were key components of Triquetra membership, a marked difference from the group ethos and conformity of sorority chapters. Like sororities, the Triquetra members described one another as "sisters," but they approached this fictive kin network in a distinctly different manner. The group's motto, "She is a stranger that is my sister," was meant to signify that the members were strangers to one another when they first arrived on campus, but that "through playing, working, and living together they bec[ame] sisters."²¹ Indeed, sorority "sisters" learned about one another in much the same way, but the conformist structure of the sorority shaped their relationships from day one through an immediate construction of a fictive kinship. Triquetra, however, *called attention* to the fact that its members started out as strangers to one another. Instead of constructing a fictive kinship with a conformist ideology from the beginning of their relationships, Triquetra appeared to allow members to bring their individuality and difference into the organization. While these groups' members no doubt enjoyed dances, dates, and other heterosocial campus events, their status as non-Greek-letter clubs likely kept them somewhat removed from the negative side of fraternity-sorority heterosocializing that was described in Chapter Four.

The absence of rush in the social clubs for independent women could allow the positive elements of group social education to flourish without hindrance from what critics saw as the

²⁰ *Pandora*, 1953, 221.

²¹ *Pandora*, 1953, 221.

severe system of member selection found in sororities. Dean Childs referred to rush as an attendant “evil” of the sorority system.²² Rush put prospective sorority members on display for the sorority sisters who would analyze the rushees’ appearance, personality, and family background. Sorority sisters met the aspiring sorority members during standardized rounds of rush teas, dinner parties, and open houses. The gatherings allowed the sisters time to assess the rushees and to try to impress those that they most wanted to join their sorority. The process left rushees vulnerable to rejection from a group, often after its members had erected a façade of friendliness.

Rush continued to cause headaches for deans like Childs, particularly as the chapters at southern universities reached their second and third generations of rushees. Daughters and other female relatives of the chapters’ alumnae, known as legacies, were often guaranteed pledge slots, and the networks of alumnae in a state or region reported diligently on the desirability of incoming students as rush material. The process became increasingly mediated by a woman’s family connections, making it more difficult for the lower middle-class, or socially up and coming women to break into the ranks.

Deans of women were regular witnesses of the yearly anguish unleashed by rush. Even deans of women who, themselves, had been sorority members, came to view sororities on their campuses with some caution. Edith Stallings was a proud member of the Alpha Xi Delta sorority and had been involved in as alumnae officer.²³ She also lent support to non-sorority women in Triquetra, which suggests she felt that UGA’s sorority system was not adequately serving all women students.²⁴ University of North Carolina (UNC) dean of women Katherine Kennedy Carmichael, an Alpha Chi Omega during her college years at Birmingham-Southern College,

²² Arney Childs to Edwin G. Seibels, August 4, 1941, *Fraternities/Sororities, 1931-1945*, n.d., USC Dean of Women Records, 1926-1945.

²³ Charlotte H. Young, “Dean Stallings Honor Day Set,” *Athens Banner-Herald*, May 10, 1963, Edith Stallings Clipping File.

²⁴ Finding Aid to Edith L. Stallings and Louise McBee (Dean of Women, 1947-1974) Papers (UGA 97-119).

acknowledged that sororities at UNC, “with all [of] their good points, illustrate[d] a fundamental conflict” in that they were “psdeudo-aristocratic bod[ies] superimposed on a democratic campus.”²⁵ She believed that sororities stratified students by financial status and popularity and was unsure of their place on public, and supposedly democratic, university campuses. The pecking order that sororities and fraternities helped establish on campuses, both public and private, resulted in a socioeconomically class conscious environment, separating the “haves” from the “have nots.” Carmichael was “concerned about the expense of education,” and worried that UNC might gain a reputation for being “a rich man’s – or woman’s – university.”²⁶ Her opinions on Greek-letter groups clearly played into her fears that UNC would become unaffordable, if not unwelcoming, to students from lower-middle or working class backgrounds. Yet, Carmichael was also against the idea of doing away with the sorority system at UNC.²⁷ Her belief in sorority social education as a way to teach young women “proper” behaviors and “morals,” as discussed in Chapter Four, seemed to have outweighed her concerns about the socioeconomic class divisions that Greek-letter groups often caused.

Sorority rushing had evolved over the years since the establishment of the first sororities. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the newly coeducational campuses had few female students, each sorority chapter on a campus would seek out specific women to “rush.” A sorority’s rush, at that point, was less formalized; sorority chapters simply approached the new women students whom they viewed as desirable material for membership. Sorority chapters often slandered their rival chapters on campus in their efforts to influence a woman to pledge their own group.²⁸ Hopes of controlling these “dirty” rush tactics were, in large part, what led to

²⁵ Advisory Committee on Sororities Minutes, 1948, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Subseries 1, Box 1, Fraternities and Sororities.

²⁶ Annual Report, 1949-1950, UNC Records of the Office of the Dean of Women, Series 2.1, Box 2, 22.

²⁷ Nancy Iler Burkholder, telephone interview conducted by author, May 11, 2010.

²⁸ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 62-67.

the creation of the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) in 1902.²⁹ Still, rush remained difficult to legislate and, over the years, individual chapters at universities continued to conduct rush in their own way.³⁰

Some college panhellenics continued to allow sororities to rush specific women students. In the fall of 1942, at the College of William and Mary, Margetta Hirsch (Doyle), a member of Kappa Delta (KD), recorded the year's rush activities in her diary. Hirsch's rendering of the events provides us with an inside view of rush from the perspective of a sorority sister. "Rushing began this evening," she wrote on November 16. Hirsch and two of her KD sisters had "rushed the town girls in Rexall's [drug store]." She thought it was "lots of fun," and reported that, "of the nine [girls] we saw we only scratched one."³¹ By that, Hirsch meant that KD would invite all of the town girls they had encountered, save the one they "scratched," to their first rush party. Two days later, the invited girls came to the KD house during two parties from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., after which the sisters held a "scratch meeting," to cut those rushees they no longer wanted to entertain as possible pledges.³² Two more days of house rushing that included playing games and singing, as well as more scratching of rushees, led up to the large, themed parties on Sunday and Monday. On November 21, Hirsch noted that the KDs were up until 2:00 a.m. decorating the house.³³ The theme of Sunday's party was "Candyland." "One room was decorated as Candy Cane Room; another was Gingerbread Castle with a witch and Hansel and Gretel; and the dining room was the land of milk and honey," Hirsch explained.

²⁹ "National Panhellenic Conference: An Historical Record of Achievement," c. 1957, NPC Archives, Publications, 1938-2002 (41/82/800), Box 1, 7.

³⁰ "Fifty Years of Rushing – Evolution to Modern System," NPC Conference Proceedings, 1951, NPC Records (41/82/10), Box 2, 40.

³¹ November 16, 1942, Diary, July 1, 1942-December 31, 1942, Margetta Doris Hirsch Doyle Papers, 1941-1945, SCRC.

³² November 18, 1942, Diary, July 1, 1942-December 31, 1942, Margetta Doris Hirsch Doyle Papers.

³³ November 19, 1942, November 20, 1942, November 21, 1942, Diary, July 1, 1942-December 31, 1942, Margetta Doris Hirsch Doyle Papers.

She listed the refreshments as “gingerbread and vanilla ice cream punch.” Again, Hirsch said that rush “was lots of fun,” but this time added that she “[couldn’t] take much more of it.”³⁴

Rush involved a whirlwind of activity and often became overwhelming for both sisters and rushees. The late night decorating, the repetitive practicing of skits and songs, the tense meetings to decide which rushees to ask back to the next party, and the constant need to display their best appearance and personality to rushees could quickly wear down a sorority member’s energy for the event. The KD’s final party was the “Hotel Premier” party. Hirsch wrote that, in preparation for the party, she “did everything from building dressing tables to making hors d’ouvers, with lots of things in between.” She thought that the overall effect of the food and decoration was “very impressive.” Hirsch and her sisters then had to wait until Wednesday to see which of the ninety-six girls going through rush had chosen to pledge KD.³⁵ On “bid day,” KD received fourteen pledges, all of which Hirsch described as “swell.” The only disappointment she noted was that one rushee that she particularly liked had chosen to pledge Chi Omega instead.³⁶

Instead of leaving first round party invitations up to the sororities, some college’s Panhellenics moved to a specific schedule of rush parties that commenced with an “open house” round to which all rushees were invited. The open house round seemed an attempt by Panhellenics to open sorority rush to all women students interested in joining a sorority. During open house, prospective members would visit all of the houses, a change that could help eliminate the issue of women entering rush set on joining a certain sorority. Likewise, each sorority chapter would have a chance to see all of the girls going through rush. This modified system was supposed to be more democratic than the older process where the sorority chapters would choose which new students they would rush. In that system, if none of the sororities expressed a specific interest in rushing a woman, she would be passed over for membership.

³⁴ November 22, 1942, Diary, July 1, 1942-December 31, 1942, Margetta Doris Hirsch Doyle Papers.

³⁵ November 23, 1942, Diary, July 1, 1942-December 31, 1942, Margetta Doris Hirsch Doyle Papers.

³⁶ November 25, 1942, Diary, July 1, 1942-December 31, 1942, Margetta Doris Hirsch Doyle Papers.

In either type of rush, a woman who had arrived at college planning to pledge a sorority but who failed to receive a bid during rush would either have to “settle” for being an independent or try to befriend some sorority women and hope to be asked to join the next year. After sororities extended bids for membership, however, the line had already been drawn between the independent women students and the sorority women and their new pledges. Thus, becoming friends with sorority women was already more difficult; the sisters wanted the pledges to associate with their pledge class to build bonds of “sisterhood.”

In 1948, Katherine Kennedy Carmichael expressed her dislike of open rush, noting that she had “always been in disagreement with the general philosophy that a girl should ‘sign up for rushing,’ ‘matriculate for rushing,’ [or] ‘go out for rushing.’” Instead, she felt that “a social woman’s fraternity should seek out a girl, and that a girl should not have to seek out a fraternity.” To make her point, Carmichael offered an analogy:

If a group of men asked you to go to Gerrard Hall to sign up so that they could inspect you with a view to proposing matrimony or rejecting you, would you go to Gerrard Hall to sign up? I think you would not. You would say, ‘if the men want to come see me, let them come find me.’³⁷

Even when all female students were allowed go out for rush, the sororities were not required to pledge everyone. Although the older rushing system also weeded out women that the sororities saw as undesirable for membership, Carmichael believed that it was somehow less painful for the women to never be approached for membership at all than for them to express their hopes of joining a sorority only to be turned down. While she acknowledged that the open rushing system was a more “democratic procedur[e],” she seemed to think that once women had their hopes up, it was easier for them to be hurt. Carmichael may have held this viewpoint, however, because she had been one of the women students at her college chosen for sorority membership. For women

³⁷ Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to Panhellenic Council president, October 20, 1948, UNC-CH, Records of the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 3, Sororities, Rushing, 1945-1956.

who aspired to be in a sorority, failing to be chosen – no matter the rushing system – would always be a painful experience.

Rush: Internalizing Sorority Norms

In Chapter One, the fictional story of Mary McBeam, a prospective member up for discussion by a group of sorority women, demonstrated the stringent requirements and harsh criticisms leveled at women trying to gain entrance into the selective sisterhoods. A sorority's entire year (and reputation) could be made or unmade by the women they pledged during rush. Thus, the decisions about which women the chapters would choose to pursue for membership were quite important. The control of members' behavior and appearance during this period of "first impressions" was crucial to the picture that the chapter wished to present to potential new members. Specific rush rules about what to wear, how to sit and stand, how to serve refreshments to guests, and how to create seemingly "natural" conversation with strangers were all extensions of the social education that sororities conveyed to their members throughout the year. These requirements for behavior, the groups hoped, would become second nature to the members and would serve to demonstrate, for rushees, the type of personality that sororities desired for pledgeship.

Even before joining one of the groups, then, potential pledges would begin their "education" in acceptable behavior for sorority members. College Panhellenic councils often provided incoming rushees with booklets telling them what to expect during sorority rush. These typically included a discussion of what the rushees should wear to parties during each round. The Eta Chapter of Alpha Delta Pi at the University of Alabama suggested that rushees wear "a cool summer dress with a comfortable pair of flats," for the first day of rush. For the round of afternoon parties, the Eta rush chair noted that, "cotton date dresses and heels will be appropriate." The final night's parties required the women to wear a "fancy cocktail dress,"

while for the preferential luncheon the chair instructed that they wear a “complete outfit – gloves, earrings, hats, etc.”³⁸

Rushees entered the rush period understanding that the course of the following one to two weeks could alter the trajectory of their college experience. Successful rushees needed to be highly attuned to the kinds of behaviors, attitudes, and appearances exhibited by sorority members and strive to emulate these characteristics. Through their demonstration of the “correct” behaviors, sororities disciplined the rushees, some their future pledges, to perform these same actions. Historian and philosopher Michel Foucault has described this model of behavioral conditioning as it developed in modern prisons. Successful rushees, according to Foucault’s arguments, would *normalize and internalize* what the sororities deemed acceptable and would come to value and highlight these same qualities in themselves as well as expect them of others.³⁹

The sorority chapters pulled out all the stops and spared no expense when organizing for rush events. The parties, skits, and house (or chapter room) needed to impress the rushees, making a sorority stand out among a sea of other like groups that the rushees would meet only momentarily. When the rushees had to judge whether or not they liked and felt comfortable with a sorority’s members – but could not actually recall meeting many of them in the whirl of excitement – the sorority leaders hoped that the women *would* remember an outstanding skit instead. Impressive displays, like the William and Mary Kappa Deltas’ “Hotel Premier” party, replete with hors d’ouvres and mock champagne cocktails could help to push them to the top of a rushee’s list.⁴⁰

³⁸ “What to Wear During Rush,” in “Eta Etchings,” 1961, Eta Chapter, Alpha Delta Pi, University of Alabama, Alpha Delta Pi Archives.

³⁹ Michel Foucault argues that through disciplining, subjects can be trained to exhibit desired behaviors. In time, these behaviors will become habitual or “normalized” in the minds of the subjects. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1977), 170-194, 179-183 in particular.

⁴⁰ November 23, 1942, Diary, July 1, 1942-December 31, 1942, Margetta Doris Hirsch Doyle Papers.

In 1957, the Omega Chapter of Alpha Delta Pi at Louisiana State University (LSU) reported that their fall rush featured a “Forget-Me-Not Party,” with all the sisters “dressed in identical white cotton dresses,” and an “ADPi Luau” where the chapter “wore brightly patterned sarongs and leis.”⁴¹ The descriptions also offered ideas to other ADPi chapters on which themes, decorations, and outfits were most enjoyed or complimented by rushees. Paraded before the rushees while wearing identical outfits, the sisters’ clothing reinforced the group’s uniformity. The report further detailed the luau decorations: “palm trees, sea shells, fish nets, and island flowers and birds.” The party’s “entertainment” was an “island dance with maracas based on the story of the ADPi pin,” which was “performed by the entire chapter and featured three hula dancers.” The sisters served Hawaiian punch for refreshments.⁴²

Popular rush skits might include song and dance ensembles that tied in with a sorority’s symbols, current popular songs or movies, or references to folk tableau. In addition to its lessons of social education, the *Tri-Delta Hostess* (1937) guidebook also provided ideas for rush parties that included details on decorations, costumes, entertainment, and refreshments. The section offered sixty-four different party themes that fell under eleven different genres: “best bet parties,” “back to childhood parties,” “decorative themes,” “foreign themes,” night club parties,” “period themes,” progressive dinners,” “sea motifs,” “southern parties,” and “traditional themes.”⁴³ A “Hotel Party,” much like the KD party described by Margetta Hirsch, was one of Tri-Delta’s “best bet parties.”⁴⁴

Theatrical in their execution, a number of the parties fell back on ethnic and racial stereotyping for humor or to lend a popularly understood authenticity to the scene. Cultural historians and film critics including Robert Lee, Michael Rogin, and Donald Bogle have noted

⁴¹ Alpha Delta Pi, Omega Chapter Report 1957-1958, Omega – Louisiana State University, 1957/58-1966/67, Alpha Delta Pi Archives, Alpha Delta Pi Memorial Headquarters, 1.

⁴² Alpha Delta Pi, Omega Chapter Report 1957-1958, 1.

⁴³ Beverly H. Ballard and Margaret Ward, *Tri-Delta Hostess*, 1937, Stewart Howe Collection (26/20/30), Delta Delta Delta Publications, 37-38.

⁴⁴ Ballard and Ward, *Tri-Delta Hostess*, 41.

that Hollywood films of the first half of the twentieth century readily featured stereotyping of racial and ethnic “Others.”⁴⁵ Yellowface and blackface depictions were common in popularly received films from the era such as *Broken Blossoms* (1919), *The Mask of Dr. Fu Manchu* (1932), *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1933); *The Good Earth* (1937), *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), *The Jazz Singer* (1927), *Babes in Arms* (1939), and *Holiday Inn* (1942). Meanwhile, the *Amos ‘n’ Andy* (1928) radio show, based on white characters performing black racial stereotypes, became immensely popular nationwide.⁴⁶ For the “Oriental Tea” party, the *Hostess*’ authors noted that the room should have “no furniture,” but “many pillows, incense burners, and dim lights.” As though to suggest an opium den, they instructed that the “atmosphere” should “ree[k] of incense.”⁴⁷ They described the “Cotton Night Club” party as a “take-off on the famous Harlem Cotton Club.” “If the orchestra is not a negro one,” wrote the authors, “they should be black-faced.”⁴⁸

Another unsettling use of racial stereotyping in the *Hostess* was the “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” party. Like the “Oriental Tea” and the “Cotton Night Club” parties, the “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” theme enabled the construction of a common *white* identity among the sorority sisters and the rushees in opposition to commonly understood caricatures of the non-white, Chinese, Hawaiian or African American evoked by the costumed sorority members. Through these depictions, middle and upper class white women defined their own perceived racial and cultural superiority while experimenting with a fantasized crossing of boundaries that could allow them to

⁴⁵ Robert G. Lee, *Orientials Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1999); Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996); Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks An Interpretive History of Blacks in Films* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1973)

⁴⁶ Lee, *Orientials*, 117-136; Thomas Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), 169-174, Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 162-169; Melvin Patrick Ely, *The Adventures of Amos ‘n’ Andy A Social History of an American Phenomenon* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1991), 4.

⁴⁷ Ballard and Ward, *Tri-Delta Hostess*, 51.

⁴⁸ Ballard and Ward, *Tri-Delta Hostess*, 51.

simultaneously confront and control their fears of racial difference. The *Hostess*' authors described the possible party decorations in painstaking detail:

Cabin interior, tables with red checked cloths, benches, pickaninnies, Uncle Tom, cribs, etc. Tiny bales of cotton and imitation cotton bolls may be worked into a very attractive centerpiece or mantel decoration. Or, make a centerpiece of a negro cabin of construction logs, with tiny black-faced dolls dressed Aunt Jemima fashion bending over a toy tub washing and hanging up clothes while their overalled and barefooted Rastuses push wheelbarrows, hoe, etc., including at least one snoozing stretched out in the shade.⁴⁹

During the 1948 school year, UNC's Tri-Deltas performed a blackface skit during rush that calls to mind the *Hostess*'s party description. A yearbook picture, captioned "Plantation party at the Tri-Delt house," shows smiling, white, rushees dancing along with the Tri-Delta sisters who wore blackface, black gloves and tights, their hair obscured by dark kerchiefs with tiny, bow-tied braids protruding, and were dressed in rough hewn clothing.⁵⁰

For the rush skits, sorority women attempted to neatly fit African Americans, Asians, Latinos and other ethnic groups into stock characters for their own entertainment and that of their rushees.⁵¹ The authors referred to "Aunt Jemima" and "Rastus" to help the sorority members visualize what they should aim for in decorating for "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Yet their off-hand reference to the two African American characters suggested that they pictured the two as representative of all black Americans. As popular consumer cultural icons, Aunt Jemima, known as the spokesperson for Aunt Jemima's Buckwheat Pancake Mix, and Rastus, the male chef character featured in ads for Cream of Wheat, would be familiar African American images easily imitable by the white sorority members.⁵² By staging events that, in effect, celebrated African American slavery in the United States, sororities figuratively, as well as literally, turned a blind-eye to contemporary racial injustices in the United States.

⁴⁹ Ballard and Ward, *Tri-Delta Hostess*, 57.

⁵⁰ *Yackety Yack*, 1949, 298.

⁵¹ Ballard and Ward, *Tri-Delta Hostess*, 48-51.

⁵² Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 45-46, 63-66; M.M. Manring, *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 61-78.

The Emotional Hardships of Rush

While each sorority wanted the most, “desirable” rushees to gain a favorable impression of their group, it was the rushee who had more to lose if she was not sought out by the sororities. Both the rushees and the sorority sisters saw only glimpses of one another during the hurried and highly choreographed parties and teas, which were not nearly long enough to make well-reasoned decisions about others’ personalities or qualities desirable for close and lasting friendships. So unless a woman was joining a sorority chapter in which her biological sister or her close friend from home was already an active member, she was, more likely than not, making a decision that rested on a surface assessment of the sorority as a whole. The sorority sisters chose their rushees based on a combination of superficial appearance and alumnae recommendations, while the rushees picked sororities based on friends’ and relatives’ comments, the rumored popularity of the group on campus, and the physical appearance of sisters. The Chi Omega rush policies for 1952 listed the “standards emphasized in choosing members.” Background counted thirty-five percent; scholarship and reputation, twenty percent each; appearance and personality, ten percent each; and physique, five percent.⁵³ From this breakdown, it is clear that “who you knew” played a major role in the sorority’s rush decisions. Also, a full thirty-five percent of each decision came down to a rushee’s superficial characteristics. With little time for the sorority to really get to know the rushees as individual women, sorority members’ discussion about prospective members had the potential to become highly critical and quite mean-spirited.

During a discussion of rushee evaluations at the inaugural meeting of the Advisory Committee on Sororities at UNC in 1948, a member of Tri-Delta and president of the student Panhellenic, said that “chapters tried not to have unpleasant facts brought out about a girl, lest

⁵³ Chi Omega Rush Policies, 1952, Guion Griffis Johnson Papers (hereafter GGJ), SHC, UNC, Series 10, Subseries 1, Box 107, UNC Panhellenic, 1948-1963.

[her] reputation be damaged.”⁵⁴ This meant that the sorority women had to find a way to present their opinions about a rushee – as negative as they might be – without straying into scandalous territory that would “mark” the woman for her entire college career. On the one hand, if only one or two sisters had a significant dislike of a rushee, she still might be given a bid by their sorority – particularly if the rushee was a legacy or came from a powerful family in the region. In that case, sorority members would have to pretend that they had not listened to their sisters berating a rushee that had been pledged by, and would be a future member of, their sorority. On the other hand, if the rushee was cut by the sorority during rush, but the sisters’ rush session discussions of the her moved outside the walls of the sorority house (and it was highly likely that some would), the damaging rumors could be spread to students on campus, both Greek-letter and independent. Hughes did not explain what types of “facts” would be “unpleasant,” and thus off-limits, and which ones would be deemed necessary information for rush selections. Nor did she establish how those “facts” – or mere observations – could be designated as somehow less hurtful and *not* the type that would damage a woman’s reputation.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, sororities based *their* behavioral standards on publicly acceptable standards of behavior for white middle and upper class women of the time. This meant that “immoral behaviors,” such as visible sexual activity, sexually *suggestive* behavior, or drinking in public, would reflect poorly on the woman’s reputation. In Betty White’s *I Lived This Story* (1930), a post-rush party discussion by the Gamma Theta sisters digs up dirt on rushee, Louise Bush. Laurel, the rush chairperson asks the sisters to comment on Louise. Following a chorus of praise based on quick and superficial meetings, one sister takes apparent pride, instead, in bringing forth malicious gossip. “She has a perfectly terrible reputation,” states Marion, as “her eyes gleamed and her lips came together firmly.” Marion seems to enjoy the

⁵⁴ Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Sororities, December 7, 1948, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Box 41, Fraternities and Sororities: Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, 1950-1964.

attention her secret will afford. A male student had told her that Louise went “on wild parties all the time.” He claimed to know someone from her hometown who, as Marion repeats to her chapter, said Louise “gets drunk – and – well –” Marion’s story immediately elicits cries of “We can’t pledge her, she’s not a virgin,” “Breaks the prohibition law,” “Great God, maybe she smokes!” from the other girls.⁵⁵ In a moment, Louise Bush’s name and reputation have become tainted by hearsay that is perhaps intentionally embellished by Marion. Gossip, whether true or unsubstantiated, could be a significant factor in rush decisions. As we will see in the examination of rush recommendations in this chapter, discussions of a woman’s family could also bring forth “unpleasant” topics, such as financial difficulties or history of alcoholism that could cast embarrassment on the individual.

In 1948, the sorority advisory committee at UNC “suggested that the chapters investigate their present systems of evaluating girls, with a view toward making discussion in chapter meetings more objective.”⁵⁶ Although the Panhellenic president described the rushee evaluations in a way that sounded highly *subjective*, she spoke as though the chapters were trying to be sensitive about the ways they assessed the prospective pledges. The advisory committee seemed to believe that the collegiate sorority members were capable of instituting these changes themselves. Perhaps the committee members’ unwillingness to further press the president about the situation resulted from the fact that alumnae members resorted to similar tactics with little regard for the reputation of rushees or their families. As we will see later in this chapter, the correspondence between sorority alumnae regarding prospective rushees, like conversations between the active sorority sisters, also included harsh criticisms of the incoming students.

Sororities and their alumnae continued to engage in these types of conversations about rushees because of the power of the rushees (as possible members) to positively or negatively

⁵⁵ White, *I Lived This Story*, 32-33.

⁵⁶ Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Sororities, December 7, 1948, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Box 41, *Fraternities and Sororities: Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, 1950-1964*.

affect the sorority's appearance and performance during rush in future years. For a popular sorority chapter to perpetuate their standing on campus, they needed to recruit personable and attractive women during rush. And in order to do that, the chapter needed the current group of sisters to also display these "desirable" characteristics. If a sorority began to have difficulties attracting desirable members during rush, the problem often compounded each year, making it increasingly unlikely each season that the "hot" rushees would want to join their group. Gaining new members that would solidify the reputation of the sorority on campus required that the sisters be personable, but more importantly, physically attractive.⁵⁷ As I have argued in previous chapters, sororities gained popularity on a campus by appealing to the men's fraternities. In order to attract attention and admiration from fraternities a sorority needed members who met racialized and classed standards of physical beauty. When sorority chapters publicized their members' achievements, it was typical for sororities to tout the number of sisters chosen each year as campus beauty queens, fraternity "sweethearts," or sponsors in regional beauty pageants. These announcements reaffirmed male recognition and approval of sorority members' appearance and were particularly common in sorority spreads of college yearbooks.⁵⁸

In the previous chapter I noted that, often, over time, a sorority "pecking order" became firmly established on each campus and that breaking into the popular fold could be quite difficult for newer sororities.⁵⁹ Established at UNC in 1945 as the campus's fifth national sorority, the Gamma Epsilon chapter of Alpha Gamma Delta sorority (Alpha Gam) serves as a prime example

⁵⁷ Sorority members use the term "hot" rushee to describe the women students going through rush whom the sororities on campus view as the most desirable future pledges. In this case, "hot" is not used to describe appearance, as in popular terminology, but is meant to include all of the desirable characteristics in a prospective pledge, such as scholarship, activities, background, personality, appearance, and recommendations.

⁵⁸ Alpha Delta Pi, Beta Nu Chapter University of Georgia, 1958-1959 Report, Beta Nu Chapter Histories, Alpha Delta Pi Archives, Alpha Delta Pi Memorial Headquarters; *Glomerata*, 1951, 295; *Glomerata*, 1962, 194.

⁵⁹ Mary C. McComb, *Great Depression and the Middle Class: Experts, Collegiate Youth and Business ideology, 1929-1941* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 73.

of this issue.⁶⁰ After a number of years as a weaker chapter on campus, the group appeared to suffer from a poor reputation among a majority of the student body.⁶¹ At a 1963 meeting of the Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, committee members discussed the sorority and its small pledge class that fall. The sorority had “expressed a deep concern over the number of rushees dropping out of their rush parties...for no apparent reason other than derogatory rumors and stories being spread among the student population.” Alpha Gamma Delta wanted to ensure that all other members of UNC’s collegiate Panhellenic were dedicated to the flourishing of every sorority chapter on campus. A letter written by the Alpha Gamma Delta Grand President to the president of the UNC Panhellenic “acknowledged knowing of alleged rumors, i.e., that the Alpha Gamma Delta house would close because of its diminishing size, etc. and the need for Panhellenic to support their house as a part of the Carolina fraternity system.”⁶² While it is unknown what the Grand President meant to imply with her use of “etcetera,” it is likely that it referred to the diminishing quality – or physical attractiveness – of the sorority’s members. Derogatory comments about the appearance or the heterosexual “dateability” of a sorority’s members could be highly damaging for a group’s reputation on campus. The advisory committee endorsed the letter from Alpha Gamma Delta and “urge[d] Panhellenic and all sorority women to maintain the viability of all campus chapters.”⁶³ The fact that the advisory committee had to issue such a reminder to the collegiate Panhellenic suggests that there were problems with sorority chapters disrespecting one another on campus. The “honest rivalry” noted by Inez

⁶⁰ Memorandum from Mary S. McDuffie to Faculty Committee on Sororities, February 13, 1946, UNC Office for the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Box 41, Fraternities and Sororities: Faculty Committee on Sororities, 1944-1946.

⁶¹ Minutes of the Faculty Committee on Fraternities and Sororities, February 12, 1963, UNC Office for the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Box 41, Faculty Committees: Fraternities and Sororities, 1964-1969.

⁶² Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, October 17, 1963, UNC Office for the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Box 41, Fraternities and Sororities: Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, 1950-1964.

⁶³ Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, October 17, 1963, UNC Office for the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Box 41, Fraternities and Sororities: Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, 1950-1964.

Koonce Stacy in 1924 and “healthy competition” observed by Katherine Carmichael in 1955 seemed to have been more spiteful in actuality, as women in the different sororities gossiped about members of the other groups.⁶⁴ Apparently, the Alpha Gams bore the brunt of this heckling.

In a move that clearly supports the argument that fraternities were the source behind a sorority chapter’s rating, or ranking, on campus, the advisory committee “suggested that the support of the IFC [Inter-Fraternity Council] be enlisted,” to help bolster the reputation of the Alpha Gamma Delta house.⁶⁵ With this comment, the women of the advisory committee (again, composed of women university administrators, professors, and local sorority alumnae) basically *admitted* that a sorority’s popularity among fraternity men was imperative to its success on a campus. To get the IFC to “support” the efforts to strengthen the reputation of the Gamma Epsilon chapter would mean that the fraternities would have to agree to have mixers with or host parties for Alpha Gams. By showing that they would accept the sorority, the UNC fraternities would hold the key to the women’s renewed image among the student body.

Typically, the top tier of fraternities and sororities on a campus would mix with one another and the second tier groups together, and so on down. With the Alpha Gams branded as highly undesirable, they would be hard pressed to get any fraternities to mix with them. Even a lower rated fraternity on campus would want to avoid the stigma of associating with a sorority that had the ignominious distinction of being the butt of campus jokes. Apparently, a number of students referred to the Alpha Gamma Delta’s by the nickname “the Gamma ghouls,” which was

⁶⁴ Annual Report, 1923-1924, Records of the Office of Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Annual Report, 1917-1929; Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to D. Loren C. McKinney, February 11, 1955, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Subseries 2, Box 1, Fraternities and Sororities: General, 1941-1971.

⁶⁵ Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, October 17, 1963, UNC Office for the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Box 41, Fraternities and Sororities: Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, 1950-1964.

meant to describe the physical appearance of the members as “ghoulish” or “unattractive.”⁶⁶ As I have noted, the physical attractiveness of sororities’ members played a significant role for sororities seeking to establish their campus popularity with men’s fraternities. The advisory committee did not discuss the possible difficulty in getting the fraternities to lend their support to the Alpha Gamma Delta rehabilitation effort. The committee might have had to promise some sort of recompense for the position in which the fraternities would risk putting themselves as supporters of a poorly rated sorority. While it is unclear how, or even if, this plan came to fruition, the fact that Gamma Epsilon withdrew from the UNC campus during the 1965 school year implies that the fraternity men and the other sororities had not been terribly interested in helping to save the chapter.⁶⁷ Even if the members of other Greek-letter groups *did* stop their gossiping and made a concerted effort to meet the Alpha Gamma Deltas on an even playing field after the 1963 advisory committee meeting, the damage had already been done.

The rush period, with its calendar of social events, often became a difficult and stressful time for both rushees and sorority members. The rushees and the active members had to attend all of the parties and the actives devoted hours to preparations before the parties and discussions of rushees after the events. Needless to say, the commitment to rush left little time for other activities, including schoolwork. Particularly in the case of first-year rushees, the trend toward socializing at the expense of classes and studying could create a confusing environment. New students would learn that both schoolwork and parties were supposed to be an important part of the collegiate culture but they might have trouble finding a balance between the two. By the time the excitement (or anguish) of rush was over, a first-year student might find herself impossibly behind in her coursework. In Peggy Goodin’s novel critiquing sororities, *Take Care of My Little Girl* (1950), Liz Ericson becomes so caught up in her pledge duties (which include frequent

⁶⁶ Off-the-record source to author.

⁶⁷ “Report of the Faculty Committee on Fraternities and Sororities, 1964-1965,” UNC Office for the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 2, 6-7.

parties and dates) that she fails to keep up with her studies and is placed on probation by the dean of women's office. Since the administration at the fictional Midwestern University did not permit women who had fallen below the scholastic average to live in the sorority houses, Liz moves into a dorm and from her new vantage point, begins to see that she is happier without the sorority.⁶⁸

One of the primary concerns of administrators and advisory committees was the "exhaustive and time-consuming" schedule of rush. At the meetings of the UNC sorority advisory committee, Anne Queen, director of the Campus Y, "expressed a vital concern over the conflict between energy and time expended on rush, during classes, and the temporary relinquishing of responsibility to academic life during [the] period." The topic was on the table for discussion at the meeting, but the committee instead took the time to give "special kudos" to "those [sororities] who improved and shortened their discussion sessions after the parties."⁶⁹ While shortening post-party meetings was a step in the right direction, the committee members did not offer any new ideas on how to help balance rush obligations with academic work at an important time of the semester.

At the Woman's College of Duke University, the Panhellenic Council attempted to improve matters of scheduling by moving to a deferred rush system in 1945. This meant that all rushing took place during the second semester of the school year. The plan seemed to offer a number of benefits. By pushing rush back, the freshmen would have an entire semester to adjust to "the total campus before entering into group affiliation."⁷⁰ This also allowed the women to get a better feeling for the differences between the sorority chapters and to know the groups' members outside of the artificial rush environment. (Of course, that could work against some of the chapters if their members publicly displayed unattractive character traits during the course of

⁶⁸ Goodin, *Take Care of My Little Girl*, 74-76.

⁶⁹ Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, October 17, 1963, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Box 41, Fraternities and Sororities: Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, 1950-1964.

⁷⁰ "An Analysis of Sorority Rushing (Deferred)," [1947?], Duke University Panhellenic Council Records, 1938-1996, Box 2, Deferred Rush, 1947-1968, 1, 3-5.

the fall semester.) On the flipside, the sororities would have access to rushees' records of collegiate scholarship when making decisions about membership. Female students who had completed a minimum of twelve semester hours and maintained a 2.0 average during the first semester would be eligible to participate in rush. The four-day rush program would take place during the third week of the second semester.⁷¹

An analysis of the system, made after two years of deferred rushing, argued that the benefits were not as great as they had at first appeared. Instead of the prospective rushees more easily adjusting to life on campus, they waited for rush to occur before "settling into the year's activity." "There [was] an attitude of suspended excitement and the hovering expectancy which does not stabilize until after rush week."⁷² Moreover, the report suggested that women who had time to get to know the different sororities over the course of the first semester would be more disappointed if they did not get a bid from their favorite sorority. It also noted that a disappointed rushee's emotional injury was more publicly visible in the deferred system; after a semester, it would have become evident which group a prospective pledge preferred. While many women arrived at school without an idea of which sorority they would like to join, the deferred rush system allowed time for favorites to develop and for rumors to be spread. With this process, "there [was] an inevitable perpetuation of the groups long established on the campus resulting from their accrued prestige."⁷³

As deans of women's offices, college Panhellenics, and advisory committees worked to find a compromise in rushing that would best suit the students involved, the NPC reaffirmed their disapproval of deferred rushing. The NPC had approved a "short early rush period," at their 1926 meeting and that "endorsement [had] been reaffirmed at each conference since that time."⁷⁴ One of the primary reasons for the establishment of the NPC was the regulation of rushing practices.

⁷¹ "An Analysis of Sorority Rushing (Deferred)," [1947?], 1, 3-5.

⁷² "An Analysis of Sorority Rushing (Deferred)," [1947?], 1, 3-5.

⁷³ "An Analysis of Sorority Rushing (Deferred)," [1947?], 1, 3-5.

⁷⁴ NPC Proceedings (41/82/10), 1951, Box 2, 40.

As campuses began to have increasing numbers of sorority chapters competing for students, sorority alumnae felt that some rules needed to be enforced to make the process less contentious. By creating an organized system of rush parties where all women interested in pledging a sorority had a chance to visit each group on campus and to narrow her choices (as the sororities did the same), the sororities believed they would enable more women going through rush to end up pledging a sorority.

In addition, the sororities, in cooperation with the college Panhellenics, began to implement a quota-limitation system on many campuses. As I explained earlier in the chapter in the case of the University of South Carolina, the quota system meant that each sorority could give bids to a set number of rushees based on chapter size and the overall number of rushees to help even out the number of members in each sorority chapter on campus.⁷⁵ While national sororities and university administrators intended all of these changes within rush to ease the process for rushees, a large part of the problems with rush resulted from the way the sorority women and alumnae handled their decisions about the rushees. In reality, the quota system was a way for sororities to help *themselves* as it gave them the leverage to build up their weaker chapters while limiting popular chapters on the same campus from pledging a majority of the rushees. The individual rushee still endured tough decisions about which sororities' invitations to accept and the possibility of elimination in the case of no return invitations. And the prospective pledges would continue to endure the tense, artificial, parties organized by the sororities to both impress *and* assess them. To improve the experience for the rushee would require that sororities and college Panhellenics completely revise their system of evaluating prospective members, a project that, to this day, they still have not undertaken.

⁷⁵ NPC Proceedings (41/82/10), 1951, Box 2, 40-42.

Behind the Scenes: Sorority Alumnae and Rush Recommendations

In addition to the scrutiny of rushees by the active members, by the 1920s, the unwritten requirement that rushees receive recommendations from alumnae further tightened the selection process.⁷⁶ The practice of recommending certain rushees, as well as passing along unfavorable reports on others, again demonstrates the significant role played by alumnae members in the continuing function of their sororities. Alumnae dutifully wrote to national officers and chapter advisors, explaining why a certain chapter should or should not pledge a specific rushee.

An examination of correspondence between Dr. Guion Griffis Johnson, Chi Omega traveling secretary and an alumnae advisor for the Epsilon Beta chapter at UNC, and other Chi Omega alumnae and officers demonstrates the types of conversations traded by sorority alumnae as they sought to limit their membership to women who met their exacting social standards. An historian and sociologist by training, Frances Guion Griffis Johnson was also the wife of Dr. Guy B. Johnson, a noted professor of sociology at the university. A Chi Omega alumna from the University of Missouri's Rho Alpha chapter, Guion Johnson also served as a sort of traveling secretary for the national sorority during the 1950s.⁷⁷

Guion Johnson was born in Wolfe City, Texas on April 11, 1900. She received degrees from Burleson [Junior] College and Baylor College for Women, where after graduating from the latter, she taught English and established a journalism department. During this time, Guion also took summer classes at the University of Missouri for a degree in journalism. In 1923, she married Guy Johnson, with whom she had carried on a long-distance relationship since their meeting at Burleson. It was Guy's invitation from Howard K. Odum to join UNC's doctoral program in sociology at the university's Institute for Research in Social Science (IRSS) that brought the Johnsons to Chapel Hill in 1924. Guion had to leave behind her newly formed

⁷⁶ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 125.

⁷⁷ Finding Aid, GGJ Papers. I will discuss her work as a traveling secretary in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

journalism department, but was encouraged by the fact that she could also join a doctoral program at UNC. Guy and Guion received their doctorates in 1927, his in sociology, hers in history.

Although Guion's dissertation on "Social Conditions in North Carolina, 1800-1860," won the Smith Research Award at UNC for best dissertation in the social sciences, she would not have the same opportunities as her husband, or male historians, to pursue a professional teaching career at a coeducational university. While Guy joined the faculty of UNC's sociology department, Guion continued to do research and writing for the IRSS.

In 1928, the couple was part of a team of researchers studying the history and folk culture of St. Helena Island, one of South Carolina's Sea Islands. From her research, Guion published *A Social History of the Sea Islands with Special Reference to St. Helena Island, South Carolina* (1930). The book received little attention from critics. It was her 1937 publication, also largely ignored by her contemporary historians, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* that, only later, received praise as a classic study of North Carolina history. Additionally, the Johnsons both devoted research and writing time to Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944), relocating to New York City to help with the book's publication.⁷⁸

Although she had established herself as a thorough and gifted historian, Guion would come to use civic work as her primary tool for social change. Focusing more on issues of gender, while her husband remained active in racial justice work, Guion found herself becoming aware of the public power available to women through volunteer organizations. While she originally felt relegated to women's civic duties when she could not obtain a faculty position, her many club affiliations offered her a new way to channel her intellect and enthusiasm to help women in North

⁷⁸ Sarah Jane Theusen, "Taking the Vows of Southern Liberalism: Guion and Guy Johnson and the Evolution of an Intellectual Partnership," *The North Carolina Historical Review* Vol. 74, no. 3 (July 1997), 284-289, 292-298, 303, 306; Guion Griffis Johnson interview by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall and Mary Frederickson, April-June, 1974, SOHP (#4007): G-0029:1-4; Inventory of the GGJ Papers, 1873-1987, http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/j/Johnson,Guion_Griffis.html, website accessed March 31, 2009.

Carolina and beyond. Aside from her work as a Chi Omega alumna, some of her more important organizational affiliations over the years included the American Association of University Women, The North Carolina Council of Women's Organizations (a group that she helped found in 1952), the North Carolina Council for World Affairs, the Methodist Church, and the United Church Women (or Church Women United).⁷⁹

While Johnson's education and her intense involvement in civic and religious organizations established her as a somewhat unconventional woman of her time, the mother of two still worked within the parameters of white southern womanhood. In some respects she was a contradiction. As a child in northeast Texas, Johnson had been brought up in the mold of southern white supremacy. In adulthood, however, she worked quietly to support her husband's work in the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) and the Southern Regional Council (SRC), both viewed as "liberal" organizations by white southerners desirous of maintaining the racial status quo. While Guy Johnson continued to pursue research and work in areas of racial understanding that proved controversial for both its time and place, Guion offered a mediating public presence with her activity in the local community. Historian Sarah Theusen suggests that Guion Johnson jumped into women's club work with such gusto in the early 1950s as a direct result of threats to her husband's job by university trustees and administrators. Although Guy succeeded in retaining his job, the "Visiting Committee" of UNC's Board of Trustees had brought him in for questioning "on everything from his views on evolution to racial segregation."⁸⁰ In 1948, shortly after this episode, Guion again tried to secure a teaching position in the UNC history department. She sent her request to Chancellor Robert B. House, who replied not about a job, but to suggest that she could help ease tension about her husband's perceived

⁷⁹ Theusen, "Taking the Vows of Southern Liberalism," 316-317; Inventory of the Guion Griffis Johnson Papers, 1873-1987, http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/j/Johnson.Guion_Griffis.html, website accessed March 31, 2009.

⁸⁰ Theusen, "Taking the Vows of White Southern Liberalism," 313-314.

radicalism by “joining various women’s associations and getting to know the wives of the community’s powerful men.”⁸¹

In light of the more liberal aspects of her own activities, Johnson’s sudden interest in Chi Omega alumnae work around this time might seem puzzling if not for the tensions surrounding Guy’s employment at the university. In this chapter and those that follow, we will see Guion Johnson serve in various capacities for both Chi Omega and UNC committees regarding sorority matters and we will watch as she artfully plays groups, or individuals, off of one another to diffuse heated situations arising from issues ranging from rush to anticommunism.

In the following cases, Johnson, as the alumnae advisor for UNC’s Epsilon Beta Chapter of Chi Omega, was a primary recipient of rush recommendations, many coming in the form of personal notes or letters from friends or acquaintances throughout the state. National sororities circulated recommendation forms to gain information on possible pledges, but the additional, confidential letters between alumnae and friends show the harsh reality of gossip and malicious words bandied about as a routine part of rush. How Guion Johnson felt about her part in this practice is unclear. Usually, she was the party receiving the correspondence from a concerned alumna, but she did not hesitate to pass information along to Chi Omega’s national leaders, Mary Love Collins and Elizabeth Dyer, while also including her own opinions.⁸²

A 1952 recommendation blank for the Epsilon Beta Chapter sought background on prospective members that included father’s occupation, the level of “leadership of [the woman’s] family in [the] community,” the state of family finances [as well as could be ascertained by the reviewer], relatives in Chi Omega or other sororities, and personal appearance. The question regarding family leadership in the community meant to inform the sorority chapter of the family’s prestige level. In a section seeking information on the woman’s previous education, special

⁸¹ Theusen, “Taking the Vows of White Southern Liberalism,” 315.

⁸² These exchanges are found in Subseries 3.1: General Chi Omega Materials, Folders 250-275, GGJ Papers.

interests, and abilities, the form also included inquiries about her “character and reputation,” and with whom she associated.⁸³ Chapters relied heavily on this information from local alumnae in the communities where possible members resided. These alumnae women were well placed to offer their perspectives on important factors such as family background, probable finances, and reputation. The subjective nature of their comments, however, shows how the rush process could easily devolve into a muckraking exercise before the college sorority members ever met the rushees on campus in the fall.

Late summer was a busy time for sorority alumnae as they filled out recommendations for the upcoming fall rush season. A hurried letter from “Pinky,” one of Guion Johnson’s close friends and a Chi Omega alumna, ticked off a list of subjective details about Sally Thompson*, a prospective rushee from Salisbury, North Carolina. Pinky had already sent in an official recommendation form giving her opinions on Thompson, but as an added measure, wanted to include a “personal note” to Johnson, perhaps including further details that she felt were inappropriate for the official record. “Thompson’s parents,” she wrote, “are new-rich... like to make a splash... but not the type to endow Chi Omega...” “Her mother is very pretty and a charming personality... belongs to a family that has risen in the world considerably in the last generation.” While monetary wealth was important in securing a sorority bid, even *more* important was the family’s history and where and when they came into their wealth. By noting that Sally’s mother was a “charming personality,” but had only very recently reached her current class status, Pinky’s words cautioned that the family was not an established member of the elite. Painting Sally’s mother as a questionable character immediately tainted Sally as well. “I understand that Sally has blossomed,” Pinky continued, “she was an original little girl but very homely. She did well at Stephens [College], but is not too good a student, according to the

⁸³ Recommendation Blank, Epsilon Beta of Chi Omega, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, April-September, 1952.

* I have used pseudonyms for the names of prospective rushees and their families discussed in the Chi Omega correspondence of the Guion Griffis Johnson Papers.

information I have received.” Although Pinky’s informants suggested that Sally had come into her own, Pinky made sure to remind Johnson that Sally *had* been unattractive and still was not an outstanding scholar. In her estimation, Sally would not add much to the Epsilon Beta chapter. Much to Pinky’s relief, it seemed, her Pi Phi friends in Salisbury were “working hard on [Sally]... and seem[ed] confident that she w[ould] go Pi Phi...” Pinky clearly did not see Sally Thompson as Chi Omega material. To save Epsilon Beta the effort of rushing a girl that they should not want as a sister and who most likely would choose Pi Beta Phi anyway, Pinky finished by stating:

I would want the chapter to go all-out or not at all in their rushing. If we don’t get her, I will not be too sorry... and certainly I don’t want to get bumped. Their red blood is struggling hard to take on a bluish tint... which it can never do as far as I am concerned... though they move in the top bracket.⁸⁴

Pinky’s comments, while marking the Thompsons as “nouveau riche,” also admitted that the family’s cultivated demeanor and achievement of financial success had allowed them to enter the upper echelon of society in Salisbury – even though Pinky did not consider them true members of local elite society. While the social education and improvement of their members was a goal of sororities, there was an obvious limit to the level of woman the groups would stoop to pick up. Ironically, at a time when many families had moved up the social ladder by relocating from rural areas to larger towns and cities and by obtaining an education, these Chi Omega alumnae (most likely along with their counterparts in other national sororities) separated themselves from families that were, perhaps, one generation behind their own in the quest for social status. Furthermore, it is unclear if Pinky was actually of a lower socioeconomic bracket than the Thompsons at this point. If so, her distaste for the family could have easily been influenced by jealousy.

⁸⁴ Pinky [surname unknown] to Guion Johnson, August 12, 1953, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1 Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, July-September, 1953.

Also evident in the letter was Pinky's greater worry that the reputation of Epsilon Beta might suffer if the group made a concerted effort to rush Sally and she "bumped" them by choosing Pi Beta Phi. As we learned in Chapter one, Chi Omega and Pi Beta Phi were the first two national sororities at UNC and, as such, maintained what Dean Inez Koonce Stacy called, in 1924, an "honest rivalry."⁸⁵ Pinky's references to Pi Phi suggest that the rivalry continued, unabated, almost thirty years later. The remarks also indicate that the members of the Epsilon Beta chapter may have considered themselves as more refined and from more established families than the women of the North Carolina Alpha chapter of Pi Beta Phi. While all national sororities worked to demarcate their members from the non-affiliated women students and college alumnae, it is again important to mention that on each campus, each sorority chapter's status varied. Having a rushee such as Sally, who was viewed as unworthy by some Chi Omega alumnae, snub a bid for membership from Epsilon Beta in favor of one from Pi Beta Phi might suggest that Epsilon Beta's status on campus was slipping. It would be better, Pinky concluded, for the Epsilon Betas not to waste their time on Sally Thompson.

The primary role of powerful, local alumnae in securing bids from their sorority for certain incoming college women and not others becomes abundantly clear in these examples. In one instance, Johnson wrote to Chi Omega national president, Mary Love Collins, thanking her for "calling [her] attention to Miss Helen McMillan." Johnson stated that she would "watch for her recommendation when [she had] her first meeting with the rush chairman [an active sorority member]."⁸⁶ Although no more is written about McMillan, we can assume that Collins either wanted Johnson to speak favorably about McMillan to the rush chair, or, perhaps, to ask the chair *not* to spend time rushing the woman. When rush chairpersons met with alumnae advisors, such as Guion Johnson, they would receive the word of powerful alumnae regarding which women

⁸⁵ Annual Report, 1924, UNC Office of the Dean of Women Records, Series 1, Box 1, Annual Reports, 1917-1929, 2.

⁸⁶ Guion Johnson to Mary Love Collins, August 24, 1951, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, 1951.

were desirable pledges and which should be dropped. The alumnae, holding money and influence, generally had their wishes met by the college actives. The sorority women understood the value of having support from the network of alumnae in their area.

In 1952, Epsilon Beta officers, advisors, several committee members and chairpersons of the alumnae districts met to “discuss plans for active Chi Omega alumnae participation” in fall rush. The rush chair reported on the UNC Panhellenic Council rush policies, noting that it was the “first time [that] no rush letters [could] be written by any sorority girl to the new girls entering Carolina in the fall.”⁸⁷ This meant that Epsilon Beta would be turning to its alumnae instead to help influence the college-bound women to favor Chi Omega. At the meeting the women discussed the ten designated districts in North Carolina, each of which would have a chairperson and several committee members keeping track of high school seniors who would be good prospects for the Epsilon Beta chapter. At that time, Charlotte was the only city in North Carolina with an active alumnae club. The goal of the Epsilon Beta alumnae was to have an organization in each district, which would host parties for the young women matriculating at UNC that fall.⁸⁸ Ironically, while during this meeting the rush chair also went over the Chi Omega rush policies, which pointedly reminded alumnae to use objectivity in their recommendations.⁸⁹ Johnson and others, however, all seemed willing to participate in the secretive, propagation of subjective and hurtful comments off the official recommendation record. When they did not approve of a young woman they did not mince words.

⁸⁷ Minutes of Alumnae Meeting, May 3, 1952, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, April-September, 1952.

⁸⁸ In 1953, the NPC adopted a measure that noted their disapproval of the practice of summer rushing. Instead, the NPC recommended “one Panhellenic party in any community,” to replace parties held by individual sororities. The Panhellenic party would emphasize information about *all* sororities. The measure would also keep individual sororities from throwing many lavish private parties in attempts to influence prospective rushees before the formal rushing period began on campus in the fall. See NPC Records, Proceedings (41/82/10), 1953, 19.

⁸⁹ Minutes of Alumnae Meeting, May 3, 1952, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, April-September, 1952.

A strange incident in 1953 involving an Epsilon Beta pledge from Tampa, Florida and the Tampa Alumnae chapter demonstrates another instance where a personal issue between an alumnae member and the family of a prospective Chi Omega elevated the rush process to crisis levels. The pledge, Kay Peters, had received a bid from Epsilon Beta although Tampa Alumnae apparently did not recommend her for membership. Although it later became clear that some members of the Tampa Alumnae chapter, as well as officials at Stephens College, and the family of UNC's Vice-Chancellor had recommended Kay, Betty Howard, the president of the Tampa Alumnae was very much against her becoming a Chi Omega. As a result of Howard's efforts, the Epsilon Betas, along with Guion Johnson and the sorority's national officers, had to work quickly to diffuse a difficult situation. Howard had claimed that she would "report [Epsilon Beta] to National for having pledged a girl without the approval of the Tampa Alumnae and that chapter would receive a reprimand from National and that 'the charter could even be revoked.'"

While speaking to the Tampa alumna who had recommended Kay, Johnson discerned that the real reason behind Howard's dislike of her was most likely a result of "something personal between the Peters' and Mrs. Howard or Mrs. Howard's family. An unnamed member of Chi Omega's Gamma chapter (Florida State College), whose mother was a member of the Tampa Alumnae, told Johnson over the phone that if Kay Peters was initiated into Chi Omega "it [would] ruin the Alumnae Chapter in Tampa." Johnson asked the woman why, and wanted to know whether there was "any moral reason why Kay should not be initiated." The young woman replied, "not as far as Kay is concerned." According to the woman's mother, however, Kay's "father sometimes g[ot] drunk." The Peters family belonged to the local country club, and to make her point, Johnson asked the woman if "she had ever seen any other Chi Omega relatives at the country club drunk." When the woman "laughingly admitted that she had," Johnson then told her to make a "special inquiry" into the Peters' background and report back if she found anything

“sufficient to debar Kay from membership.”⁹⁰ Johnson did not hear from the woman again. The episode created much stress for Guion Johnson, the Chi Omega national officers, the Epsilon Beta members, and the Tampa Alumnae, but perhaps could have been avoided if petty disagreements or family grudges had not entered the equation. The point, however, is that these type of disputes might be used by alumnae to keep women out of the sorority. By exacting revenge on a sorority hopeful or her family during rush, an alumna could satisfy her own feelings of justice as well as keep a woman she felt was “undesirable” out of her sorority.

While the sorority members often went along with the desires of the alumnae, at other times, certain sorority members called on the alumnae to use their influence over the chapter. In the spring of 1951, Johnson reported being invited to attend an Epsilon Beta chapter meeting where the president brought up for discussion a girl who had failed to receive a bid from the chapter the previous fall. Johnson believed that she had been purposely invited by the chapter president, who was a very close friend of the girl, so as to give “support to the candidacy for membership.” Johnson was able to tell the sorority women that the girl in question was “from a good family in the state and should make a desirable member as far as scholarship and personal adjustment to the group [were] concerned.” After that discussion, four girls from Goldsboro, North Carolina who had been pledged in the fall “also presented the name of one of their life-long friends” who, like the president’s friend, had not been pledged. As Johnson explained to Mary Love Collins, the young woman was “the only one of six attractive girls of excellent families from Goldsboro who had not been pledged.” She further noted that the girl in question was the “only one of the Goldsboro girls who [took] an active part in campus affairs.” Never failing to insert status and tradition into these discussions of rushees, Johnson explained to Collins that Goldsboro was “an old and aristocratic town in Eastern Carolina.” The fact the parents of the Goldsboro girls were major players in the state, and that some of the fathers were university

⁹⁰ Guion Johnson to Elizabeth Dyer, December 30, 1953, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, December 1953.

trustees caused further escalation of the situation. The men were so upset by the snub that they were “threatening to try to outlaw fraternities.” Johnson described having attended a party at the Goldsboro Country Club several months earlier where the parents “could talk of nothing else.” Their conversation, she reported, “centered about ‘the evils of a system which would permit a beautiful and gifted girl to be so cruelly hurt.’” She explained all of this to the sorority women at the chapter meeting, hoping for a positive outcome in their reevaluation of these prospective members. This type of situation was just what sorority alumnae and university administrators tried to avoid in their attempts to maintain good public relations.

In the subsequent voting on the cases, both the president’s friend and the girl from Goldsboro had “received one negative vote each.” The negative votes were, however, “later withdrawn because they were not for ‘character reasons.’” Johnson stated that she was “never able to determine just why [the] two girls were not pledged in the fall,” but after the meeting she heard from one of the opponents of the woman from Goldsboro who said, “I have never seen her do anything unladylike but she sometimes looks to me as if she would like to.” Johnson was careful to preface the opponent’s statement with the aside that she was “a girl who d[id] not often have dates.”⁹¹ With the portrayal of the opposing member as a poorly adjusted, and perhaps jealous, woman, Johnson seemed willing to overlook her comment (admittedly, also subjective) about the Goldsboro girl’s potential propensity toward immorality of some sort. The larger point of this particular vote on membership was about safeguarding the fraternity against critics and not about appeasing the whim of one sister. The outcome of the meeting pleased Collins. She wrote to Johnson that, “the chapter was quite wise it seems to me in deciding to ask the Goldsboro student. I am glad you were present at the meeting.”⁹² For Collins, the case of the woman from Goldsboro (which included furious and, apparently, politically powerful fathers who could cause

⁹¹ Guion Johnson to Mary Love Collins, May 11, 1951, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, 1951.

⁹² Mary Love Collins to Guion Johnson, May 14, 1951, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, 1951.

trouble for the fraternity system at UNC) was the one that most needed to be solved in a manner agreeable to the parents. In a time when Greek-letter organizations faced criticism about their membership policies, Chi Omega did not need an obvious scandal to its name. Just as important as keeping the “wrong” people out, was allowing the “right” people into the society.

Later in the summer of 1951, Johnson received another letter from Collins. She reported a recent request from a young woman named Alice Miller in Wilmington, North Carolina who expressed great interest in Chi Omega. Miller was “very much interested...and would like to belong to [the sorority]” when she entered college within another year. She wanted to know about the “qualifications” for membership and “how she should go about planning to be pledged.” Collins had not yet responded to Miller and hoped that Johnson could write to any Epsilon Beta alums in Wilmington to gain information about her first. “In this day and age,” Collins confided, “one never knows what individuals may really have in mind.”⁹³

As I will discuss in Chapter Seven, Mary Love Collins was a staunch anticommunist who sought to influence both Chi Omega and other national sororities to pursue a vehemently anticommunist ideology. Evidently, she suspected that the letter was not a legitimate request for information from a conscientious high school student, but was instead an attempt to discern the membership policies of the private, social organization. To make sure that the “wrong” people would not be privy to information about Chi Omega that could be used against it, Collins advocated vigilance. As in her crusades against communist infiltration, she urged the alumnae to trust no one. Johnson responded to Collins, saying that the letter from Wilmington “amaze[d]” her and that she was “starting inquiry concerning [the young woman].” Johnson noted that she had happened to meet the athletic director of the Wilmington high school at a party the previous evening and had asked if he had ever heard of the Miller family. He had replied that he did know them, where they resided in town, and that they were “very fine people.” “I had their daughter,

⁹³ Mary Love Collins to Guion Johnson, August 16, 1951, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, 1951.

Alice in class several years ago, coaching basketball,” he said. “She was in our A group, a good student but not brilliant.” Johnson explained to Collins that she was writing to one of the recent Epsilon Beta members from Wilmington “for a further check on the name, address, family, etcetera.”⁹⁴ The background of a woman and her family must be checked and double-checked prior to rush in order to ensure that a sorority chapter did not inadvertently pledge an undesirable or disreputable woman. If a woman’s family showed evidence of character flaws, she would be omitted from consideration for membership, even if she, herself, was of exemplary character.

Minority Women Students Encounter Rush

Rush was unpleasant enough for a woman when she was a rushee who technically fit the mold of sorority membership – meaning that she was white, Protestant, and from a family of financial means. For women of racial and religious minorities during this period, rushing an NPC sorority was often off-limits. Nicholas Syrett has discussed the difficulties encountered by male students of racial and religious minorities who sought to join the traditionally “WASPy” IFC fraternities.⁹⁵ Female students who were not white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants also met with adversity if they attempted to enter NPC sorority rush. At southern colleges and universities, most of which did not admit significant numbers of African American undergraduate students until the early to mid 1960s, Jewish women students were the most likely targets of intolerance by NPC sorority chapters.

Many southern state university campuses had chapters of national Jewish fraternities by the 1910s and 1920s and Jewish sororities by the 1920s-1940s.⁹⁶ In her study of Jewish college fraternities in the United States, historian Marianne Sanua argues that southern universities often welcomed Jewish students and, conversely, that Jews often found a “haven” of acceptance on

⁹⁴ Guion Johnson to Mary Love Collins, August 24, 1951, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, 1951.

⁹⁵ Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 248-261.

⁹⁶ “Appendix B: Directory of Jewish Fraternity and Sorority Chapters at Selected Colleges and Universities,” in Marianne Sanua, *Going Greek: Jewish College Fraternities in the United States, 1895-1945* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 326-331.

southern campuses as eastern colleges imposed increasing restrictions on Jewish student enrollment. While Sanua paints a rosy picture of strong Jewish student enclaves at schools like the University of Alabama, UGA, and the University of Mississippi in the 1930s, she also demonstrates another side to this story for Jewish sororities at some southern universities.⁹⁷ Some schools' administrators opposed bringing Jewish sororities to campus because of the small enrollments of Jewish women students.

In 1946, when UNC's Panhellenic Council discussed "inviting a Jewish sorority to organize on campus," they "unanimously decided that [it] would be unwise both because of the small number of undergraduate Jewish women in the University and because of the further segregation that would result."⁹⁸ Jewish sorority Alpha Epsilon Phi expressed interest in colonizing at UNC in 1963. While Alpha Epsilon Phi's national representatives explained to the UNC college Panhellenic and the Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems that, "although there are not discriminatory clauses in the sorority's constitution, its composition [was] primarily Jewish." Anne Queen, head of the Campus Y and a member of the advisory committee, pointed out that "establishing such a sorority on [the] campus would be contrary to the present movement toward abolishing discriminatory policies in sororities and fraternities."⁹⁹ What her comment did *not* address was the fact that Jewish women interested in pledging a sorority at UNC were *already* being discriminated against by most of the Greek-letter groups on campus. It is important to note that the minority Greek-letter groups came about in *opposition* to the groups that would not allow membership to these individuals.¹⁰⁰ Thus, refusing a chapter of a Jewish

⁹⁷ Sanua, *Going Greek*, 147, 206-208.

⁹⁸ Mary S. McDuffie to Faculty Committee on Sororities, February 13, 1946, UNC Office for the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Subseries 1, Box 41, Fraternities and Sororities.

⁹⁹ Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Sororities, October 17, 1963, UNC Office for the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Box 41, Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, 1950-1955.

¹⁰⁰ Syrett also notes this important fact in reference to Jewish, Catholic, African American, Asian American, Latino, multicultural, or gay fraternities in the period of his study. See Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 7.

sorority the right to colonize at UNC because it could possibly discriminate against women for whom there were *already* a number of other sororities on campus seemed faulty logic. Queen was a liberal personality on the UNC campus, and her interest in denying AEPi the right to colonize likely stemmed from her interests, as part of the university administration, in making sure that new sorority and fraternity chapters did not adhere to membership practices that would cause legal problems or embarrassment for the university shortly down the road.

When Jewish women did choose to go through rush at UNC, they had few options for pledging. Sharon Mujica, a member of the Epsilon Gamma chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma, which had colonized at Chapel Hill in 1958, claimed that Kappa was the only sorority on campus that would offer bids to Jewish women.¹⁰¹ A 1963 UNC Panhellenic memo outlining activities for rush counselors (members of Stray Greeks who were supposed to be impartial and would offer counsel to rushees), provided special instructions in regard to counseling Jewish rushees. The memo advised the counselors to talk to rushees “about the situation with the jewish [sic] women.”¹⁰² Apparently, this was to help the Jewish rushees prepare for the fact that most of the sororities would not wish to extend them a bid and to instead point them toward the groups that might be willing to pledge Jewish women.

While Epsilon Gamma Chapter might have been open to Jewish pledges, the Panhellenic Council at the Woman’s College of Duke University listed Kappa Kappa Gamma’s Delta Beta Chapter as one of four sororities on campus that would not accept Jewish women during the 1955-1956 school year.¹⁰³ It is unclear whether Kappa’s *national* position at this time was to deny membership to Jewish women. Unlike UNC, Duke had housed a chapter of the Jewish sorority Alpha Epsilon Phi since 1934. As a result, the Kappas of Delta Beta may have seen it

¹⁰¹ Sharon Mujica Interview, March 7, 1991, SOHP (#4007/L-0056), 19-20.

¹⁰² “Stray Greeks, 1963-1964,” UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 32, General: Stray Greeks, 1950-1967.

¹⁰³ Notes from Panhellenic Council Meetings, 1955-1956, October 4, 1955, Duke University Panhellenic Council Records, 1938-1996, Box 1, Minutes, 1951-1957, 2. The other sororities at Duke that would not accept Jewish women were Alpha Delta Pi, Kappa Delta, and Zeta Tau Alpha.

unnecessary to address the issue of Jewish rushees if the Jewish women interested in sorority membership joined AEPi. This approach could have crystallized over time to the stated position that Duke's Kappa chapter did not accept Jewish women. Also possible, is that UNC may have been urging newly colonizing chapters of Greek-letter groups to comply with non-discrimination in membership by this time. It might have seemed easy enough for the Epsilon Gamma chapter to agree to comply with non-discrimination against Jewish women. There were no African American women students at UNC at this time.

Without a Jewish sorority on campus at The College of William and Mary and with Jewish women unable to join the campuses NPC sororities, Jewish women students remembered feeling left out of many of the campus's social events. A 1926 graduate recalled that as "one of a handful of Jewish students" she was "all but excluded" from the campus social life, including "sorority life, dates, and dances." The same students who accepted her on the student council, inter-collegiate debate teams and other aspects of campus life "could not," she explained, "bring themselves to include [her] in a social setting."¹⁰⁴ Marianne Sanua notes that in 1933, the William and Mary student body included, "one hundred Jewish men divided between two fraternities and twenty unorganized Jewish women."

Alpha Epsilon Phi (AEPi) attempted to colonize on the campus that year, but William and Mary President Julian A.C. Chandler quietly opposed the organization. While Chandler had initially given his "verbal approval" to AEPi, it was "on condition that he also have final approval of its housing arrangements." The house that Chandler offered the women had only one bathroom and was in need of repair. Yet, when Lucille Fritz, the student in line to be president of the new AEPi chapter, pressed for repairs to be made, Chandler rescinded his approval of the sorority colonization, saying that the college was financially unable to make the repairs or offer the women a different house. Although the women explained that they did not need a house to

¹⁰⁴ Surveys, Class of 1925-1926, Box 1, Larua Parris Papers, SCRC.

start their chapter, Chandler remained firm in his denial, refusing to allow Alpha Epsilon Phi to colonize without a house. Fritz wrote to the sorority's national officers, explaining that Chandler's decision was borne of prejudice and unrelated to any college financial woes, since *he* was the owner of the property. "It seems that he just won't tolerate a Jewish sorority on campus – he could have said so immediately without getting us so excited. What steps are to be taken next?" Apparently, Alpha Epsilon Phi decided not to continue pressing the matter of colonization at William and Mary and the Jewish women students were left unorganized.¹⁰⁵ In the late 1930s, Jewish students at the college fared no better. Yet another Jewish female student remembered the "usual 'at that time' subtle but sure exclusions" of Jews in social campus activities. By the early 1940s, a Jewish woman student at William and Mary said that she believed that there were not enough Jewish women at the college to support their own sorority at that time.¹⁰⁶

Rush remained a source of image problems even as it occupied the greatest amount of sorority members' and alumnae's efforts throughout each year. Since the perpetuation of the sorority depended on desirable new pledges, in some sense, the intense focus on rush was logical. That rush was a public relations job targeted at a specific audience – namely, the rushees that the sororities hoped to entice into membership, is a critical point. The NPC sororities expended most of their energy trying to sell their groups to the select group of white, Protestant, upper and middle class women that they wanted for new members. The groups promoted their social education for members and their various philanthropic works only as a means to sweep the "dust" of rush under the rug, not to actually *clean up* any of the practices associated with the event.

Even parents skeptical of rush could be convinced that their daughters would fare better in the future if they had the socially desirable head start bestowed by sorority membership. Helen Campbell "Cam" Walker, a student at William and Mary from 1960 to 1964 recalled that her

¹⁰⁵ Sanua, *Going Greek*, 183-185.

¹⁰⁶ Survey, Class of 1940, Box 1, Laura Parrish Papers; Survey, Class of 1945, Laura Parrish Papers.

parents “encouraged [her to join] because they thought [she] would become a southern belle.”¹⁰⁷ Walker’s father had been in a fraternity, but her mother had been unable to join a sorority in college because of financial difficulties in the Depression. Walker felt that her mother’s disappointment in what seemed a missed opportunity led to her push her daughter toward membership. She believed that she went through rush and joined a sorority as a result of “getting [a] sense from home that, ‘We certainly will pay for it, and if you want to, you should.’”¹⁰⁸

While sororities labored to maintain a good working relationship with university deans of women and other administrators, the pull of sorority alumnae at their alma maters helped to insure the stock of national sororities on campus. Happy sorority alumnae often translated into happy university alumnae, as dean of the Women’s College at Duke University, Alice Mary Baldwin, and others certainly realized.¹⁰⁹ A college that was unfriendly to its Greek-letter groups might suddenly find itself frowned upon by powerful alumni and without their financial support. So, even though deans of women might have found fault with the rush process, they typically worked alongside the sororities as best they could to maintain positive connections with alumnae.

The national sorority journals, the primary method of communication to the alumnae members, featured annual chapter reports that often touted the gains made by the group during that year’s rush. Chapter secretaries gave ample time to discussions of rush party themes while gushing over the new pledge class.¹¹⁰ For alumnae members, reading about their local chapter’s yearly rush successes constituted a reminder of the society’s – and by extension, their own – popularity, while ensuring that the chapter was continuing to flourish at their alma mater.

Alumnae of Alpha Delta Pi’s Beta Nu Chapter at UGA welcomed their chapter’s report in *The Adelphean* announcing that, “at the end of rush week there were fifteen of the cutest Freshmen

¹⁰⁷ Helen Campbell “Cam” Walker Interview, University Archives Oral History Collection, SCRC, 24.

¹⁰⁸ Helen Campbell “Cam” Walker Interview, 24.

¹⁰⁹ See Chapter Five, fn. 2.

¹¹⁰ “Chapter History – Beta Omega, 1959-1960, Auburn University,” Alpha Delta Pi Archives, Alpha Delta Pi Memorial Headquarters, 1-2.; “Omega Chapter, 1957-1958, Louisiana State University,” Alpha Delta Pi Archives, 1-2; “Chapter History, Alpha Kappa, University of Tennessee,” Alpha Delta Archives, 1-2.

who wanted [to] and did join us.”¹¹¹ Painstakingly detailed accounts of rush party themes and decorations, outfits worn by the sisters to each party, and the names and hometowns of new pledges would, the collegiate and national sorority officers expected, pique alumnae interest. With well-heeled alumnae serving as important sources of monetary donations and purchases of wares for the sorority house or chapter room, keeping these women abreast of the chapter’s latest rush triumphs, which suggested the donations were going to good use, was a vital step in securing future or continued financial support.

During the post-World War II era, the NPC, university administrators, college Panhellenics, and individual sorority women discussed, with varying levels of success, the possibility of trying to change rush to make it a less heart-wrenching experience and, in the process, make the event appear less terrifying to outside observers. As I will show, however, these talks were generally kept within the campus community and did not make their way into the larger public’s picture of sorority life during the period. Depictions of sorority life regularly appeared in public form, however, but often these were the images that NPC and national sorority leaders wished to keep out of view. In the following chapter, I discuss examples of publicity that these women saw as problematic for their sororities’ images, as well as their attempts to create counter-narratives to this possibly damaging publicity.

¹¹¹ “Beta Nu Chapter Report, University of Georgia, 1933-1934,” Alpha Delta Pi Archives, Alpha Delta Pi Memorial Headquarters, 1.

CHAPTER SIX: SORORITIES' FIGHT TO ACHIEVE A POSITIVE PUBLIC IMAGE

While critics weighed in on Greek-letter societies and their activities throughout the period of this study, the voices of discontent appeared to grow louder in the postwar years. In addition to the “evils” of sorority rush that I describe in the previous chapter, critics continued to feed on the long-standing issue of Greek-letter groups’ elitism and socioeconomic class stratification. In the immediate post-World War II era, with the United States focused on the goal of worldwide democracy, critics also took up the issue of sororities’ discriminatory membership practices. I turn to a detailed discussion of sororities and discrimination in the following chapter. In this chapter I examine the ways in which sororities worked to keep their unpleasant publicity under wraps and to defuse publicly embarrassing situations that had moved beyond the immediate control of the organizations. Critics of sororities and fraternities included journalists, independent students, students who were members of Greek-letter groups, alumni of these groups, as well as citizens unaffiliated with any Greek-letter societies. Publicity came in a variety of forms, ranging from malicious gossip, to newspaper and magazine articles, to fiction novels, to motion pictures. The NPC had long understood the need to monitor and manage, as best they could, publicity about NPC member groups.¹ The crucial point for sorority leaders was to try to keep unwanted publicity from cropping up in the first place.

In 1946, Midge Winters, Phi Mu’s Public Relations Director instructed all chapters to “cancel immediately any arrangements pending with any photographer or representative of *Life* magazine.”² The following year, the NPC’s Research and Public Relations Committee noted, *Life* ran a spread “illustrating the life of a typical coed” that featured pictures of women from several universities. At the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) some of the pictures

¹ The NPC first discussed how to control the publishing of information about sororities at their 1919 conference. See NPC Proceedings, 1919.

² February 10, 1946, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records, University Archives, Duke University, Box 12, Minutes, September, 1945-November, 1952.

taken by the *Life* photographer were acceptable to the NPC while others, including a “beer drinking scene, farewells at the sorority doorstep, [and] couples in parked cars,” were not.³ As the committee explained, “on the whole, the theme was definitely social and extracurricular making the typical coed conspicuously unstudious.” Although the social and extracurricular side of college life was the particular interest of Greek-letter sororities, the national leaders did not wish for their groups’ names to be associated with that image. Some national sororities, like Phi Mu, had already sent letters to their chapters to remind them that the group “refrain[ed] from national magazine publicity participation either as a chapter or as individuals with or without identification.” As it turned out, women from several sororities at UCLA did pose for pictures without their sorority pins or mention of their groups’ names. They were members of national sororities that had not yet sent instructions warning against any involvement in publicity.⁴ Even if a sorority member did not wear her Greek letters or make any reference to her affiliation in a picture, an untold number of people knew of which group she was a member and could thereby link the sorority to any unfavorable image shown by a publicity photo.

Men’s fraternities seemed to approach their public relations in a slightly different manner than the NPC sororities. While sororities, like fraternities, clearly participated in practices with which members of the press and the public could easily find fault (such as breaking rush rules, also known as “dirty rushing,” and hazing of pledges), the sororities’ national leadership appeared to take a greater interest in spinning their publicity to present a façade of respectability than their male counterparts. In 1948, Chandler Harris, a member of Delta Sigma Phi fraternity, authored an article for *The Carnation* of Delta Sigma Phi in which he argued that no amount of positive publicity about fraternity life would negate the seemingly never-ending stream of bad publicity. “They never sell the public on the value of fraternities to the extent that the bad publicity has unsold it,” he explained. The best that fraternities could do was “to work night and day to prevent

³ NPC Proceedings (41/82/10), 30th Congress, 1947, 153.

⁴ NPC Proceedings (41/82/10), 30th Congress, 1947, 153-154.

the things in fraternities which result in the bad publicity.” Furthermore, instead of trying to convince the majority of the public to embrace fraternities, Harris argued, fraternity members simply needed to “maintain enough prestige among entering college and university students to make them want to be chosen as fraternity pledges,” and to “avoid offending the general public, the college administrators, and the legislators to the point where they can reasonably demand the curtailment or abolition of fraternities.”⁵ Maintaining prestige among the public – by way of appearing to have a “highly select and thus elite” membership – was more important for Greek-letter groups than the engendering of good will.

To maintain prestige, sororities needed to uphold the façade of respectability. NPC committees operated with an eye to keeping the façade intact. The committees looked for weak spots in sororities’ images and worked to strengthen or obscure these areas with tactically deployed publicity. The NPC’s Committee on Research and Public Relations resulted from the 1947 merger of the Committee on Research and the Committee on Public Relations. Led by the venerable Mary Love Collins of Chi Omega, the committee’s primary task would become the investigation and creation of propaganda aimed at critics of the sororities’ restrictive membership practices. While much of the committee’s work would grow to include efforts to divert public attention away from sororities’ policies of membership selection, the committee handled publicity on a variety of issues that might cause trouble for NPC sororities’ images.

During the Public Relations and Research Committee Reports and Forum at the 1947 NPC meeting, Alpha Delta Pi Grand President, Maxine Blake, spoke about “desirable and undesirable” publicity and recalled the incident that spawned the NPC’s publicity code several years hence. Good publicity, she explained, of the kind that they “all as fraternity women would be proud” to announce, included “news about scholarship attainment, the granting and awarding

⁵ For the excerpts from Chandler Harris’s article, see Louise Leonard, “The Panhellenic Mail Pouch,” *Alpha Gamma Delta Quarterly* (January, 1949), Stewart Howe Collection (26/20/30), Box FS-4, 23-24.

of scholarships, successful women's careers, [their] philanthropies... and the worthwhile accomplishments of [their] organization, both nationally and locally."⁶

Undesirable publicity, on the other hand, came in a variety of forms. Blake listed four categories of negative coverage and examples of each. First, she named "anything which discredit[ed] the fraternity system." In particular, Blake noted the journalists' "sensation type of story" in this category.⁷ A sensational story might result from publicity about situations such as the 1961 UNC Zeta Psi/Tri-Delt Halloween party discussed in Chapter Four, or if details from gossipy rush recommendation letters became public knowledge. Second, Blake identified as bad publicity that "which tend[ed] to distort the fraternity system." Here, she offered the problem of the "emphasis of the play boy – play girl existence associated with people that belong to Greek-letter organizations and overemphasis on social activities."⁸ Reading this against my discussion of sororities' class-consciousness from previous chapters, we can see that national sorority leaders seemed unsure of how to strike a balance between an elite image and the attempts to assure the public that the elite image did not mean that their members were snobbish. Sorority chapters, meanwhile, spent much of their time trying to convince rushees that they took in women from wealthy and aristocratic backgrounds and that sorority membership was a ticket to social involvement and popularity on campus. The fact that the active sorority members and the alumnae were involved in these seemingly contradictory exercises, both of which were dedicated to insuring that their organizations would be looked upon favorably by students and the general public, speaks to the overall artifice of the enterprise.

Blake additionally pointed to recent "movies that ha[d] been publicized within the last two years dealing with college background and...fraternities or sororities" as a source of negative

⁶ NPC Conference Proceedings, 1947, SLA, NPC Records (41/82/10), Box 1, 155.

⁷ NPC Conference Proceedings, 1947, 156.

⁸ NPC Conference Proceedings, 1947, 156.

publicity.⁹ While she did not allude to specific movie titles, she may have had in mind such films as *Confessions of a Coed* (1931), *Sorority House* (1939), *Nine Girls* (1944), *Secrets of a Sorority Girl* (1945), or *Sweetheart of Sigma Chi* (1946), all of which contained plotlines with characters who, as sorority members, showcased the type of self-absorbed, snobbish behavior that the NPC would want to minimize through publicity campaigns. In *Nine Girls* (1944) and *Secrets of a Sorority Girl* (1946) the sorority was merely a backdrop for a “whodunit” murder mystery. In both cases, the only actual relation to sororities was the setting or title of the film. Still, the NPC had reasons to fear the negative connotations implied by the storylines, which portrayed sorority women as backstabbing, conniving, liars and party-girls mixed up in crime rings.¹⁰ The Grand Council of the Sigma Chi fraternity had condemned the release of the original *Sweetheart of Sigma Chi* (1933). The fraternity did not own the copyright for the title of the film, which was based on the popular song of the same name, thus preventing them from blocking the release of the film.¹¹ To have their name attached to piece of undesirable publicity was among Greek-letter groups’ worst nightmares.

Of these films, *Sorority House* (1939) is the only one to directly address rush in its storyline. The film’s protagonist, Alice Fisher, arrives at college during rush week and quickly sees that affluence is the ticket to popularity with sororities. Although she is the daughter of a small-town grocer with little money to spare, Alice’s new boyfriend, who happens to be the star of the football team, spreads a rumor that she is a wealthy heiress. As a result, all the sororities on campus try to rush Alice. She feels uncomfortable, however, among the snobbery of the sorority women and the materialistic displays of their parties. When Alice’s father visits campus, she finds herself ashamed at his plain appearance in the eyes of the sorority women. She realizes that she does not want to be a part of a hurtful and exclusive group, and decides not to pledge the

⁹ NPC Conference Proceedings, 1947, 156.

¹⁰ Plot summaries from American Film Index (AFI) Online database.

¹¹ *Fraternity Month* (January, 1934), 37.

sorority. Even though Alice has decided to ignore the popularity of sorority life, the ending affirms that she made the correct decision; she will not be an outcast in her college years, as she still has her “Big Man on Campus (BMOC)” boyfriend and her non-sorority friends at her side.¹² The film’s conclusion suggests to audiences that female college students could have a full and “well-adjusted” social life *without* the added strain and expense of sorority membership.

The third type of undesirable publicity listed by Blake was that which “tend[ed] to belittle the fraternity system.” She explained this as publicity of “feuds and fussing,” that arose “most generally in the rushing season,” where she freely admitted that sororities were not “tactful.”¹³ These feuds could be between rival sororities or could exist within one sorority. We saw an example of the intra-sorority quarreling in the previous chapter when the Epsilon Beta Chapter of Chi Omega did not want to pledge the girls from Goldsboro. Since it was public knowledge which women had hoped for, but did not receive, bids, the chapter was unable to contain the news. As a result, the episode caused difficulties for their public image in the state for a time. The key was to keep such behavior *hidden* from public view by guarding what was said or written to whom. “Let those things get beyond our own college community,” warned Blake, “where a newspaper, let’s say, is only too anxious to pick something up against the Greek-letter system. It only too gladly uses them in the public press.”¹⁴

Her fourth criteria for bad publicity included, “anything which emphasize[d] trivialities.” Here, Blake cited the “indiscriminate use of affiliations,” such as in a newspaper’s society page where a woman might make unnecessary reference to her sororal affiliation in a personal piece.¹⁵ Blake’s inclusion of this example seems puzzling, since sororities usually prided themselves on their members’ and alumnae’s positive contributions to the campus or community. She may have been worried that women would readily mention their sorority membership in newspaper pieces

¹² Plot summary from American Film Index (AFI) Online database.

¹³ NPC Conference Proceedings, 1947, 156.

¹⁴ NPC Conference Proceedings, 1947, 156.

¹⁵ NPC Conference Proceedings, 1947, 156.

that portrayed them as leaning toward a particular political party or involved with an organization with which NPC sororities did not wish to associate their name. As I argue in the following chapters, the NPC wished to maintain an image of political neutrality even as they supported the work of conservative organizations and pointed to left-leaning groups as nuisances to democracy.

Blake urged members and alumnae to “set a standard of good taste” by returning to some privacy in their activities as sorority women. To emphasize her point, Blake reprised an episode, which had occurred several years prior and led to the NPC’s crackdown on publicity. Shortly after the start of the school year, a sorority’s pledge director happened to explain the rules for new pledges while in a public place. The directives included items such as “how [the sorority] wished [the pledges] to appear on the campus, what they were to do, and how they were to dress.” Mentioned in this code, and apparently within public earshot, was the announcement that they would require all of their members to wear girdles. “Imagine my horror,” Blake recalled:

To read in a downtown newspaper twenty-four hours later a story which was headlined, ‘The Battle of the Bulge,’ and which quoted people on the campus [of various affiliations], [saying] what they thought about such and such sorority requiring their girls to wear girdles.¹⁶

While not a topic of public conversation, the wearing of girdles would suggest the sorority women’s physical “propriety.” Girdles aided women’s conformity in a physical sense by shaping their bodies to meet normative standards for middle and upper class women’s physical appearance. With the woman’s body “controlled” by the fit of a girdle, she also projected an image of sexual inaccessibility and thus sexual “propriety” and respectability. Typically, sorority policies such as these would be discussed within the walls of the sorority house, not in the open air, where members of other sororities, independents, or the general public might pick up on possibly damaging information about a group.

Another member at the committee meeting, a Miss Merritt, stressed the benefit of “getting on the right side of the society editors” in city newspapers as a means of gaining some

¹⁶ NPC Conference Proceedings, 1947, 156-157.

influence over the content of publicity pieces. In so doing, Merritt explained, alumnae in her town had “been able to accomplish a good deal about getting the right kind of publicity and preventing the wrong kind,” particularly during rush. She told the committee that her city’s Panhellenic had brought editors of the local newspapers’ “woman’s page” to one of their summer meetings as special guests. At the meeting, the alumnae “tried to explain to [the editors] just what [they] desire[d] in the way of publicity and what [they did] not desire.” The group then allowed the editors to “explain... how to prepare [their] publicity.” Merritt concluded by stating that she had found that “enlisting the interests and understanding of the newspaper women” was the best way to achieve positive publicity.¹⁷ By working backroom connections with newspaper reporters and editors, sorority alumnae attempted to control *which* stories about their organizations went to press. Not exactly investigative journalism, society page editors may have been more willing to accept publicity pieces prepared by sorority representatives since the articles usually just included a report of what happened, where, and who attended. With the newspaper’s society or woman’s page editor as an ally, the sororities would have at least one dependable, local, outlet for the items about themselves that they *wanted* to see in print.

Stories about sororities that alumnae and sorority leaders most likely did *not* want published often turned up in fictional novels of college life. By using sororities as settings for their writings authors were able to question the motives of Greek-letter groups while often succeeding in poking fun at them at the same time. As I explained in Chapter One, Shirley Marchalonis has shown that fictional accounts of women’s coeducational college experiences in the early twentieth century often included references to sorority life.¹⁸ These novels were often negative in their portrayals, yet they presented sororities as typical components of a “coed’s” college experience. Whether or not the novel’s heroine joined a sorority, reading audiences would understand the influential position of the societies on campus. These stories underscored

¹⁷ NPC Conference Proceedings, 1947, 162.

¹⁸ Marchalonis, *College Girls: A Century in Fiction*, 115-127.

the important role of Greek-letter groups on campuses even as their authors offered criticism of the organizations. They served as cautionary tales for young women entering college.

A number of novels about sororities followed a similar plotline. Typically, the story begins when the protagonist arrives as a college freshman, wide-eyed and somewhat overwhelmed, either excited or uncertain about the potential of sorority rush. After pledging a sorority, the protagonist goes through a series of relationships with the group. First, she is caught up in the excitement of activities and the promise of “sisterhood.” Next, she becomes disillusioned with the sorority and its members and seeks to distance herself from them. Finally, either she finds balance in her college experience and remains a member of her sorority (albeit one who is more level-headed and mature than before), or she decides that she is not happy with the lifestyle and leaves the group.

Several key themes emerge during an examination of these texts. The authors consistently present cynical depictions of rush as well as instances of sorority women feeling pressured to go on dates, being introduced to alcohol, and dealing with sexual harassment or rape. The protagonists also seek friendship from women outside of their sororities, suggesting that they have failed to find adequate relationships within the groups. Significantly, these stories take place in all-female enclaves. As I discussed in Chapter One, these spaces could serve as key sites of support for young women, but they also raised public fears about the “proper” heterosocialization of these women in single-sex environments.¹⁹ I introduce examples of these themes that show why NPC leaders were so concerned with popular media coverage of their societies. We will see how the books’ authors turn a critical eye toward the organizations and the nature of their influences on individual women.

In the pages of a majority of these novels, backstabbing sorority sisters, interested in little but appearance (their own and that of the other sisters), getting dates, and the popularity of their

¹⁹ Historian Leisa Meyer discusses similar public concerns over the “lesbian threat,” in the all-female Women’s Army Corps (WAC). See Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane*, 43, 161-165.

sorority, characterize the clubs as superficial and gossipy. Only one book, Olive Dean Hormel's *Co-Ed* (1926), tells a story that sorority alumnae may have found acceptable. Her protagonist flirts with the idea of leaving the sorority but instead successfully reestablishes herself as a leading member of her chapter – even becoming chapter president by her senior year.²⁰ Still, Hormel was not without criticism for some aspects of sorority life. These fictional stories alternately entertained and shocked readers. While the novels did not impart the air of authority found in journalistic renderings of Greek-letter groups, they did bring an account of sorority life (if exaggerated at times) to general readers who may have been curious about or critical of secret societies or interested in joining one when they reached college. Most of the novels received little critical notice at the time of their publication while few were bestsellers; yet some of the less well-known books have since gained recognition.²¹

As I mention above, these novels are set in the single-sex environment of the college sorority. To some people, these spaces represented possible locations for what they saw as “inappropriate” emotional and sexual relationships between women. Groups of women living in close quarters within a sorority house or dormitory raised public fears about these spaces as sites that fostered lesbianism or lesbian relationships.²² Particularly when set against the historical backdrop of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when many Americans feared that higher education for women would lead to the “masculinization” of female students, sororities

²⁰ Olive Deane Hormel, *Co-Ed* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1926), 306, 255.

²¹ Vin Packer's *Spring Fire* was an unexpected top-seller of 1952 and Ann Bannon's *Odd Girl Out* was the second best-selling paperback book of 1957. Both books have since been resurrected for new generations of readers and become cult classics in the lesbian pulp fiction genre. See Yvonne Keller, “Was It Right to Love Her Brother's Wife So Passionately?: Lesbian Pulp Novels and Lesbian Identity, 1950-1965,” *American Quarterly* Vol. 57, no. 2 (June 2005), 389, 387; Ann Bannon, *Odd Girl Out* (1957; reprint, with an introduction by Ann Bannon, San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 2001), vii.

²² Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz discusses how, by the 1920s, women's colleges planned student's living spaces so as to “constrain expressions of female friendship which could not be monitored.” At the University of North Carolina in 1944, the handbook of “Rules and Regulations for Women Students” specifically stated in its list of “miscellaneous” rules that, “Two girls cannot sleep in the same bed.” See Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 314; “Rules and Regulations for Women Students of the University of North Carolina,” 1944-1945, UNC Records of the Office of Dean of Women, Series 1, Box 1, Women's Association, 1935-1945, 3.

saw the need to intensify their focus on members' heteronormativity.²³ On college campuses, sororities existed within spaces that *already* produced concerns over women's adherence to gender norms. As I have shown in Chapter Four, sororities forced members to date men and to attend parties hosted by men's fraternities. These popularly understood sorority activities helped reinforce the image of the groups as all-*heterosexual*-female enclaves within the "masculinizing" space of the coeducational university. Yet, novels that questioned the uniform heterosexuality of sorority women could endanger the overall image of sororities as organizations for respectable, middle and upper class, white women.

Two books in my survey, Vin Packer's *Spring Fire* (1952) and Ann Bannon's *Odd Girl Out* (1957), both of which are early examples of the lesbian pulp fiction genre, challenge the image of sororities' uniform heterosexuality.²⁴ Packer was one of several pen names used by writer Marijane Meaker, who was a lesbian and had been a member of a college sorority. During the late 1940s, Meaker attended the University of Missouri and was a member of Alpha Delta Pi.²⁵ Bannon was the pen name of writer Ann Thayer. Also a sorority member, Thayer graduated from the University of Illinois in 1954 and was a Kappa Kappa Gamma.²⁶

Scholar Yvonne Keller has explained that it was a "convention" of lesbian literature to place stories in "female-only spaces." She notes that between 1950 and 1965, a period during which "lesbian pul[p] [fiction] flourished," a number of such novels featured sorority settings. While Keller and Susan Stryker concede that lesbian pulp fiction often contained homophobic storylines, they also argue that the novels became an important source of lesbian identity

²³ On the public objections to women's higher education see Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 60-61.

²⁴ Keller, "Was It Right to Love Her Brother's Wife So Passionately?" 389, 387; Bannon, *Odd Girl Out*, vii.

²⁵ "M.E. Kerr: Some Biographical Information," <http://www.mekerr.com/bio.html>, website accessed June 11, 2010. M.E. Kerr is another pseudonym of Marijane Meaker.

²⁶ Paul D. Cain, *Leading the Parade: Conversations With America's Most Influential Lesbians and Gay Men* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002), 156; Susan Stryker, *Queer Pulp: Perverted Passions from the Golden Age of Paperback* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2001), 61.

formation at a time when there were few other glimpses of lesbian life.²⁷ These novels are significant for the fact that they call attention to sororities as a possible site for lesbian relationships or for lesbian identity formation – a point that national sorority leaders would certainly have liked to keep from public view. They are also important for the fact that, with the exception of their inclusion of a coming-out story, they address many of the same issues of rush, forced heterosocializing, and alcohol use as found in the other books that I examine.

Like Alice Fisher in the previously mentioned film *Sorority House*, most of the heroines of sorority-themed novels also experienced uneasiness with the rush process – whether they viewed it from the standpoint of rushee or active sorority member. In Olive Deane Hormel’s *Co-Ed* (1926), protagonist Lucia Leigh encounters sorority rush as an excited, enthusiastic freshman. Yet, once Lucia is a member of the fictional group, Gamma Alpha Beta, and has a chance to witness rush from the inside, she is less eager to participate. She is unsettled by the tiring “chapter chews” that take place after the parties each night, “which might be over at nine, or again might last ‘til two.”²⁸ She describes a typical evening of disagreement over rushees by the sorority sisters:

As the season advanced, pro and con grew more tenacious. “Problems” were legion. There was the “nice” girl with “hopeless” young sisters whom it wouldn’t do to inherit, and the “colorless” girl with the prosperous parents who might help pay for the house, or the “dazzling” one of doubtful disposition who was certain to “make the beauty section” and perhaps “lead prom” but equally certain to keep the house in a turmoil, and the “sweet” girl who would make a lovely roommate but would “never do a thing on campus.”²⁹

Each decision about which girls to ask back to the next round of parties is mediated not by the woman’s individual personality or character attributes but by the larger question of how her presence will affect the public image of the sorority as a whole.

²⁷ Yvonne Keller, “Was It Right to Love Her Brother’s Wife So Passionately?” 386-389; Stryker, *Queer Pulp*, 57.

²⁸ Hormel, *Co-Ed*, 165.

²⁹ Hormel, *Co-Ed*, 165.

Similar rush discussions are recounted in Betty White's *I Lived This Story* (1930), as well as Peggy Goodin's *Take Care of My Little Girl* (1950), and Meaker's *Spring Fire* (1952)³⁰ Both *Take Care of My Little Girl* and *Spring Fire* also feature instances of alumnae influence in the rush process. In the latter, Mrs. Boynton, an alumna of the fictional Epsilon Epsilon Epsilon sorority, checked out potential pledges and reported her findings to the chapter at Cranston College. "Mrs. Boynton," Meaker wrote, "relished the task."³¹ Although Meaker's depiction of Boynton's work is written with tongue in cheek, it makes clear the point that alumnae reported on the minutiae of the rushees' life and that of their family and friends to make available all possible details that could influence a sorority's decision to offer a woman a bid.

She would often come from an assignment with copious notes on such intimate details as the estimated income of the candidate's father, the color of the guest towel's in the candidate's bathroom and the condition of said bathroom, the morals of the candidate, the candidate's mother, father, brother, and sister, and ever important, the social prestige of the candidate's family in the community.³²

Not unlike the messages sent to Guion Johnson by "Pinky" and other Chi Omega alumnae, Mrs. Boynton's report offered her opinion on rushees' family background and the appearance of material wealth. Publicly acknowledging the type of gossipy recommendation material that women in Guion Johnson's position received in confidence, these novels accentuate the efforts of both the alumnae and the college members to mold the future image of their groups. For critics of sororities and sorority rush in particular, these painfully detailed accounts of the discussions that went on behind closed doors only increased their disapproval of the groups.

While we are not witness to the "problems" of rush season in Anne Rivers Siddons's *Heartbreak Hotel* (1976), Siddons suggests that events in the story that take place during summer school will have a direct effect on the fall rush of the fictional "Kappa" sorority. Set at the fictional Randolph University, in Randolph, Alabama (a thinly disguised version of Auburn

³⁰ White, *I Lived This Story*, 31-33, Goodin, *Take Care of My Little Girl*, 39-43, Vin Packer, *Spring Fire* (New York, NY: Gold Medal Books, 1952), 8-14.

³¹ Packer, *Spring Fire*, 8.

³² Packer, *Spring Fire*, 8.

University) in 1956, protagonist Maggie DeLoach awakens to the racial injustices caused by the enduring legacy of white supremacy in the South. She pens a column for the student newspaper, *The Senator*, which urges racial conciliation and progress toward racial equality. Maggie's sudden show of courage and conviction, however, is not rewarded by her sorority sisters.³³ The Kappas find Maggie's interest in the welfare of African Americans an embarrassment and worry that she has damaged the group's image and will cost them pledges during the upcoming rush season. This, in turn, will keep popular fraternities from seeking to have parties with them, further harming the Kappa's rating on campus. "Didn't it occur to you how this would make us look?" Kappa president, M.A. Appleton asks Maggie. "We'll be lucky if we get one dog legacy," she continued. "And as far as pledge swaps go, not even the Zetas will come over here."³⁴

The emphasis on dating and socializing with fraternity men and "big men on campus" (BMOCs) is another theme common to these novels. In each story, the sorority is a gateway for members to meet and date men who are also interested in being fixtures on the campus social scene. As pledges, some of the women are swept up in the excitement of plentiful dates and dressing for dances. In *Co-Ed* (1926) protagonist and Gamma Theta pledge, Lucia, found that her "social life grew ever more engrossing." Since she was a member of a popular sorority at a school where there were twice as many male students, she had a full schedule of dates. Lucia "soon found herself 'stepping out' to the orthodox two dances every weekend, and usually possessed of a "little playmate" for the equally orthodox occasion of a "mid-week date" to the Orpheum or to the movies.³⁵

While Lucia may have been frittering her time away as a queen of the campus social scene (a point she comes to realize by her sophomore year), the more troubling instances of heterosocializing in these stories are the ones enforced by the sorority. The authors demonstrate

³³ Siddons, *Heartbreak Hotel*, 269-272, 276-284, 305-309.

³⁴ Siddons, *Heartbreak Hotel*, 269-272

³⁵ Hormel, *Co-Ed*, 62.

the desire of the sororities to match their pledges and members to fraternity men who will enhance the reputation of their chapter as a whole or who will affirm a pre-existing bond between a sorority and their “brother” fraternity chapter on campus. In organizing the blind dates, the sorority sisters have little regard for the pledges’ preferences as to what type of individual they would like to accompany them on the dates. In *Spring Fire* the Tri-Epsilon social chair, Kitten Clark, is “responsible for seeing that Tri-Eps dated fraternity men.” Clark’s motto is, “If he’s got a [fraternity] pin, he’s in!”³⁶ Liz Ericson, protagonist of Peggy Goodin’s *Take Care of My Little Girl* (1950), is trained in fashion by an older, more sophisticated, sorority sister and is matched on dates with popular fraternity man, Chad Carnes. She goes along on group dates and drinks beer with the rest of the crowd because her sorority, the Queens, expects her to do so. While Liz does not dislike Chad, she also does not find him an interesting or intelligent companion. To be “in,” however, she has to do what her sorority sisters decree, and that means stay with Chad and attempt to win his fraternity pin.³⁷

Dates with the fraternity men whom the young women did not know at all could be boring, unpleasant, and even dangerous. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, heterosocial activities between fraternities and sororities frequently involved alcohol. While drinking eased social interaction it also could lead women into unsafe situations. Although Liz found that drinking beer was a required part of group dates, she managed to remain free of any unwanted sexual advances from Chad or other fraternity men. In *Spring Fire* and *Heartbreak Hotel*, however, the main characters both face sexual violence at the hands of inebriated fraternity men. *Spring Fire*’s Susan “Mitch” Mitchell is set up with Bud Roberts, the boorish president of a popular fraternity. On two occasions, Bud uses beer and then liquor to try to get Mitch to yield to his sexual advances. During the second attempt, when Mitch is drunk on whiskey but is still aware and able

³⁶ Packer, *Spring Fire*, 9.

³⁷ Goodin, *Take Care of My Little Girl*, 57-66.

to say “no” to his pressuring, Bud rapes her.³⁸ Mitch keeps the rape a secret, only telling her roommate, and lover, Leda Taylor. Meanwhile, following the rape, Bud and his fraternity brothers return to the fraternity house to debrief one another on their evenings’ sexual exploits with various sorority women. They relish hearing Bud tell of how Mitch reacted to the (unwanted) sexual domination.³⁹ In the aftermath, the women do not go to the administration with the story because they would also implicate themselves by having to admit to drinking at the mixer. Out of fear of being accused of breaking college rules and of appearing to have “invited” or, at least, not fought hard enough against, a sexual encounter sorority women, like Mitch, may have concealed instances of abuse rather than report them to campus authorities.

In *Heartbreak Hotel*, Maggie is already pinned to Boots Claibourne from the Kappa Alpha fraternity. Maggie’s possession of the pin gives Boots the impression that he owns her and that she should be willing to allow him greater sexual access to her body. For individuals, being pinned often served as a step along the way to engagement and marriage, and, as I discussed in Chapter One, many did see the status as granting tacit permission to engage in premarital sexual activity, which was largely condemned by society at that time. Maggie, however, is not ready to give Boots that right. Since the KA chapter always seems to be throwing a party and since Boots appears to be an early-stage alcoholic, he is rarely sober when socializing with Maggie on evenings and weekends. His alcohol-fueled passion can easily turn violent when Maggie puts the breaks on their necking and petting. On one occasion, Boots becomes angry at her for making him “wait” to have sexual intercourse and momentarily forces himself on her. She feels “violation quiver[ing] at the kernel of her being like a red toothache.” Only a moment later, however, Maggie mentally pulls herself back into the conventional mold of southern ladyhood as shaped by her sorority. She tries to explain away her anger at his actions by telling herself, “This

³⁸ Packer, *Spring Fire*, 23-26; 62-63.

³⁹ Packer, *Spring Fire*, 66-67.

was Boots, this boy would be her husband.”⁴⁰ If he was going to be her husband and if everything appeared fine to bystanders, particularly in the judging eyes of her sorority sisters, then Maggie would forgive Boots’s transgression and convince herself that it was understandable and acceptable for him to have acted as he did.

Fraternity men have the “same standards and high ideals” as sorority women, Kitten Clark, *Spring Fire*’s Tri-Epsilon social chair explains to the group’s pledges. That perception, whether truly believed by the sorority women, or simply upheld and taught by alumnae as a means to encourage members away from the independent men, is the reason pledges at Tri-Epsilon are instructed *not* to date independents.⁴¹ These examples demonstrate the irony of this logic and reinforce the notion that socializing with and dating fraternity men is smiled upon by the sororities for the benefit of the chapter reputation and not the individual member. While Maggie eventually breaks up with Boots, she had remained in an abusive and belittling relationship because she felt that the sorority sisters expected it of her. Siddons appears to suggest that marriage was the post-graduation goal for most of the Kappas as well as other sorority girls at Randolph; in that scenario Maggie had already won the prize, choosing to veer off that path is what seemed difficult.

One last common thread among these stories is that the protagonist often finds support *outside* the sorority “family.” National sorority leaders and their collegiate sisters had worked diligently to construct an image of sororities as a home away from home where women could find true friends on whom they could always rely for support. The authors of these books challenge that picture as their main characters turn to non-sorority women for meaningful friendships. The *unconditional* support offered by these “external sisterhoods” calls into question the true benefit of the sorority sisterhoods.

⁴⁰ Siddons, *Heartbreak Hotel*, 225-331.

⁴¹ Pakcer, *Spring Fire*, 30.

In *Take Care of My Little Girl* Liz Ericson is put on probation and forced to move into a dormitory as a result of her poor scholastic showing during her first semester. Suddenly, she has to find her own friends since the sorority is no longer there to provide them for her. Her first impression of the non-sorority women she encounters suggests that they are independents because most sororities would view them as undesirable members. One girl is overweight, another is serious and studious, and a third is shy and reserved. Yet, when Liz stops thinking of herself as an exiled Queen and, instead, sees herself like any other female student at the fictional Midwestern University, she finds that her dorm mates are all varied and talented individuals whose friendship is worth having.⁴²

When Robin Mauer is de-pledged from the Tri-Epsilons in *Spring Fire* for choosing to date an independent and for getting expelled from class, Mitch Mitchell admires her courage. Mitch had realized that Robin was the only other member of her pledge class who also seemed uneasy with the rules and the conformity dictated by the sorority. She and Mitch remain friends and Robin is an anchor of reality outside the sorority where Mitch often feels self-conscious and out of place.⁴³ When the protagonists feel let down or disappointed by the artificiality and conformity of their sorority sisters, they find affirmation in these relationships that sorority leaders would have them believe are less significant than the sorority brand of “sisterhood.” Much to the chagrin of NPC delegates, this type of publicity suggested that many sororities hid from public view their episodes of infighting and evidence of chapter cliques. Not the NPC-endorsed show of perfected manners and ladylike propriety, the themes addressed by these authors of sorority fiction presented a critique of sorority life that was easily accessible to the general public.

⁴² Goodin, *Take Care of My Little Girl*, 74-75, 85-104

⁴³ Packer, *Spring Fire*, 59-62

What may have irked the NPC and national sorority leaders most of all was that the authors of these novels were not outside agitators but were members of NPC sororities⁴⁴ As I have already mentioned, Marijane Meaker and Ann Thayer were both sorority members Like Thayer, Olive Deane Hormel was also a Kappa Kappa Gamma at the University of Illinois where she graduated in 1916⁴⁵ While she was active in women's clubs and in literary education through the University of Michigan's extension office, it is unclear if she remained involved with Kappa as an alumna. She was later the book review editor for the *Christian Science Monitor*⁴⁶ Hormel's book, *Co-Ed*, tells a story that sorority alumnae may have found more acceptable than the novels that other authors later published. While protagonist Lucia experiences the disillusionment with her sorority typical in sorority fiction, she manages to find a balance between sorority life and other college activities. By her senior year, she becomes president of her sorority. In a turn that likely pleased NPC leaders Lucia befriends her sorority's national president and has an excellent time attending the Gamma convention as a rising junior She described the event, held at Mackinac Island, Michigan, as a time when "truly, one put away childish things... with Mrs Merriman [the national president], other officers, distinguished

⁴⁴ I chose the fictional stories about sororities that I discuss in this section by conducting WorldCat keyword searches for "sorority" and "college" I was not purposely seeking out novels written by sorority members (or former members) – I felt very lucky to find *any* novels mentioning sororities in my searches, since few turned up Only when exploring the available background information on the authors of these books did I discover that many were basing their depictions of sororities on personal experiences Not all authors who wrote fiction about sororities were sorority members, and some authors were male *Sorority Sin* (1959) by E S Seely, which fits Yvonne Keller's "virile adventures" category of lesbian pulps, may be an example of a male-authored novel that briefly touches on sorority life (I am unsure whether Seeley was male, or if the name might be a gender-neutral pseudonym) Keller explains that "virile adventure" pulps were often written by men (or by women under a male pseudonym), were intended for a working class or middle class male audience, were voyeuristic, and often featured a "male hero" who "rescued" the protagonist from a same-sex relationship by the novel's end Little of *Sorority Sin*'s plotline takes place in the sorority house but, again, the sorority serves as the meeting place for the same-sex couple on which the novel focuses As Keller describes of the "virile adventures," *Sorority Sin* features a male hero character who "saves" the female protagonist from an emotionally abusive and controlling relationship with her former sorority sister See Keller, "Was It Right to Love Her brother's Wife so Passionately?" 400, E S Seely, *Sorority Sin* (New York, NY Universal Publishing and Distributing Company, 1959)

⁴⁵ Franklin W Scott, ed, *The Semi-Centennial Alumni Record of the University of Illinois* (Urbana, IL University of Illinois, 1918), 625

⁴⁶ "Friends Renew Acquaintance With Miss Olive Hormel," *Owosso* [Michigan] *Argus-Press*, June 18, 1952, 10

alumnae, college girls from far and near, working together for the betterment of college life...”⁴⁷

Through her story, Hormel argues that the level-headed sorority woman, who does not become carried away with the social aspect of college life, can remain an independent figure and true to herself.

Betty White, author of *I Lived This Story* was a 1929 graduate of Northwestern University. In 1930, she had won a prize jointly offered by Doubleday, Doran, and Company publishers and *College Humor* magazine for a college student or recent graduate to write a story about college life.”⁴⁸ The publication of the story was part of that prize. While we cannot be sure whether Betty White actually lived the story about which she wrote, the fictional Colossus University described in her book seems to suggest details of Northwestern University. Some newspapers implied she had been a sorority member and had been forced to resign after publishing her novel, but this point remains uncertain.⁴⁹ Her literal translation of pieces of Kappa Kappa Gamma ritual songs, which I discussed in Chapter Two, however, suggests that she had an insider’s knowledge of the sorority. White’s novel did not feature positive depictions of sororities to offset her criticisms, as had Hormel’s. Had White been a sorority member, she may have found her chapter and her national officers less than pleased with her literary turn. Following the success of *I Lived This Story*, she went to Hollywood as a scriptwriter for Paramount Pictures. There, the studio produced *Confessions of a Co-Ed* (1931), a film loosely based on White’s novel.⁵⁰

Anne Rivers Siddons was also a sorority member, this time in the South during the mid to late 1950s. She joined Delta Delta Delta when she arrived at Auburn University (then Alabama

⁴⁷ Deane, *Co-Ed*, 306, 255.

⁴⁸ “Current Magaines,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1930, 70.

⁴⁹ R. Grantham, *The Ubysey*, January 5, 1932, 2.

⁵⁰ Betty White Johnson Papers, Finding Aid, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, AL, <http://www.birminghamarchives.org/LitandJournalism2.htm>, website accessed May 31, 2010

Polytechnic Institute) from her neighboring home state of Georgia.⁵¹ Randolph University in *Heartbreak Hotel* is based on Auburn and like her main character, Maggie, Siddons was also a columnist for the student newspaper, *The Plainsman*. Also paralleling Maggie, Siddons wrote a column during the fall of her junior year that, literary scholar Margaret Thomas McGehee contends, delivered a “critique of the immorality of white-on-black violence in the Jim Crow South.” McGehee notes that Siddons’s piece also showed a “glimmer of growing dissatisfaction with the roles assigned to white southern women like herself.”⁵² While *Heartbreak Hotel* presents a picture of sorority women at Randolph as frivolous and conformist in their thinking and behavior, it is more an indictment against the mythic ideal of the southern lady than the sorority woman. Siddons seems to suggest that young southern “ladies” routinely joined sororities at college as a natural progression of their lives; the sorority simply continued what had been the families’ and communities’ role of policing of white, southern women to adhere to the white South’s social expectations for their behavior. Perhaps, for this reason, Siddons was not vilified by Tri-Delta or asked to resign from the sorority. She appears, to this day, on the Tri-Delta national website in a feature that boasts the achievements of “Distinguished Deltas” in various fields.⁵³

Peggy Goodin, on the other hand, found that the publication of her novel *Take Care of My Little Girl*, and the subsequent release of the movie version a year later, put her in a difficult position in regard to her sorority membership. She had been a member of the Eta Chapter of Chi Omega at the University of Michigan in the late 1940s. The idea for her book came out of a paper titled, “A Critical Evaluation of Social Sororities,” that she wrote for a contest held by the

⁵¹ Tri-Delta’s finest in Literature, “Anne Rivers Siddons Bio,” https://www.tridelta.org/Alumna/Distinguished%20Deltas/Alumna/Distinguished_Deltas_Literature, website accessed May 23, 2010.

⁵² Margaret Thomas McGehee, “On Margaret Mitchell’s Grave: Women Writers Imagining Modern Atlanta,” (Ph.D. Dissertation: Emory University, 2007), 106.

⁵³ Tri-Delta’s finest in Literature, “Anne Rivers Siddons Bio.”

university's Sociology Department.⁵⁴ At the time of the release of the film version of Goodin's story, she explained her reasons for writing the novel:

I saw so many kids arrive at the university with the same preconceived notions I had, that a sorority was absolutely essential to their happiness. I think that is very bad and if the book and the picture do any good at all, they will show that sororities, in their present form, are undemocratic and stress false values. Neither my book nor the picture say we should outlaw them. We simply point out some serious imperfections.⁵⁵

Goodin made sure to note that the fictional sorority, the Queens, was not modeled on her own sorority, but was "a combination of all those [she had] seen or heard of." She did, however, choose to resign from Chi Omega just before the film release. After turning in her letter of resignation, Goodin explained, the national president of her sorority – who, at that time, would have been Mary Love Collins – wrote her a succession of letters asking her to reconsider her decision. When Goodin declined, Collins apparently wrote back "implying [that Goodin] was either badly maladjusted or a Communist."⁵⁶ Even as a sorority member, to the NPC, if you were not clearly *with* them, then you were against them.

A Show of Good Works: Philanthropy in Public Relations

One way that sororities sought to doctor their sometimes-objectionable public image during the middle decades of the twentieth century was by emphasizing their philanthropic efforts. While a number of sororities had taken part in service projects, and volunteer work during both World War I and II, many national sororities left the task of altruistic work to the local collegiate or alumnae chapter level, to be completed how, or if, they so chose.⁵⁷ Under this

⁵⁴ Harold Heffernan, "Flood of Protests Fail to Halt 'Sorority' Film," November 25, 1950, *Ottawa Citizen*, Section 3, Page 3.

⁵⁵ Harold Heffernan, "Flood of Protests Fail to Halt 'Sorority' Film."

⁵⁶ Harold Heffernan, "Flood of Protests Fail to Halt 'Sorority' Film."

⁵⁷ During World War I, Gamma Phi Beta sorority launched their "milk bottle campaign." In the spring of 1918 Gamma Phi Beta college and alumnae groups put up wooden collection stands in their cities. Each stand held two empty milk bottles in which to collect pennies to provide supplies for babies in war-torn Belgium. In 1917, writer and Kappa Kappa Gamma alumna, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who was living with her husband and children in France at the time, spearheaded a philanthropic effort to have Kappas adopt the children of Bellvue, France. In World War II, many sororities donated time to help the Red Cross, the United Service Organizations (USO), and started Chapter victory gardens, among other projects. See Barbee, *The Story of Gamma Phi Beta*, 163; Burton-Roth and Whiting-Westermann, *The History of Kappa*

plan, or to be more precise, because most groups *lacked* a cohesive plan, service work may have been performed on an irregular basis and with uneven effort among the many collegiate and alumnae chapters. That is not to say that all of the chapters lacked initiative. In 1914, the Delta Chapter of Phi Mu at Sophie Newcomb College began working with New Orleans alumnae to aid “pre-school and kindergarten children from the factory districts”⁵⁸. During the 1925-1926 school year, the Beta Omicron Chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma, also at Sophie Newcomb, “began active work at Kingsley House, a settlement house, with two of the girls going every afternoon to help supervise the playground”⁵⁹. Typically, the alumnae spearheaded efforts at fundraising for the altruistic works, while collegiate chapters would be invited to contribute as well. At the 1928 Zeta Tau Alpha convention discussion on altruistic work, alumnae stated that, “Since the philanthropic work [will] be the particular project of the alumnae, its financing will necessarily be closely connected with their associations”⁶⁰.

Pi Beta Phi, Beta Sigma Omicron, Sigma Kappa, Phi Mu, Kappa Delta, and Zeta Tau Alpha were among the first groups to organize a focus for national philanthropy. The most popular causes for sorority philanthropy in first half of the twentieth century appeared to be 1) aid to isolated rural peoples, often in the southern Appalachian mountains, and 2) contributing funds to specialized hospitals, often dedicated to treatment of children or women. Sorority women, like their contemporaries in women’s voluntary clubs, often devoted their organizations’ service work toward women and children in need.⁶¹

Pi Beta Phi pioneered the aid to rural Appalachia. Since 1912, the sorority had provided financial and volunteer support to their Settlement School in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Solely

Kappa Gamma Fraternity, 771-780, Morse, *A History of Kappa Delta Sorority*, 446-447, Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu*, 62-63

⁵⁸ Lamb, *The History of Phi Mu*, 182

⁵⁹ Burton-Roth and Whiting-Westermann, *The History of Kappa Kappa Gamma Fraternity*, 398

⁶⁰ Strout, *The History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 521 Fn 55

⁶¹ For discussion of women’s volunteer work to aid women and children in the Progressive Era, see Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women’s Associations in American History* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 167-173

supported by the sorority for many years, the school “offered a program of education, and revival and encouragement of native handicrafts” among the underprivileged people of the Appalachian mountain region. In 1925, they started the Arrowcraft Shop through which to sell the wares fashioned by the area’s native craftspeople.⁶² Although the sorority launched their altruistic movement in 1910 as a “worthy memorial” to “be dedicated to [its] Founders on the fiftieth anniversary of the fraternity in 1917,” Pi Beta Phi did face some internal resistance to the project. The sorority found that “most of the alumnae clubs were interested” in the Settlement School and had received donations of \$2,775.63 from them by March 15, 1912. Yet they also noted the need to “do much pioneer work in ‘selling’ the idea of the school to many.” One club explained, in 1911, that they were, “divided somewhat on the Settlement School project.” “Those against it,” the club reported, “seemed to feel it is a missionary venture and thought churches covered that field.” The club, however, still chose to contribute to the school. Another alumnae club, seemingly less convinced by the sorority’s national drive for altruism, explained their lack of support, apologizing for the fact that “the Settlement School proposition failed to interest our club to the extent of any accomplishment.”⁶³

Beta Sigma Omicron, a sorority that limited its chapters to schools in the South and was later absorbed by Zeta Tau Alpha, helped fund the Pine Mountain Settlement School in southeastern Kentucky, beginning in 1913.⁶⁴ Zeta Tau Alpha alumnae started to discuss plans for a national philanthropy in 1928 and the project continued to develop during the 1930s.⁶⁵ They, too, hoped to implement their work among the people in “an almost forgotten section” of Appalachia, that they described as, “living unto itself in a primitive way.” Specifically, this area was the Currin Valley in Smyth County, Virginia.

⁶² “Philanthropies and Projects, 1965,” NPC Archives, Fraternity Affairs File (41/82/9), Box 1, NPC Philanthropy Reports, 1965-1971, 10.

⁶³ *A Century of Friendship in Pi Beta Phi; 1867-1967*, 171, 176.

⁶⁴ Report of the 31st National Panhellenic Conference, 1949, 30. Copy contained in GGJ Papers, Box 107.

⁶⁵ Strout, *The History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 508.

At ZTA's 1928 convention, the alumnae chose this project from several because it "was found to offer unlimited possibilities for constructive assistance to a worthy but backward people of purest Anglo-Saxon blood, whom time and progress have passed by."⁶⁶ That the ZTA alumnae and others singled out the Appalachian folk, purportedly of pure Anglo-Saxon stock, as those whom they most wished to assist, again reflects on their desires to designate white, Anglo, Protestants as those persons who were "worthy" of aid and of the benefits of United States citizenship. While the alumnae of these sororities saw these rural people as "backward," they also imagined that the "pure" Anglo-Saxon heritage of the population made these people more deserving of their assistance than immigrant-born populations of the United States and certainly more so than black Americans. In their minds, the claim of Anglo-Saxon heritage placed these people in closer relation to the elite, white, Protestant ethic that sororities wished to perpetuate as the American ideal. They appeared to believe that by attempting to provide funds for schooling, health care, and other modernized services they were helping the rural populations to achieve their rightful place in American civilization, and, pointedly, ahead of African Americans and immigrant or non-Protestant Christian groups.

Sigma Kappa launched a similar project, but instead of focusing on southern Appalachia, the sorority turned their attention to underprivileged people in Maine. In 1915, Sigma Kappa's "committee to consider a national philanthropy" offered the Maine Sea Coast Mission as, what they considered, a worthy and appropriate project to honor the founders of the sorority, all of whom were from Maine. Brothers, Angus and Alexander McDonald, both pastors, founded the mission in 1905. By boat, they traveled to island communities of Maine, "providing spiritual support where there were no churches, [and] bringing books and learning opportunities." The sorority adopted the project for its national philanthropy in 1918.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Strout, *The History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 508.

⁶⁷ [Lillian M. Perkins?], *History of Sigma Kappa*, 23; "History," <http://www.seacoastmission.org/history.html>, website accessed June 8, 2009.

Of sororities that chose hospital and public health projects for their philanthropic works, Phi Mu took the lead. The “Healthmobile” became Phi Mu’s national project in 1920. The sorority sponsored the mobile health unit, described as “a well-equipped doctor’s office on wheels,” which traveled throughout rural Georgia (the state of Phi Mu’s founding) under the direction of Dr. Alice Moses, head of the state’s Division of Child Hygiene. Significantly, the Healthmobile held daily clinics “for people of all races and classes,” providing free health consultations for expectant mothers, and examinations of infants and pre-school age children.⁶⁸ Phi Mu’s literature is the only one to specifically mention that their philanthropy also aided non-whites.

In 1921, the Kappa Deltas took up a national project supporting the Crippled Children’s Hospital in Richmond, Virginia, the state of the sorority’s founding. The sorority had sought to begin a philanthropic project in 1916, but its early efforts were sidelined by attention to war work during World War I.⁶⁹ Kappa Delta continued to support this project, gradually adding funding for more beds in the hospital as well as medical equipment and toys for the young patients.⁷⁰

Despite these sororities’ early efforts at civic volunteerism, the trend toward linking sorority membership with social service did not become a widespread public relations venture among the organizations for a number of years to come. The Depression may have been partially to blame for this lack of concentrated effort at philanthropy. During the lean years of the Depression, sororities needed to find ways to *make* money (one suggested method was to bring in more pledges) rather than find new projects to sponsor.⁷¹ As I discussed in Chapter Three, the performance of charity work was also a way that white, middle class women defined their

⁶⁸ Ethel Buckmaster, “The Phi Mu Healthmobile,” *The Aglaia* Vol. 17, no. 3 (March 1923), 35-37.

⁶⁹ “Philanthropies and Projects, 1965,” NPC Archives, Fraternity Affairs File (41/82/9), Box 1, NPC Philanthropy Reports, 1965-1971, 8, Morse, *A History of Kappa Delta Sorority*, 407.

⁷⁰ Morse, *A History of Kappa Delta Sorority*, 407-427.

⁷¹ In 1935, the Gamma Epsilon chapter of Phi Mu read a letter from Phi Mu national treasurer, Alice Miller, which reminded chapters to use “care with regard to finances” and “suggest[ed] ways to earn money.” It also “stressed the necessity of more pledges,” to offset financial burdens. See Jan 26, 1935, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

socioeconomic status against that of the working class, or working poor, to which they ministered.⁷² My above discussion of sorority philanthropic work is not meant to serve as an exhaustive list of sorority projects. The organizations sometimes changed their national philanthropy or added new projects over the years. My point, instead, is to note the significance of national sororities' emphasis on their philanthropic work as part of a publicity campaign targeted at an audience of non-members. Smartly highlighting these acts of benevolence could help the groups' shape a more positive public image while quieting critics who suggested that sorority women were merely financially wasteful partygoers.

White, Greek-letter, social sororities and fraternities were not founded with the idea of community betterment in mind. Their founders intended the groups to promote the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual betterment of their members. As time progressed, however, the groups became overwhelmingly, social – and *socializing* – clubs where women turned for friendship and fun and where they did not necessarily wish to be preoccupied with thoughts about making the world a better place. Sorority members may not have felt a great need to sponsor altruistic works because a variety of other women's organizations, including Altrusa Clubs, Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the Junior League, the King's Daughters, the League of Women Voters and the YWCA already undertook that type of work.⁷³ Through their membership in one of these other groups, sorority women might have felt that they were doing their part in charity work and community involvement.

Furthermore, the national sororities sought contributions to finance a variety of scholarships for their own members, other college women, and sometimes for foreign women

⁷² See Chapter Three, 164, fn 104.

⁷³ Esther Allen Gaw, "We the Deans," *Journal of Higher Education* Vol. 11, no. 5 (May 1940), 263; Darlene Rebecca Roth, *Matronage: Patterns In Women's Organizations, Atlanta, Georgia, 1890-1940* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, Inc. 1994), 5, 32.

students attending college in the United States⁷⁴ As organizations for women in college, sororities wished to help other women pursue their goal of higher education For some groups, such as Delta Delta Delta sorority, it appears that this desire led them to make the scholarship programs their primary philanthropy In the 1940s, after “discovering that many young women were being forced to leave school because of war conditions,” the group decided to make the program of providing financial assistance for women completing their college education their national philanthropy⁷⁵

White sororities’ approach to service work in this period placed them in stark contrast with African American women’s sororities, which made social outreach to the black community a primary goal of their organizational efforts Following the path blazed by other African American clubwomen in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, black sororities also took up the mantle of service work The legacy of middle class African American women’s work to improve social welfare among less privileged and less educated African Americans resulted from a desire to make social gains for the race as a whole⁷⁶

Imbued with the ethic of “Lifting as We Climb,” the motto of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), founded in 1896 and first led by Mary Church Terrell,⁷⁷ community uplift served to educate and enable all classes of African Americans to help themselves to live healthy, community-minded, and respectable lives By enacting what historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has termed the “politics of respectability,” black women of the middle class, first and foremost, urged their less privileged African American sisters to exhibit ladylike “manners

⁷⁴ Report of the 31st National Panhellenic Conference, 1949, 30-31 Copy contained in GGJ Papers, Box 107

⁷⁵ “Philanthropies and Projects, 1965,” NPC Archives, Fraternity Affairs File (41/82/9), Box 1, NPC Philanthropy Reports, 1965-1971, 4-5

⁷⁶ Stephanie J Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and To Do Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago, IL University of Chicago Press, 1996), 167

⁷⁷ Siedglinde Lemke, introduction to *Lifting as They Climb*, by Elizabeth Lindsay Davis (1933 Reprint, New York, NY G K Hall & Co , 1996), xxx

and morals” and to remain chaste⁷⁸ To combat the white-created stereotype of enslaved African American women, and later freedwomen, as sexually promiscuous, black clubwomen sought to instill in young African American women the value of chastity as a marker of class and culture⁷⁹ African American sororities upheld this ideal, though, as historian Paula Giddings has noted, black sororities were “not conceived to transform society but to transform the individual”⁸⁰ It was through this transformation of the individual, however, that the next generation of African American women leaders would be formed and would, as Stephanie Shaw has remarked, exhibit “socially responsible individualism”⁸¹

So, in this way, the mission of African American sororities appeared quite similar to their parallel groups in the NPC The African American sororities, like their white counterparts, also grappled with the issue of elitism Their members were generally from the upper echelon of black society, a group who tended to view less privileged, or “lowly” African Americans, as Mary Church Terrell termed them in a 1900 address, as their cultural inferiors to be aided and made “respectable” so as to reduce the possibility that they would be an impediment to the progress and aspirations of the black middle class⁸² As Giddings explains

As one of the very few closed-membership organizations in the Black community, and the only ones that required a college education, sororities were particularly vulnerable to the stereotypes of a less than serious bourgeoisie class that was insensitive to the needs of the less fortunate⁸³

Yet, the African American sorority members’ inherent commitment to social activism – a product of their upbringing as socially responsible individuals within the black community – resulted in a greater drive to use their sororal organizations as a sociopolitical tool for racial

⁷⁸ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 185-188

⁷⁹ Deborah Gray White, “The Cost of Clubwork, the Price of Black Feminism,” in *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism*, eds. Nancy Hewitt and Suzanne Lebeson (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 258-259

⁸⁰ Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood*, 21

⁸¹ Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and To Do*, 7

⁸² Lemke, “Introduction,” xix

⁸³ Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood*, 144

uplift. In her history of Delta Sigma Theta (DST) sorority, which began at Howard University in 1913, Giddings explains that the “organization has consistently rendered service to its community.” Delta Sigma Theta founder, Naomi Sewell Richardson desired the sorority to “be more than just a social group.” “We wanted to do more, when we graduated,” she explained, “for the community in which we were going.”⁸⁴ While Giddings notes that African American sororities have long struggled to “translat[e]” their “concept of service into political activism,” the groups’ insistence on service work as a primary component of membership impelled their altruistic aspirations beyond those of white sororities.

In her history of black women’s health activism, historian Susan L. Smith sheds light on the work of Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority in Mississippi during the 1930s. Alpha Kappa Alpha started at Howard University in 1908.⁸⁵ The sorority “designed, financed, and carried out the Alpha Kappa Alpha Mississippi Health Project for two to six weeks every summer from 1935 to 1945.”⁸⁶ In a project somewhat similar to the Phi Mu Healthmobile, the AKA sorors, led by national president, Ida Louise Jackson, a native of Mississippi, and Dr. Dorothy Boulding Ferebee, another AKA alumna, brought basic health care, including immunizations for children and venereal disease control education, to the state’s black sharecroppers. The health clinics provided care for 2,500 to 4000 people each summer for the duration of the project. Over the course of the decade, forty AKA members volunteered in the field for the health project.⁸⁷ As Smith notes, the AKA project operated both in the realm of “social service work and political activism,” making the black sorority women’s approach decidedly different from that of their white counterparts. Both during the health project and in the years following its demise, AKA members lobbied state and federal government officials to provide adequate support for

⁸⁴ Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood*, 15, 21-22, 49

⁸⁵ Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood*, 43

⁸⁶ Susan L. Smith, *Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired: Black Women’s Health Activism in America 1890-1950* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 149

⁸⁷ Smith, *Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired*, 151-153, 157, 160-161

healthcare for African Americans Through AKA's Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs, established in 1938, and its successor, the American Council on Human Rights, formed with six other African American sororities and fraternities in 1948,⁸⁸ AKA sorority women used their organization's name to press their political agendas, a step the NPC sororities would not take

As Diana Turk has noted, NPC sororities of the early twentieth century "adopted positions designed to attract the least amount of resistance or opposition from their memberships"⁸⁹ The sororities did not wish to alienate any portion of their membership, and thus, on divisive issues such as woman suffrage, "resisted taking a position"⁹⁰ By choosing *not* to participate in public politicking, the sorority women may have wished to distinguish themselves from those women they saw as "unwomanly" or "uncivilized," and whom many Americans perceived as trespassing in the male-dominated political arena If being outspoken on social and political issues made individual women appear unladylike in the eyes of the public, then white sorority women, as a whole, would elect to remain neutral and, they hoped, been seen as elite, feminine, and non-controversial

Particularly in the post-World War II era, when NPC sororities and IFC fraternities began to face increased criticism of their discriminatory membership policies they also faced further questions about their value in American society The groups hoped that they could turn to their philanthropic work to deflect critics' attention from the negative aspects of "Greek life," such as excessive drinking and partying, class snobbery, as well as covert and overt displays of racial and religious bigotry For each NPC sorority, focusing their altruistic work toward a national philanthropic project would give each collegiate and alumnae member something at which to point if questioned about the contributions of sororities to contemporary society

⁸⁸ Smith, *Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired*, 163-164

⁸⁹ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 110

⁹⁰ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 110

Additionally, a national philanthropy would channel the service efforts of each sorority's members toward a common goal; the project would be yet another way to unify the membership. Individual chapters might still choose to sponsor a local project or charity with which they had a previous relationship, but they would also be expected to contribute to the official national project. In 1936, the Gamma Epsilon chapter of Phi Mu at Duke University received a reminder from the sorority's national treasurer "regarding the thirty-five dollars...not included in the budget" that the chapter needed to contribute for the Healthmobile project.⁹¹

Still, the level at which each chapter, not to mention each individual member, participated in the altruistic work likely was not evenly distributed. Nancy Iler Burkholder, a member of Pi Beta Phi at UNC during the early 1950s did not recall that her chapter ever participated in any volunteer or service work.⁹² Furthermore, the projects undertaken by many sorority chapters for either their national or local philanthropies did not actually bring them in contact with those whom their donations of money or service hours were designed to help. The collection of sundry items to fill a Red Cross basket for a needy family need not mean that sorority women had to deliver the basket themselves if they did not wish to do so.⁹³ Margetta Hirsch reported that the Kappa Deltas at William and Mary held their own charity Christmas party in the sorority house, with sisters contributing ten cents each to buy gifts for patients at the Crippled Children's Hospital in Richmond, Virginia. She left no record, however, of the KD members making a trip to Richmond to visit the children and deliver the gifts.⁹⁴

By adopting a foster child for \$14 a year in 1954, the Gamma Epsilon chapter of Phi Mu at Duke would have a "relationship" with an orphaned child, but did not have to actually give

⁹¹ April 6, 1936, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

⁹² Nancy Iler Berkholder, telephone interview conducted by author, May 11, 2010, 10.

⁹³ "Chapter History – Beta Omega, 1959-1960, Auburn University," Alpha Delta Pi Archives, Alpha Delta Pi Memorial Headquarters.

⁹⁴ December 17, 1943, Margetta Hirsch Doyle Diaries.

time other than to have a sister send a letter or card now and then.⁹⁵ In 1950, the chapter threw a Christmas party at Durham's Lincoln Hospital, the city's first hospital for African Americans.⁹⁶ The Gamma Epsilons provided "\$30 for refreshments and presents" and sang to the patients.⁹⁷ In November 1950, the chapter devoted their monthly Philomathean Hour to a "social services project." The sisters made Christmas tray favors for children in the local hospitals.⁹⁸ Even though the Gamma Epsilon members did not appear to have direct contact with those whom they intended to assist with their services (as there was no discussion in the minutes about fining those members who did not attend a service project), their minutes suggest that they at least attempted to engage in social service work on a regular basis.

At least one sorority chapter did hold a charity event that directly involved the disadvantaged that they aimed to assist. The Iota Chapter of Alpha Delta Pi at Florida State University (FSU) threw an annual Christmas party for underprivileged children. In 1957, Iota Chapter, along with FSU's chapter of Phi Delta Theta fraternity, hosted fifty children at the sorority house for Christmas. Together, they played games and had refreshments. The highlight of the event, the Iota secretary wrote, was the arrival of "Santa Claus," who handed presents out to the young guests. "It was wonderful," she noted, "to see their eyes light up."⁹⁹ The sorority women may have enjoyed their ability to bring some happiness to those less fortunate than themselves, but, again, such philanthropic work was not the main focus of social sororities.

With no real deadlines for volunteering, it also became easy for sororities to put off their local projects if another activity was more pressing, or if the project called for more effort than the women wished to expend at the time. In an April 1943 chapter meeting, the Gamma Epsilons read a letter from the Foster Parents' Society about a child named "George." The girls appeared

⁹⁵ April 7, 1954, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

⁹⁶ "Original Lincoln Hospital," December 17, 2008, <http://endangereddurham.blogspot.com/search?q=Lincoln+hospital>, website accessed May 30, 2009.

⁹⁷ December 11, 1950, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records; *Chanticleer*, 1951, 251.

⁹⁸ November 19, 1951, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

⁹⁹ "Chapter History of Iota for 1957-1958," Alpha Delta Pi Archives, 2.

interested in fostering George or another needy child. Since the end of the school year was near, however, they decided to wait and discuss the matter in the fall. The issue, it seems, may have lost its momentum in the interim since the chapter did not mention the foster child project again until the fall of 1949 when they decided to support one child for the year.¹⁰⁰ The girls also adopted a foster child in the spring of 1954 for a cost of \$14 year.¹⁰¹

While the philanthropic work of the NPC sororities may have begun more as an activity of the alumnae members than their college sisters, the programs' possibilities for positive publicity helped earn them an increasingly visible role in the overall image of sororities. Rush and other social events were the center of the sorority experience, while charitable work received less attention than social events and rush events. This suggests that individual chapters and alumnae associations felt less impetus to spearhead, or to join in on, sorority-related altruistic projects. Philanthropy, as a show of goodwill and good citizenship became a route that NPC groups increasingly navigated as a means to improve the image they presented to the general public. The national sororities hoped that the heightened visibility of their philanthropic works would serve to placate the critics whose claims that Greek-letter groups were undemocratic and discriminatory were becoming ever more strident. In the following chapter I will turn to a discussion of membership issues and the controversies that surrounded them.

¹⁰⁰ April 26, 1943, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records; September 17, 1949, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records.

¹⁰¹ April 7, 1954, Minutes, Gamma Epsilon Chapter Records, 1953-1960.

CHAPTER SEVEN: “INEQUALITY FOR ALL AND MINT JULEPS, TOO”: SORORITIES, ANTICOMMUNISM, AND MEMBERSHIP DISCRIMINATION

In a February 11, 1964 article for the University of Georgia (UGA) student newspaper, the *Red and Black*, entitled “Southern Sorority Toured,” staff writer Neil Aronstam lampooned the image of UGA sororities. In the article, he visits the fictional “Alpha Alpha” sorority, which he describes as “the sorority that epitomizes all sororities, the paragon of Greek womanhood.” As he arrives at their door, the Alpha Alphas check to make sure he is wearing a fraternity pin before he crosses their threshold. The sorority women explained to him that they were “employing Darwin’s theory of natural selection – only letting ‘approved’ fraternity men date the Alpha Alphas.” Aronstam then tells them that he is a reporter, at the house to do a feature on their sorority. In response, the sorority housemother “began frisking [him] for any hidden tape recorders, paper or pens.” “We can’t be too careful you know,” she says. “The way things are, just anyone could slip in here sometimes.” Aronstam then characterizes his discussion with “Ida Belle Mae Montgomery,” president of the Alpha Alphas, who tells him about the history of her sorority’s founding, “just after the War of Northern Aggression on the principles of ‘inequality for all and mint juleps, too.’” She goes on to say that the sorority has “striven through the years to maintain the same standards, and traditions, and outlooks that our forefathers had during the South’s most glorious era.” Aronstam asks her if she “didn’t feel that was a bit outdated,” and she responds by “muttering something about damnyankees.” “Actually we are just a group of farm girls at heart,” interposed another sorority sister while she “rubbed [Aronstam’s] back with a rubber hose.” At the article’s end, Aronstam makes clear that this scenario did not actually take place, but was a send-up of sorority culture. He closes the piece with a tongue in cheek apology “for all of my diatribes against the fine, courteous, sincere sorors on this campus.”¹

¹ Neil Aronstam, “Southern Sorority Toured,” *The Red and Black*, February 11, 1964.

Aronstam's satire plays on stereotypical images of white southern sorority women even as it suggests that the stereotypes were not that far from reality. Through his portrayal of southern sorority women as simplistic southern belles (or "farm girls at heart"), he criticizes the groups for upholding an elitist and segregationist ideology among its members. By emphasizing the sorority women's devotion to the Lost Cause mentality, Aronstam indirectly demonstrates the groups' adherence to racially discriminatory ideology. The Alpha Alpha housemother's allusion to the "way things are" likely referred to the recent 1961 racial desegregation of the University of Georgia.² Her comment suggested that, in the current climate, the sisters needed to be on guard since *anyone*, including African Americans, might now be able to enter the sorority house either as rushees or, in what was perhaps to her an even more frightening possibility, as male friends or dates of the white sorority women. For Aronstam, the line "Inequality for all and mint juleps, too," served as the mantra for this group of southerners for whom social change was a phenomenon to be feared or ignored and social justice was a foreign idea. When he writes that one of the sorority sisters (suggestively?) caressed his back "with a rubber hose," it effectively reminds the reader that although the sorority members appeared kind and well-mannered, as part of the southern segregationist bloc, they could be considered as guilty of racial violence as those who actually committed such crimes. The rubber hose imagery also calls to mind the well-known pictures and television coverage of police officers in Birmingham, Alabama turning fire hoses on young African American civil rights protesters in 1963.³ Or, the rubber hose could even be seen as a weapon in its own right. At the end, Aronstam's "apology" to the "fine, courteous, sincere sorors" was to again remind the readers, sorority women included, that he perceived their manners as but an act to shield public criticism of their very unladylike discriminatory activities.

² Robert A. Pratt, "The Long Journey from LaGrange to Atlanta: Horace Ward and the Desegregation of the University of Georgia," in *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses*, ed. Peter Wallenstein (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008), 110.

³ Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 267-268.

Aronstam's sarcastic editorial sheds light on the serious activities of white Greek-letter sororities concerning membership policies, particularly in the post-World War II period. The very visible issue of racial discrimination, which dominated national discourse at this time, focused attention on private membership organizations including sororities and fraternities. In turn, the focus on racial discrimination opened a space for the discussion of the implicit and wide ranging discriminatory practices of Greek-letter groups. In this chapter, I discuss the ways in which the elevated anticommunist rhetoric and the increased attention to civil rights in the United States become intertwined in the policy decisions of the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) and its member groups. In the previous chapter, I examined national sororities' reliance on philanthropic works to create positive public relations for their organizations. By the mid-twentieth century, the NPC saw the need for publicity that demonstrated the ways in which sororities actively participated in preserving and perpetuating American freedoms and the nation's democratic ideals. If the NPC left room for groups or individuals to paint the Greek-letter societies as unconcerned with the current national crisis or uninvolved in the fight for democracy, critics who charged that sororities were snobbish, secretive, and antidemocratic could gain ground.

I examine sorority citizenship training as it relates to the molding of "All-American" women and I illustrate the connections between the NPC and conservative organizations in this period. I consider the Edgewater Conference, a group of sorority and fraternity alumni concerned with challenges to their groups' restrictive membership, and will show how Edgewater members obsessively turn their attention to university administrations' rulings regarding Greek-letter groups' membership policies. In this chapter and the next, I also explore student attitudes during this period to examine the ways sororities at both the national and local level responded to their changing relationships with university administrations.

Nicholas Syrett briefly touches on some of these issues in regard to white men's fraternities in his book *The Company He Keeps*, but he neither investigates the ways fraternity alumni might have spread their pro-American, pro-discrimination, and anticommunist rhetoric among their active members, nor delves into the NIC's involvement in the Edgewater Conference, a group of Greek-letter alumni devoted to maintaining "freedom of association."⁴ While examining many disputes between fraternity chapters and university administrations over the clauses in the post-World War II period, historian Anthony James looks further into fraternities' connections between restrictive membership clauses and anticommunism in his unpublished dissertation, "The Defenders of Tradition." He mentions the Edgewater Conference and briefly alludes to its role as a lobbying group against federal legislation, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that sororities and fraternities deemed unfriendly to their organizations.⁵

The NIC and the fraternities' national officers worked alongside the NPC sorority women in the fight to maintain their organizations' membership restrictions. While fraternities also sought to exert control over their college members as they chose new pledges, the NPC sororities seemed more successful in adhering to an educational program where college members had continuous, close guidance by alumnae and visiting national officers. The NPC sororities went to great lengths to check possible subversive behavior among their membership. While the NPC orchestrated and executed the sororities' overall anticommunist agenda, at the individual chapter level, basic teachings of citizenship education revolved around the development of member responsibility and leadership skills.

Citizenship Training

The NPC's campaign to promote sororities' American patriotism and citizenship preparedness actually began during World War II. In 1942, the NPC's provisional Committee on Information on War and College Women noted the apparent need "to give the public more

⁴ Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 248-261.

⁵ James, "The Defenders of Tradition," 83, 108-110.

constructive publicity on the actual good that sororities are doing,” and requested that each NPC member group send in their materials to the publicity committee. This request suggested that many Americans were not aware of any war work or citizenship education undertaken by national sororities. As we learned in the previous chapter, the desire by the NPC to control what sorority and non-sorority members, alike, wrote or said about Greek-letter groups led to a strengthening of NPC policies regarding publicity and publications. These concerns culminated with the formation of the Research and Public Relations Committee in 1947.⁶ The committee would deal frequently with the issue of how to deflect the increasingly vocal critique of sororities’ membership policies.⁷ As Zeta Tau Alpha’s historian and publicity director, Shirley Kreasan Strout noted in 1956, the “bitter anti-fraternity propaganda and strategy that characterized the [post-World War II] period put a different complexion on publicity as an activity.”⁸

While keeping up appearances for the general public, the NPC also saw wartime as an important occasion to stress to individual members the need to keep tabs on “agitation aimed at the right of social organizing.” To the NPC groups, social organizing referred to their ability to maintain private, social groups with members of their own choosing. Members of Greek-letter organizations viewed pressure against their closed ranks as an impingement on their freedoms and as a threat to democracy. Critics of the groups, on the other hand, explained that sororities and fraternities were, themselves, presenting an affront to democratic values with their restrictive membership requirements. In March of 1943, the Committee on Information on War and College Women sent a letter to presidents of NPC groups and NPC delegates reminding them of their duty to help preserve the right of social organizing. This right “alone stands between totalitarianism and democracy,” wrote the committee. “Because we live in a revolutionary world, Greek-letter

⁶ Public Relations and Research Committees Reports and Forum, NPC Archives, Proceedings, 1947 (41/82/10), Box 1, 160.

⁷ The Report of the Research and Public Relations Committee, NPC Archives, Proceedings, 1949 (41/82/10), Box 1, 116.

⁸ Strout, *The History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 838.

groups must be especially alert to their responsibility in maintaining this right.” By linking the continuance of sorority exclusivity to displays of wartime patriotism, the committee paved the way to argue for their “right” to discriminate in membership as a basic American freedom in the 1950s and 1960s.⁹

Greek-letter groups acknowledged long-standing public perceptions of their reputation as antidemocratic organizations. National leadership of sororities and fraternities recognized that public sentiment could turn against them as the Cold War era communist scare enveloped the nation. As a result, they sought ways to distinguish their secret societies as fervently *anticommunist* organizations. Historian Ellen Schrecker has shown how both communists and their fellow travelers within the U.S., as well as individuals merely suspected of being communists, increasingly faced persecution from the FBI and U.S. leaders in the World War II period. She makes clear that U.S. government pressure on communists and suspected communists was very much alive in the late 1930s. In 1938, Democratic Representative Martin Dies of Texas became head of the new Special House Committee on Un-American Activities, later known as HUAC. As Schrecker explains, the committee’s formation was actually an act of partisan politics, as anti-New Dealers in government sought to use it to “expos[e] alleged communist influence in CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] unions and New Deal agencies.”¹⁰

It would be a decade later when anticommunism became an American cultural phenomenon as Wisconsin’s Republican Senator, Joseph McCarthy, led widely publicized

⁹ Minutes of Committee on Information on War and College Women, November 15, 1942, NPC Archives, Committee File (41/82/50), Box 1, Committee on Information on War and College Women Report, 1942; Committee on Information on War and College Women to Presidents of NPC Fraternities and NPC Delegates, March 15, 1943, Committee File (41/82/50), Box 1, NPC Minutes and Committee on Information on the War and College Women Report.

¹⁰ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998), 91.

communist witch-hunts that amplified the nation's fear level.¹¹ In addition, several well-timed events that appeared to affirm the reality of the communist threat to U.S. national security aided McCarthy's media-driven scare tactics.¹² First, the "fall" of China to communism in 1949 suggested that other countries, the U.S. included, could be in danger of succumbing to communist control. This spread of communism also supported the scenario that President Harry S. Truman and his officials warned against in their advocacy of the 1947 Truman Doctrine. To secure American funding for war-torn Europe, the Truman Doctrine promised both economic and military support for Greece and Turkey, although, as Schrecker explains, neither country "was directly threatened by Soviet forces." She notes that the Truman Doctrine "publicly committed the United States to a worldwide policy of containing the USSR."¹³ The second significant event aiding the McCarthyism frenzy was the conviction of former State Department official Alger Hiss for perjury in January of 1950. In 1948, Whittaker Chambers, a former Communist Party member turned informant, had "publicly identified Hiss as a Communist at a HUAC hearing" and soon after accused him of being a Soviet spy.¹⁴ To fearful Americans, the Hiss case, seemed to present evidence of espionage within U.S. government. It was in this environment that the NPC delegates saw the need to increase their attention to anticommunist activism.

Around this same time, American servicemen returning from World War II began to publicly question the status quo on racial segregation in the U.S. and the lack of citizenship rights for *all* Americans. Since the country had claimed to be fighting to preserve democracy and freedom abroad, the hypocrisy of civil rights injustices *within* the U.S. became a source of embarrassment for the national leaders as well as a sticking point for civil rights activists.¹⁵ As Schrecker explains, "many policymakers believed" that:

¹¹ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 242-243.

¹² Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 246.

¹³ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 157.

¹⁴ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 175.

¹⁵ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 6-11.

The existence of Jim Crow in the South... made it hard for them to convince people in Third World countries that the American way of life was better than the Soviet one. And, of course, they did not want American Blacks to turn red.¹⁶

The Communist Party did, Schrecker notes, “appeal to people with legitimate grievances.”

Poverty, discrimination, and racism, “played into the party’s hands.”¹⁷

Civil rights advocates became more vocal and visible in this period even as their fellow Americans might perceive their protests as evidence of subversive activity. Policymakers viewed the increased agitation with concern, wondering if disaffected protesters might turn to the Communist Party for support in their attempts at racial desegregation. Early in the Cold War, Schrecker points out, liberals actually began to voice their support for desegregation in large part because they hoped it would discourage the growth of communism.¹⁸ This connection, however, appeared lost on NPC delegates.

When NPC delegates surveyed this scene in the decades surrounding the mid-twentieth century, they saw those involved with civil rights advocacy, social justice work, or organizations they perceived as liberal as possible threats to American freedom. National Panhellenic Conference sororities as well as National Interfraternity Council (NIC) fraternities felt that the *gravest* threat was to their “freedom” to choose their members. Sororities’ longstanding written *and* unwritten policies of racial and religious discrimination began to face increased criticism from Americans who had become uneasy with the United States’ lack of attention to democracy within its *own* borders. Both sororities and fraternities had long faced criticism of their exclusivity; in the post-World War II era, the challenges to the groups came as part of a larger push for social equality and racial integration that focused on public schools and institutions of higher education. Greek-letter societies became targets of Americans who wanted to strengthen the country’s democratic image by ending discriminatory practices. National Panhellenic

¹⁶ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 151.

¹⁷ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 150.

¹⁸ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 151.

Conference delegates and members of the NIC viewed critics as left-leaning and as possible communists or communist sympathizers.¹⁹ I argue that the NPC and its member groups among their chapters both on southern and non-southern university campuses attempted to indoctrinate their members *against* liberal thought in the guise of anticommunist rhetoric. Furthermore, the Greek-letter groups conflated the ideas of membership discrimination and communist infiltration. To the NPC and the NIC, an end to their right of control over membership selection also meant that they could no longer keep the so-called “subversive element” out of their societies. In Chapter Five I showed that national sorority officers were quite interested in checking the backgrounds of unknown rushees, in part to eliminate the possibility that they might be communist infiltrators. Concomitantly, they saw the possibility of a communist takeover of the United States as the death knell for private organizations of any kind. Fighting both on the national and the individual organizational levels, Greek-letter groups hoped to win the battle against communism *and* liberalism in order to make the country safe for continued discrimination by private establishments.

Many sorority members most clearly identified aspects of citizenship training as they related to leadership skills. By gaining experience as officers of their chapter or in work on various committees, women students could learn how to work effectively in groups and how to have self-confidence in their own abilities. Elizabeth Breazeale, a Kappa Kappa Gamma at Louisiana State University during the early 1940s, credited her experience as chapter president with teaching her about “democracy . . . the fundamentals of presiding, [and] order of business.”²⁰ A description by Marion Ferguson, a Zeta Tau Alpha at Centenary College in Shreveport, Louisiana during the same era, encapsulates the goals of citizenship training:

¹⁹ Eugene G. Schwartz, ed., *American Students Organize: Founding the National Student Association After World War II: An Anthology and Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: American Council on Education/Praeger Publishers, 2006), 398-400, 750.

²⁰ Elizabeth Breazeale Interview, 4700 0304, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, LSU, 15

We were trained from the very beginning that you learned all of the ideals of the Greek-letter system and, in particular, your own national group. But you were trained that you were to be a contributing member not only to your sorority, but to your fellow students at your school and to your community as a whole. We were taught that if you are going to be privileged enough to have membership in an organization that offers so much to you, you have to take a great deal of responsibility for the benefit of that organization and... for your college...your friends...and your community.²¹

As Ferguson put it, ZTA instilled in its members a desire to be involved in campus life, beyond the sorority, and in their communities. This type of training by sororities likely would be well received by deans of women and university administrators. In addition to molding ideal students, deans of women could see this type of training as beneficial for preparing women for possible post-collegiate roles in civic and volunteer organizations or paid careers that might require executive decision making and professional organizational skills. For the sororities' national leadership, the training had the added benefit of preparing sorority members for active alumnae status. Knowledgeable about the functioning of the sorority at the college level, the women ostensibly could make a seamless transition to roles of responsibility within the structure of the national organization. By placing an emphasis on a sorority woman's position of "privilege" in relation to non-Greek-letter individuals, sororities represented their lessons of responsible citizenship as a form of *noblesse oblige*. The Beta Iota Chapter of ZTA seemed to encourage Marion Ferguson and her sorority sisters that their "privilege[d]" position as sorority members required that they give back to those whom, apparently, were not so privileged. While it was beneficial to remind college sorority women to seek involvement with and have concern for people and activities beyond their chapter, the lesson also may have reinforced, among the sorority members, the notion that they were somehow "better" or more deserving of their social status than those the chapter advised them to remember.

Perhaps not as clearly evident to contemporary sorority members of the time, the NPC's anticommunist agenda also used citizenship training to inculcate democratic principles and teach

²¹ Marion Covington Ferguson Interview, 4700.0236, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, LSU, 4-5.
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members to uphold certain, “all American,” values and freedoms. Historian Wendy Wall describes these values that comprised an “American Way” during the 1940s and 1950s as, “a framework [that] privileged individual freedom, national unity, and a shared faith in God above all else.”²² Building on their history of linking Greek-letter membership to civilization and definitions of American citizenship, national sororities saw it as their duty to shape their members according to the consensus ideology of the time. A group with conformist tendencies *could* become a hotbed for communist infiltration *or* it could benefit from the fact that the policing of members’ behavior would keep them in check and *clear* of any communist activities or party sympathizers.

In an effort to strengthen students’ resolve against communist infiltration, national sorority leaders enacted programs to increase knowledge of the history and importance of American democracy. Sigma Sigma Sigma (Tri-Sigma) chose to make citizenship their national educational program in 1951. The national program director created an entire year of programming designed to “encourag[e] [their] members on ways and means to become better citizens.” The educational programming was held in discussions the sorority chapters called “Harmony Hour.” Officers at the individual chapters underwent “instruction in group dynamics” to prepare them to present the programs in ways that would yield “maximum participation on the part of all chapter members.” The citizenship program appeared to be tied in with lessons of American democracy through education about the 1952 United States presidential election, if of voting age. In step with national sororities’ desires to appear apolitical, there was no hint as to whether sorority women should support Republican candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower or Democrat Adlai Stevenson.

Tri-Sigma’s national president, Mary Hastings Holloway Page, explained that the first program of the school year dealt with American “heritage,” the second with [campaign] issues,

²² Wall, *Inventing the “American Way,”* 11.

the third with the candidates, and the final in the series with the topic of “the articulate citizen.” Tri-Sigma also used what they called “Charm School” programs in combination with the Harmony Hour programming. The entire program of the first Charm School session was “devoted to posture – standing and sitting.” “We were hoping to develop citizenship through personal characteristics and attributes,” Page told NPC attendees at a specially convened meeting on citizenship programs in 1951. Other Charm School lessons concerned how to make “conversation...valuable and interesting at a tea,” tips on public speaking, and “presiding” over events. The national officers felt that the sorority programming was a success, pointing to “some very thrilling reports” from their chapter program chairmen. Some members reported that they experienced an “awakening of their ideas and their realization of the citizenship opportunities that [were] before them as individuals.”²³ Just how they might have taken advantage of the citizenship opportunities was not explained at the NPC meeting. By predicating their citizenship training on a social education during the early 1950s, Sigma Sigma Sigma showed their desire to produce women who would fit into the mold of the sexually-non-threatening, civic-minded housewife and mother depicted by Elaine Tyler May in *Homeward Bound*.²⁴ Through reinforcement of the home, “properly” trained sorority alumnae would do their part to ward off communist incursions. For Tri-Sigma, as well as other sororities, “proper” citizenship training, like sorority membership, would be based heavily on appearances.

At the meeting of Zeta Tau Alpha’s National Council in 1944, the officers “adopted [the] motion that ‘ZTA stands for neat grooming, the observance of the social graces, et cetera, and that chapters, house directors and alumnae be notified of our national policy on this; that standards be set up.’” The women intended to combine the teaching and enforcement of ZTA’s national social standards with their “fraternity education” program. “They hoped,” wrote ZTA

²³ NPC Archives, Proceedings, 1902-1989, 1994-1998, 2000-01 (41/82/10), Box 2, 1951 Special Called Meeting, 23-24.

²⁴ May, *Homeward Bound*.

historian, Shirley Kreasan Strout, “to stress and develop more and more’ the new standards program – the promotion of personal development, good grooming and gracious living” as a part of their education program. The national president was to write a letter outlining the new program for the sorority’s journal, *Themis*, which each chapter would be instructed to post on their bulletin board.²⁵ While still very important for a sorority chapter’s popularity on campus, maintaining a “proper” image also gained significance as an issue of national security in the post-World War II era. By appearing well groomed and demonstrating an affable personality, an individual would fit social definitions of “normality,” and not appear to be “maladjusted,” and by extension, a possible target for communist interlopers.

To strengthen members’ citizenship ideals, Kappa Kappa Gamma (Kappa), actually created their *own* “infiltration” program, as they termed it. Kappa instructed its chapters to hold meetings to discuss matters of the dangers of communist infiltration. These sessions were less obviously orchestrated than Tri-Sigma’s official, yearlong program; the chapters were encouraged to invite “speakers from the campus to give...background in American democracy.” The Kappa leadership realized that this plan could backfire since, on occasion, chapters had opportunities to hear speakers that the leadership were “not always certain about.” While Kappa national president, Helena Flinn Ege, praised some of her sorority’s chapters for “work[ing] out...a rather satisfactory program” for themselves, she admitted that she would recommend the national leadership “do a little more spoon-feeding” of the issues.²⁶

The “spoon-feeding” by national officers also came in the form of directives to regional alumnae and to sorority chapter presidents. The NPC and sorority national officers took their cues from anticommunist organizations such as the All-American Conference to Combat Communism, an offshoot of the American Legion, and the Daughters of the American Revolution

²⁵ Strout, *The History of Zeta Tau Alpha*, 772-773.

²⁶ The minutes gave no specific examples of the questionable speakers to which Ege referred. See, NPC Archives, Proceedings, 1902-1989, 1994-1998, 2000-01 (41/82/10), Box 2, 1951 Special Called Meeting, 25.

(DAR) To publicly demonstrate their position as an enemy of communism, the NPC joined or supported a number of anticommunist groups from the late 1940s to the 1960s including the All-American Conference to Combat Communism, the National Conference on Citizenship, and Young Americans for Freedom

The American Legion, which formed the All-American Conference to Combat Communism in 1950,²⁷ had itself been started as a way to combat communism in the aftermath World War I. The Legion was a veterans group that promoted patriotism as a means of keeping American soldiers still in Europe after the Armistice from becoming caught up in the revolutionary zeal spreading across continent. The founders and financial backers of the Legion were largely from the elite, but concealed their positions so as to give the group the appearance of being solidly middle-class. As Ellen Schrecker states, the Legion was “the largest mass-based organization within the countersubversive world and the one that most single-mindedly and continuously pushed an anticommunist agenda.”²⁸ The Legion was involved in violence against suspected communists during the 1919-1920 Red Scare and in the 1920s lobbied for anticommunist legislation and worked to assimilate immigrants through their Americanism program. It was these early countersubversives, Schrecker explains, that tended to “be expansive about the nature of the [communist] threat.” She notes that during the Interwar period one Legion official “actually claimed that the Young Men’s Christian Association was a communist front.”²⁹ To the NPC, this was apparently a reasonable assumption, as they and the NIC suspected the YMCA and YWCA of subversive activity into the 1960s.³⁰ According to Schrecker, the Legion’s “right-wing patriots” often gave “Cold War anticommunism the extremist spin that accounted for

²⁷ Richard M. Fried, *The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming! Pageantry and Patriotism in Cold-War America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 28

²⁸ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 61-62

²⁹ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 63-64

³⁰ Elizabeth Dyer to Chi Omega Counselors, January, 1957, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 31, Chi Omega Correspondence, January-March, 1957, Edgewater Conference Minutes, 1962, Alpha Tau Omega National Officers, Edgewater Conference Files (41/93/31), Alpha Tau Omega Archives (1865-present), SLA, 97. For more on the YW and YMCA, see Chapter Eight, 398-406

the more notorious incidents of the McCarthy era ” The Legionnaires also worked regularly as FBI informants ³¹

Their All-American Conference (AAC) focused intently on educating citizens about the “current pressing problems of communist and other subversive attacks on [their] free way of life,” and sponsored promotional kits for “Know Your America Week,” a program designed to bring Americans in touch with their “vital American heritage ” By providing booklets with “simple, factual text on various phases of the Communist conspiracy,” the AAC aimed to help its participating organizations (the NPC included) train their members in “counter-subversive tactics and programs ”³² In the language of Cold War culture, every United States citizen became part of the intelligence operation to root out threats to American freedom Groups like the Legion’s All-American Conference could help every individual feel that they were an integral part of the fight against Soviet espionage

Spurred on by the All-American Conference, and availing themselves of AAC materials, the NPC formed of an official committee to streamline their efforts to “inform those with whom we come in contact, of the national danger of communism ” Calling themselves the “All-American Committee to Combat Communism,” the women sent a newsletter to NPC delegates urging their assistance in the “nation wide crusade ” “We must be diligent,” they commanded “Collegiate and alumnae members alike must be reached ” The newsletter contained lists of books, magazines, and pamphlets that might aid delegates and their contacts in alumnae and collegiate groups in presenting the lessons of anticommunism to their members The materials on the list were “vast and controversial, and even political,” the committee explained It recommended books such as *The Whole of Their Lives Communism in America A Personal History and Intimate Portrayal of Its Leaders* (1948) by Benjamin Gitlow, *The Coming Defeat of*

³¹ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 61, 216-217

³² “Presenting the All-American Conference,” 1955-1956, NPC Archives, Fraternity Affairs File (41/82/9), Box 1, 3-4, Richard Fried, *The Russians are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!*, 28

Communism (1949) by James Burnham, *Men Without Faces: The Communist Conspiracy in the U.S.A.* (1950) by Louis Budenz, and a pamphlet entitled, “New List of Subversive Organizations” prepared and released by the Committee on Un-American Activities (May 14, 1951) as useful tools in the crusade.³³ Both Gitlow and Budenz were former CP members turned professional witnesses against suspected communists, while Burnham was a former Trotskyite turned conservative intellectual and leading Cold War supporter. Since mainstream politicians knew little about the CP, Schrecker explains, “the professional anti-Communists became disproportionately influential in shaping the political repression of the McCarthy period.”³⁴

The NPC’s All-American Committee warned sororities to “caution” [underlining in original] their membership against joining any organization unless they were well informed of the group’s real sponsors. The newsletter cited the testimony of Mary Markward, who worked undercover as agent for the FBI, infiltrating the Washington D.C. “District Communist Party” during the 1940s. Markward listed such “harmless sounding names” as “Health Club” and “Newspaper Club” that were, in actuality, communist front groups.³⁵ The committee also advised delegates to “warn everyone [underlining in original] to be on alert for any signs of communist propaganda,” and suggested that they would be wise to examine candidates for school or public offices to make sure they did not have any “questionable affiliation.”³⁶

To enlist speakers on the topic of Americanism, or anticommunism, the committee recommended that sorority active or alumnae chapters “check names with the local American Legion chapter or the Americanism Committee of the DAR.” Additionally, the committee noted,

³³ “News Letter,” [1951?], NPC Archives, Fraternity Affairs File (41/82/009), Box 1, All-American Conference to Combat Communism, 1951-1962;

³⁴ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 126, 392, 45 (quote); Francis P. Sempa, “James Burnham: The First Cold Warrior,” *American Diplomacy* Vol. V, No. 4 (Fall, 2000), http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/AD_Issues/amdipl_17/articles/sempa_burnham1.html, website accessed September 23, 2011.

³⁵ “Virginia Housewife Praised for Anti-Red Undercover Work,” *The Washington Post*, July 8, 1951, M1.

³⁶ “News Letter,” n.d., NPC Archives, Fraternity Affairs File, 1941-1991 (41/82/9), Box 1, All-American Conference to Combat Communism, 1951-1962.

those groups might have their own lists of suitable speakers, whom, the committee seemed to assume, had been vetted as true patriots, and not communists in disguise.³⁷ The DAR, like the American Legion, was another right-wing patriotic group devoted to fighting communism with xenophobic zeal.³⁸

The DAR began in 1890 when the recently formed Sons of the American Revolution (1889) eliminated women from its membership. Members of the DAR could trace their lineage from individuals who had served and supported the cause of the American Revolution, but they were also required to be “personally acceptable” to other DAR members. The DAR had chapters in “every state and territory by 1912” notes historian Francesca Morgan, but was “[s]trongest in the Northeast and the upper Midwest.” The organization was similar to other hereditary organizations that began in the same period such as the Society of the Colonial Dames of America (1891), but also combined aspects of “women’s self-education” and “present-minded activism” found in nonhereditary groups like the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC). Morgan contends that the DAR functioned to “bring together propertied white women from all parts of the country” as it “sought symbolically to unify the United States into a nation on the bases of white supremacy and elite class standing.” The group, she asserts, “brought together white women who were eager to parade their social stature with those who aspired to climb farther up the social ladder.”³⁹

National sororities, I argue in Chapter Two, operated in much the same way. A common membership between the two groups also suggests that the women who gravitated toward both sororities and the DAR had similar goals and interests. A number of NPC members and national sorority officers, including Mary Love Collins and Mary Louise Snellings of Chi Omega, and Genevieve Forbes Morse and Marion Day Mullins of Kappa Delta also held membership in the

³⁷ “News Letter,” n.d., NPC Fraternity Affairs File, 1941-1991 (41/82/9).

³⁸ Schecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 61.

³⁹ Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 42-43.

DAR.⁴⁰ While the group was always right-leaning, Morgan shows that during the early twentieth century, the DAR offered some limited support for progressive reform. Their main project, Americanization work, foreshadowed the mid-twentieth century anticommunist campaigns. The DAR distributed their own citizenship manuals and offered classes to prepare immigrants who were eligible for naturalization (Europeans) to pass the history and civics test required for citizenship after 1906. The members also undertook “patriotic education” work among Mexican and Asian immigrants in the western United States even though those groups were ineligible for naturalization. Morgan highlights this work to show that DAR members believed that non-European immigrants were capable of learning and adapting to new behavioral standards, but she points out that the DAR lessons only “strengthened racial assumptions” by basing the standards on a “white, middle-class, Anglo American culture.”⁴¹ The DAR brand of American patriotism focused on an allegiance to these standards and by the mid-twentieth century, measures to monitor those who did not conform to DAR-held standards for Americanism.

Along with the American Legion’s All-American Committee, the NPC officially supported the National Conference on Citizenship (NCOCC) formed at the close of World War II. An informational pamphlet for the organization explained that its establishment was “inspired by efforts of patriotic Americans to maintain, in peacetime, the spirit of cooperation that existed during the war.” The group worked to publicize good citizenship and stress youth education in civic responsibility. In addition to organizing annual citizenship conferences on the state, local, regional, and national levels, the NCOCC prepared materials for and emphasized widespread participation in Citizenship Day, Constitution Week, and other “patriotic occasions.”⁴²

⁴⁰ “Mary Love Collins, 90, President of Chi Omega,” *The Washington Post*, Oct 2, 1972, C5; Morse, *A History of Kappa Delta Sorority*, 90, 114-115; “Mary Louise Snellings,” *Who’s Who of American Women* (Chicago, IL: Marquis Who’s Who), 1959.

⁴¹ Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in the Jim Crow America*, 82-84.

⁴² The NCOCC continues its work today, “measur[ing], track[ing], and promot[ing], civic participation across the U.S.” “National Conference on Citizenship,” (pamphlet), 1967-1968, NPC Archives, Fraternity

Perhaps the most useful affiliation for the Greek-letter groups was that with the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), a conservative, youth organization. Instead of catering solely to the interests of conservative, older alumni, the YAF stood to capture the attention of college fraternity and sorority members and young alumni in this period when some of their peers began to turn toward more socially liberal ideas.

The group formed in 1960, under the auspices of William F. Buckley, Jr., a 1950 graduate of Yale University who gained prominence in conservative intellectual circles following the publication of his book *God and Man at Yale* (1951). In 1955 Buckley founded and subsequently edited the conservative magazine *National Review*. The support of Buckley and other young conservatives of the 1950s enabled the meeting of students from such conservative campus groups as Young Republicans and Youth for [Barry] Goldwater for Vice-President and facilitated their organization as the non-partisan, but right-leaning, YAF.⁴³ The group's founding document, the Sharon Statement (so named for the Sharon, Connecticut home of Buckley where the group crafted the statement), "emphasized antistatism and anticommunism through a celebration of liberty and individual freedom." "In many respects," notes historian, John A. Andrew, the threat of communism was "the core of the document."⁴⁴ The founders of YAF leaned heavily on the threat of communism as a reason to support and pursue conservative ideologies. Greek-letter groups, in a similar manner, linked the threat of communism to a loss of American freedoms – primarily through the threat posed to private organizations' right to closed membership. Young Americans for Freedom gained strength in the socially tumultuous early 1960s, continuing its hawkish Cold War stand against communism and addressing issues of liberalism on university campuses. The latter particularly took form in resisting positions taken

Affairs File (41/82/9), Box 1; NCOC website, <http://www.ncoc.net/index.php?tray=topic&tid=top2&cid=6>, accessed March 26, 2009.

⁴³ Gregory L. Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1999), 14, 18, 33.

⁴⁴ John A. Andrew III, *The Other Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 58-59.

by the National Student Association (NSA), an organization that I discuss at length later in this chapter.⁴⁵

By 1965, YAF national chairman, Tom Charles Huston, made direct appeals to Greek-letter fraternity and sorority members to serve as compatriots in the fight for “freedom.” Huston was a member of Phi Kappa Psi fraternity and had served as president of his chapter at Indiana University (IU). A 1963 graduate of IU, Huston had founded the Indiana University Conservative League and in 1961 had been elected state YAF chairman. He remained at IU to attend law school, during which time he became a member of the YAF national board and was elected by the board to the national chairmanship in 1965.⁴⁶ Huston would later gain notoriety as the author of the “Huston Plan,” a program designed to coordinate domestic intelligence gathering against enemies of the Nixon administration. Although acceptable to Nixon, the plan was opposed by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and was never put into action.⁴⁷ During his tenure as YAF national chairman, Huston traveled to many fraternity and sorority national conventions and was the featured speaker at the 1965 NPC meeting. His rhetoric of exclusion in the name of freedom spoke to the fears of sorority and fraternity alumni, who wanted to keep their associations closed to the types of people they felt would damage the reputation of the entire group.⁴⁸

Longtime Chi Omega national president, Mary Love Collins, was also a leader in the NPC’s fight for “freedom of association” and crusade against communism, and chaired the NPC’s All-American Committee in addition to the Research and Public Relations Committee. A well known and, apparently, highly regarded member of the Greek-letter community, Collins led Chi

⁴⁵ Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism*, 60.

⁴⁶ Jason S. Lantzer, “The Other Side of Campus: Indiana University’s Student Right and the Rise of National Conservatism,” *Indiana Magazine of History* Vol. 101, no. 2 (June 2005), 157; Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism*, 76-77.

⁴⁷ Schneieder, *Cadres for Conservatism*, 178-179.

⁴⁸ Tom Charles Huston, “Fraternities and Freedom,” Wilson Heller Papers, 1937-1984 (41/2/52), Box 19, Young Americans for Freedom, 1965, 1967-68.

Omega for over half a century. Collins's correspondence with Guion Griffis Johnson, which I discussed in Chapter Five, demonstrated her interest in maintaining tight controls over membership at Chi Omega chapters across the United States. Collins was born in Loveville, Pennsylvania in 1882. She graduated with honors from Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and married a Mr. H.M. Collins. About Mr. Collins, however, Mary Love's Chi Omega biography notes mysteriously, "No one knows for sure what happened to him and no one seems to have ever seen him." As a married woman pursuing her Master's degree, Collins spearheaded the establishment of the Chi Omega Delta Chapter at Dickinson in 1907. After taking her first year of law school at Dickinson, Collins received her law degree from the University of Kentucky in 1911 and was admitted to the bar. She was later a member of the Court of Appeals in Kentucky. By 1915, Collins taught law courses at University of Kentucky.⁴⁹

From the time her 1907 initiation into the sorority, loyalty and service to Chi Omega appeared to rank first and foremost in Collins's life. She quickly moved into leadership positions within the national sorority and served as Chi Omega's alternate delegate to the NPC in 1909. She would become an important force in the NPC and remain so for the rest of her life. In 1910, Collins became national president of Chi Omega, a post she would hold for forty-two years. When she stepped down, it was to hand the post over to her companion Elizabeth Dyer. Collins immediately became the "administrative counselor/president emeritus" and continued to serve in that capacity for another nineteen years. Her Chi Omega biography claims that she is the most honored woman in the history of the Greek-letter world in America.⁵⁰ Dyer, who was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1890, served as Chi Omega president from 1952 to 1970, and during the years

⁴⁹ "Mary Love Collins," Chi Omega website biography, <http://nm.chiomega.com/people/prominent.aspx?item=people/Prominent/2-2-3%20Mary.xml&thumb=3>, website accessed September 23, 2010.

⁵⁰ "Mary Love Collins," Chi Omega website bio.

1963 to 1965 she was chairman of the NPC.⁵¹ Together with Mary Love Collins, she helped keep the anticommunist fervor alive within Chi Omega and throughout the Greek-letter system.

As Collins's Chi Omega biography notes, her husband, Mr. Collins, was never seen. Apparently no one ever questioned what had happened to him either. By the mid-twentieth century, it appears that Collins and Dyer resided together in a large home overlooking the Ohio River in Cincinnati. Officially, the estate on Grandin Road served as the Chi Omega Headquarters.⁵² It is unclear if the two women met through their national alumnae contacts or if they had known each other through the Delta Chapter of Chi Omega at Dickinson where they had both been actives, although not at the same time.⁵³ Dyer was the founder and later the Dean of the Department of Home Economics at the University of Cincinnati, where she taught from 1924 to 1952. She served as dean from 1940 to 1952.⁵⁴ During this period, when the NPC was embroiled in their battle for "American freedoms," Mary Love Collins and Elizabeth Dyer may have hoped their patriotic zeal and anticommunist endeavors would also keep them free from public suspicions or accusations of same sex desire. Whether the relationship was of a romantic nature and whether it also included physical intimacy or remained purely platonic, the two women surely knew that their living arrangement, as well as their work as advisors to young women, could make them

⁵¹ "Elizabeth Dyer," Chi Omega website biography, <http://nm.chiomega.com/people/pastnationalpresidents.aspx?item=people/PastNationalPresidents/2-4-7%20elizabeth.xml&set=thumbs2&thumb=7>, website accessed September 23, 2010; "Elizabeth Dyer," *Who's Who of American Women*, 1959.

⁵² Collins and Dyer are listed at the same address in a pledge manual from 1965 or later. This could be the office address, but two Chi Omega alumnae, who are regular posters on the Greekchat.com forums, there state that Dyer and Collins lived together at the Grandin Rd. address. In the 1959 *Who's Who of American Women*, Dyer is listed at another "home" address nearby, but that entry also does not list her years at Dickinson College, Delta Chapter either. See "Chi Omega Pledge Handbook" n.d., GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 36, Chi Omega Publications, Pledge Materials; "Elizabeth Dyer," *Who's Who of American Women*, 1959.

⁵³ The Chi Omega website lists both Collins and Dyer as Delta Chapter members. However, *Who's Who of American Women* (1959) says that Dyer was student at the University of Cincinnati (1908-1910) and does not mention time at Dickinson. See "Mary Love Collins," Chi Omega website bio, "Elizabeth Dyer," Chi Omega website bio.

⁵⁴ "Elizabeth Dyer," *Who's Who of American Women*, 1959.

easy targets of Cold War era lesbian and gay witch hunts.⁵⁵ Other members of the Greek-letter community may have suspected that Mary Love Collins and Elizabeth Dyer might have been more than housemates. Yet, if any of their contemporaries did have suspicions, it seems that they kept them to themselves. Probably as keenly aware as Collins and Dyer of the scandal that could arise should such a story become public (whether based on fact or conjecture), the sorority and fraternity communities would keep such gossip among themselves.

In addition to Collins and Dyer, the Chi Omega national leadership included another female partnership, in that of Christelle Ferguson and Helen Bridger Gordon. Ferguson served as editor of Chi Omega's journal, *The Eleusis*, while Gordon was a chapter visitor for Chi Omega from 1936 to 1941 and served on the sorority's National Governing Council, including six years as secretary.⁵⁶ Born in Homer, Louisiana, in 1895, Ferguson was a 1917 graduate of the University of Arkansas. A member of the Psi Chapter, she became Chi Omega's first chapter visitor in 1920.⁵⁷ Ferguson attended graduate school at Columbia University in the early 1920s.⁵⁸ Gordon was born in Sardis, Mississippi in 1914 and graduated from Southwestern College (now Rhodes College) in Memphis, Tennessee in 1935 with a Bachelor's degree in psychology. She received her Master's degree at Columbia University in 1941 where she was Chi Omega's first graduate scholar the student personnel department.⁵⁹ Gordon then worked in the office of the dean of women at the University of Louisville and later at Southwestern while also teaching in the schools' psychology departments. She became dean of women at Louisiana State University (LSU) in 1947, a post she filled until 1966 when she became LSU's Director of Women's

⁵⁵ On Cold War era targeting of suspected lesbian and gay teachers, see Blount, *Fit to Teach*; Stacy Braukman, "Nothing Else Matters But Sex." On U.S. government targeting of federal employees under suspicion of homosexuality, see Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*.

⁵⁶ Margaret Jameson Interview, (#4700.0226), T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, LSU, 11; "Chi Omega Sorority to Honor Former LSU Dean of Women" *The Advocate* [Baton Rouge] June 10, 1982, LSU Office of Public Relations Records, Faculty/Staff Files, RGS# A0020.

⁵⁷ "Chi Omega History," from Chi Omega Mu Alpha Chapter, University of New Hampshire, <http://www.unh.edu/chi-omega/history.html>, website accessed January 23, 2011.

⁵⁸ "Christelle Ferguson," *Who's Who in American Women*, 1959.

⁵⁹ "Helen Bridger Gordon Resume," n.d., LSU Office of Public Relations Records, Faculty/Staff Files, RGS# A0020; "Chi Omega Sorority to Honor Former LSU Dean of Women."

Housing. Gordon retired in 1974, but continued her Chi Omega alumna activity as a trustee of the Chi Omega Educational Foundation and as an NPC area advisor for Louisiana and Texas.⁶⁰ According to Margaret Jameson, LSU's dean of women from 1966 to 1976, Gordon "all of her life, lived with a Chi Omega who was editor of the magazine [Ferguson]." "They actually built a home here and lived together for many years," she remembered. "They were strong, strong people, and she [Gordon], of course, being the dean of women, was very strong."⁶¹ Jameson's reflection on Gordon's and Ferguson's strength of character may suggest that the two women met with gossip or even disdain from the community as a result of their living arrangement, or for the fact that they were unmarried, professional women in this period. Ferguson died in 1982 and Gordon in 1989. Together, the two women established an endowed fund at Chi Omega called the Christelle Ferguson/Helen Gordon Leadership Development Fund.⁶² Ironically, for all of college sororities' emphasis on the heterosocial, Chi Omega may have represented a safe space for Ferguson and Gordon as well as Collins and Dyer to freely share their lives without pressure to conform to heteronormative social standards. The female-only space of events such as Chi Omega's national conventions offered relaxation in resort surroundings and provided a setting where single women or women in partnerships with other women would likely feel less out of place than in everyday American society, which expected that they would marry a man and raise a family. Still, possible fears of being labeled as a sexual "deviant" in this time when such accusations inevitably linked the accused to communist subversion, could have strengthened Mary Love Collins and Elizabeth Dyer's desire to appear staunchly pro-American and anticommunist.

⁶⁰ "Services Scheduled for Former LSU Dean," May 12, 1989, LSU Office of Public Relations Records, Faculty/Staff Files, RGS# A0020; "Chi Omega Sorority to Honor Former LSU Dean of Women."

⁶¹ Margaret Jameson Oral History Interview, LSU, 11.

⁶² "Making a Difference – The Chi Omega Foundation," <http://eleusis.chiomega.com/departments.aspx>, website accessed January 14, 2011.

National Sororities Address Issues of Discrimination

As part of Collins's attempt to keep her finger on the pulse of possible subversive activities in various Chi Omega chapters around the U.S., she kept in regular contact with the sororities' traveling secretaries, including Dr. Guion Griffis Johnson. In the previous chapter, we learned about Johnson's position as advisor of the Epsilon Beta Chapter of Chi Omega at the University of North Carolina. She also worked as traveling secretary, or chapter visitor, for the national organization during the 1950s. In this capacity, Johnson called on many Chi Omega chapters to assess problems and advise solutions, all while reporting back to the sorority's national office. A number of communications between Johnson and Mary Love Collins pertain to sorority alumnae's fears of a communist takeover of the United States. Collins relied upon Johnson's sociological expertise as an important tool in their fight to stem communist propaganda and infiltration. In 1953, Collins wrote to Johnson urging her not to take a two-year post in Africa because she felt that, "the greatest need is in our own country." "The largest possible number of intelligent persons," she continued, "should take on standards that would influence the quality of American culture."⁶³ Collins hoped that Johnson and other intelligent women of similarly "civilized" (white and middle to upper class) upbringing would impart to American youth the values of American citizenship in such a way that would combat the growth of support for communism within the United States. In the end, whether or not Collins's words changed her mind, it appears that Johnson did not go to Africa during this period.

The NPC groups' vocal fears of communism intertwined with their tireless efforts to maintain control over their membership policies. Indeed, some of the chapter problems that Johnson witnessed during her travels concerned questions and criticism over NPC sororities' discriminatory membership clauses. Johnson told other Chi Omega alumnae, in the mid to late

⁶³ Mary Love Collins to Guion Johnson, April 13, 1953, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, April-June, 1953.

1950s, that issues over membership discrimination did not trouble UNC's Epsilon Beta Chapter⁶⁴ As I will show in the following chapter, this was the not case for all sorority chapters on the UNC campus. Two members of the Pi Beta Phi sorority had de-sistered from their chapter, citing membership selection as part of their reason for leaving⁶⁵ It is, again, important to note here that "discrimination" did not always refer to *racial* discrimination. Frequently, criticism over membership discrimination referred to the way that sorority chapters passed over other white female students during rush. Since no African American female students had been admitted to the university at this point, this would suggest that Johnson's comment referred to the discrimination against some white female students that sorority chapters saw as "undesirable" sorority material. While UNC had admitted four African American students to law school in 1951 as the result of a court order, and three undergraduates in 1955, all were male.⁶⁶ The first African American undergraduate student to graduate from UNC in 1961, David Mozart Dansby, Jr, was also male.⁶⁷

The university did, however, begin making preparations for situations that could arise in regard to Greek-letter groups' racially exclusive membership clauses. In 1959, UNC's Subcommittee on Discriminatory Clauses, formed of members from the Faculty Committee on Fraternities and Sororities, issued a report that acknowledged the issues and offered some "recommendations" for actions in the future. The subcommittee considered questions about 1)

⁶⁴ Guion Johnson to Ann [Kiel] Sterling, March 28, 1956, GGJ Papers, Series 3 1, Box 31, Chi Omega Correspondence, January-March, 1956

⁶⁵ See Chapter Eight, 407-408

⁶⁶ None of the three African American male undergraduates admitted to UNC in 1955 graduated from the university. See Peter Wallenstein, "Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: The Desegregation of the University of North Carolina," in *Warm Ashes: Issues in Southern History at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Winifred B. Moore, et al. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 290

⁶⁷ Augustus M. Burns, "Graduate Education for Blacks in North Carolina, 1930-1951," *Journal of Southern History* 46, no. 2 (May 1980), 212; Nelson H. Harris, "Desegregation of North Carolina Institutions of Higher Learning," *The Journal of Negro Education* 27, no. 3 (Summer 1958), 296; Peter Wallenstein, "Black Southerners in Nonblack Universities, 1935-1965," in Wallenstein, ed., *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008), 34; Wallenstein, "Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: Desegregating the University of North Carolina," 291

the “relationship between the University as an agency of the State and private groups of students,” 2) whether the university should “permit social groups under its jurisdiction to select their members on the basis of race, religion, or national origin,” and 3) if the university chose not to allow such groups to “discriminate on such bases,” how would it regulate the groups according to its decision. In their examination of Greek-letter groups’ discriminatory clauses and “climate of freedom” on campus, the subcommittee perceived that the clauses cut both ways. Such clauses, they noted, impinged on *both* the freedom of “certain individuals and groups within the University” to have “equal privileges which should be the prerogatives of all students,” *and* to the sororities and fraternities “by categorically denying to individual chapters the right of freedom of association in the selection of members.” The subcommittee seemed to feel that the existence of discriminatory clauses was unnecessary, but stated that the “removal” of the clauses did not “deny the right of individual chapters to choose their friends or associates.” At least in considering a situation that would inevitably occur at UNC, the subcommittee acknowledged that it would have to take action in clear cases of discrimination, but suggested that Greek-letter groups could subvert charges of discrimination by removing their discriminatory clauses, and even seemed to recommend this as a prudent course of action to simplify issues both for the chapters and the university.⁶⁸ As I will discuss later in this chapter, university administrators increasingly sought to clarify whether sorority and fraternity chapters on their campuses had restrictive clauses in their constitutions or bylaws in regard to the religion or race of prospective members.

So even as Guion Johnson suggested that the Epsilon Beta Chapter of Chi Omega had not received criticism of their restrictive membership policies, her travels as a chapter visitor did take her to schools that were beginning to experience deepening questions over membership

⁶⁸ “Final Report of Subcommittee on Discriminatory Clauses,” 1959, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 32, Fraternities and Sororities, Discriminatory Policies, 1959-1971.

policies, particularly in regard to race. A trip to the Eta Chapter at the University of Michigan in 1952 brought Johnson face to face with the ways in which Chi Omega's college members were dealing with their sorority's membership criteria. During the previous year, in the midst of campus uproar at Michigan over the need to remove restrictive membership policies, several members of the Eta Chapter had withdrawn their membership over their disapproval of discrimination.

The "Michigan Plan" set what sociologist Alfred McClung Lee called, a "deadline for democracy," requiring fraternities to remove their restrictive membership clause(s) by a certain date (usually within five years) on penalty of removal from campus. Formed by Michigan students, the plan was twice thwarted by the university's presidents. It proved a model, however, for a number of other schools. The University of Michigan's student legislature proposed a "deadline-for-clauses" in 1950, only to have the measure vetoed by university president, Alexander G. Ruthven on May 29, 1951. Students, displeased with the outcome, tried their plan again the following year, when the university had a new president. The new, "watered-down resolution," adopted February 13, 1952, did not rely on deadlines, but instead called for "the withdrawal of recognition only from organizations that failed to make formal efforts to have restrictive clauses changed." New president, Harlan H. Hatcher, vetoed the new measure, stating his belief that fraternities and sororities had "responded to th[e] changing atmosphere" of the United States that was moving "toward egalitarian ideals," and would "continue to do so." In a comment that echoed white southerners' responses to social pressure for racial segregation, Hatcher explained that the administration "believe[d] that the processes of education and personal and group convictions," would move them "forward faster, and on a sounder basis, than the proposed methods of coercion."⁶⁹ Basically, they argued that allowing sororities and fraternities

⁶⁹ Alfred McClung Lee, *Fraternities Without Brotherhood, A Study of Prejudice on the American Campus* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1955), 62-68.

to make their own gradual changes (or none at all) would help to ensure proper attitudes toward social progress, reducing the chances of backlash by alumni groups.

Johnson reported that “those who were closely identified” with the former Eta members were “still in the process of ‘searching their souls’ to determine whether a fraternity [was] really a discriminatory group.” During her private conferences held with each of the Eta sisters, a regular aspect of her visiting duties, Johnson found that “many expressed...a strong desire that Chi Omega would alter its constitution and ritual to read simply: ‘She is (or shall be) a gentlewoman of good (or noble) birth.’” As Johnson noted, the women thought that, “all implications of discrimination might then be removed...and [the sorority] would be free to have any policy of member selection which it deemed wise.”⁷⁰ Since we do not know the exact wording of the actual Chi Omega constitution without the suggested amendments by the Eta members, it is not fully clear what they were hoping to make more open-ended with their changes – class, racial, or religious background, or all of the above. The members of Eta, like sorority and fraternity members at numerous schools, would soon be reminded that the organizations’ national officers and other influential alumni decided the membership policies, not the individual chapter.

While in Ann Arbor, Johnson also met with Sarah Healy, the dean’s office’s counselor to the University of Michigan’s Panhellenic Council. Born in Richmond, Michigan in 1908, Healy graduated from the University of Michigan in 1930. While a student, she joined Delta Delta Delta (Tri-Delta) but, at first, had not been happy with sorority life. She felt disillusioned after rush and wanted to be friends with independent women as well as sorority members. With encouragement from her mother, Healy decided to remain in the sorority, but as a result of her experiences, was always aware of the hurt caused by rush rejections. Healy’s biographer notes that this led her to “spend many years working to alleviate the possibility of that hurt and to

⁷⁰ Guion Johnson “Eta Chapter Report,” October 7-8, 15, 1952, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, October-December, 1952.

remove the inequities in the system's method of selection."⁷¹ While a member of the Iota Chapter at Michigan, Healy went on to serve as the Panhellenic Council representative and the Rush Chair.⁷² Like Lucia Leigh in Olive Deane Hormel's *Co-Ed* (1926), Healy appeared to move past her initial disappointment with sorority life, finding constructive ways to make the most of her time as a member. Healy spent the majority of her adult life working in student personnel, starting as a graduate resident hall counselor at Michigan following her graduation, and then completing a Masters in Student Personnel at Syracuse. In addition to serving in student personnel at several colleges in the western United States, she went on to become dean of women at the University of Alabama in 1954, serving in that capacity during the school's integration crisis in 1956.

In 1949, Healy, recently widowed, had returned to the University of Michigan as the Director of Residence. She was the Associate Dean of Women and counselor to the Panhellenic Council by the time she met with Guion Johnson in 1952.⁷³ During their meeting, Healy told Johnson that the National Student Association (NSA), a group understood by many national sorority officers and their allies as liberal, if not outright troublesome, had "placed the chairmanship of its Human Relations Committee at [Michigan] with a view, perhaps, to continuing the pressure of [the previous] year on fraternities with discriminatory clauses."⁷⁴ The group's attention to the discriminatory clauses usually focused on whether or not Greek-letter groups had written rules that prohibited membership by non-whites and non-Christians. The NSA's Third National Congress had taken place at the University of Michigan in 1950 and Healy was one of three national advisors for the organization.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Nelda Chadwich Schultz, "Sarah Lutes Healy: A Life and Career of Significance," (Ed. diss.: Memphis State University, 1991), 23-26, 35.

⁷² Schultz, "Sarah Lutes Healy," 36.

⁷³ Schultz, "Sarah Lutes Healy," 40, 43, 97, 100, 83, 86.

⁷⁴ Johnson, "Eta Chapter Report," October 7-8, 15, 1952..

⁷⁵ J. Angus Johnston, "The United States National Student Association: Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student, 1947-1978," (Ph.D. diss.: The City University of New York, 2009), 486; Schultz, 87.

Johnson's portrayal of the meeting, in a report to Mary Love Collins and other Chi Omega national officers, revealed a lengthy exchange over the issue of discriminatory clauses in the Chi Omega constitution. Reportedly, Healy asked Johnson why Chi Omega, "[did not] follow the example of some other groups by removing all discriminatory statements." Healy's comment suggested that Chi Omega could skirt the issue by making discrimination an unwritten policy. Johnson replied that she was not aware of any such clause in the constitution. Yet, Healy continued to press Johnson, asserting that the dean's office had a copy of the Chi Omega constitution and that it proved the discriminatory membership practices. She claimed the 1945 version of the Chi Omega constitution in the school's possession contained discriminatory clauses. Johnson countered that if they had a 1945 copy it was "outdated, because [she] was aware of certain changes which ha[d] taken place since that time." Indignant, she said she failed to understand how the administration could have a copy because it was "clear that in America, an organization ha[d] a right to keep its confidential papers secret." She felt that "a University ha[d] no authority to inquire into the secret papers of a fraternity." Johnson's comment suggests she was trying to paint those, like Healy, who inquired about the doings of a private organization, as un-American. At the same time, however, her reference to Chi Omega's "secret" papers could also give the impression that the sorority was hiding evidence of subversive activity. "The only question which should concern an administration," Johnson stated, "is whether the practices of the group are subservice to the best interests of the University, its student body, and the government of the United States." Healy seemed to agree with Johnson on this point, and "emphatically stated that fraternities contribute greatly to the University." Her regret "was that Chi Omega [had been] so poorly prepared to state [their] contribution when confronted" the

It is unclear when the NSA invited Healy to become an advisor and for how long she may have served in this capacity. Schultz's information comes from her interviews with Healy and Schultz does not state the dates of the advisorship. Since Healy appears to have discussed it in conjunction with the NSA Congress in Ann Arbor in 1950, this suggests she was an NSA advisor at the time of her 1952 meeting with Guion Johnson.

previous year. Healy had explained to Johnson that she was “letting you know now about the activities of unfriendly groups so that you will have time to prepare your membership.” As a result of this comment, even after their bickering, Johnson reported that she “consider[ed] Mrs. Healy’s attitude to be very friendly.”⁷⁶ Apparently, to members of middle and upper class, white, Protestant Christian organizations, it was okay for *their* membership to hold documents secret from the rest of American society. This type of clandestine behavior, however, would not be tolerated by groups whose members did not fit those NPC standards of citizenship.

Although Healy had served as the director of the first residence hall for black students at Michigan as a graduate counselor in 1930, it did not necessarily mean that she was a proponent of racial integration in social activities. And while an NSA advisor, Healy may have wished to keep the policies of sororities and fraternities beyond the reach of the university administration. The questions of 1) whether or not Greek-letter groups operated separately from the university and, 2) if they did, whether they should or should not be subject to university rules set for student groups would continue to influence the issue of restrictive membership policies in the years to come.

Johnson paid a return visit to Eta Chapter the following month while in Michigan to attend the State Panhellenic Conference held in East Lansing and left with a decidedly different opinion of Sarah Healy. Johnson’s report to Chi Omega explained that University of Michigan’s dean of women, Deborah Bacon, as well as Healy, held a negative opinion of Lola Hanavan, Chi Omega’s National Vice President and an Eta Chapter alumna. At the state conference, Healy was upset by Hanavan’s suggestion to the Eta members that they practice informal rushing, which would take place outside of the university sanctioned formal rush schedule. The Eta Chapter’s collegiate members were against informal rushing.⁷⁷ Back in Ann Arbor, following a Panhellenic

⁷⁶ Johnson, “Eta Chapter Report,” October 7-8, 13, 1952.

⁷⁷ Johnson, “Eta Chapter Report,” November 24-25, 1952, GGJ Papers (#4546), Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, October-December, 1952.

dinner, Healy privately explained to Johnson her feeling that Hanavan had launched an “‘attack’ upon the girls and how ‘alarmed’ they were.” Healy said to Johnson, “You told me when you were here in October that Chi Omega does not have a bias clause, and I believed you.” After this instance, Healy demanded a “copy of the exact wording of your membership requirements for the information of this office.” Stating that Johnson might not “be aware of all the provisions,” she requested the change in writing. Johnson replied to Healy that she did not “have the authority to give [her] a statement,” and suggested that Healy “communicate directly with Executive Headquarters.” In her report, Johnson surmised that with this challenge, Healy was, in effect, saying that, “Your chapter will again be harassed over its bias clause unless you keep Mrs. Hanavan away from us.”

Even after all of the posturing on the part of the dean of women’s office and the Chi Omega officers, the Michigan trip ended on a positive note for Johnson and the Chi Omegas. She and Lola Hanavan briefly visited with University of Michigan president, Harlan Hatcher, whose wife was born in Chapel Hill. It appears that Johnson was able to draw upon the fact that she and her husband had been good friends with Mrs. Hatcher’s parents, prior to their deaths. “We renewed old acquaintances,” she noted, and happily reported that, “Lola plans to give a dinner at the Chi Omega House at which the Hatchers will be guests of honor.”⁷⁸ Just as when working to perpetuate the popularity of a particular chapter by pledging socially prominent young women during rush, sorority alumnae drew upon their social connections to keep their national organizations in the good graces of college administrators.

Johnson’s involvement in Chi Omega’s efforts to uphold discriminatory membership clauses is particularly interesting given the fact that she and her husband had long studied the “race issue” and worked in support of interracial cooperation. While the two would be

⁷⁸ Guion Griffis Johnson, “Eta Chapter Report,” November 24-25, 1952.

considered liberal for their time, they were not proponents of black and white social integration.⁷⁹ Personally, Johnson *may* have been in favor of keeping the white, Greek-letter groups white, but she was not pleased with Chi Omega's ways of going about that goal. We know from the previous chapter, that in the early 1950s Johnson may not have wished to draw attention to herself or further attention to her husband, Dr. Guy Benton Johnson, as possible supporters of racial equality. With the UNC trustees investigating Guy as a subversive threat, Guion countered by moving into patriotic mode, serving as an investigator of subversive activities for Chi Omega and the NPC. Yet in 1964, she confided to another Chi Omega that she had been "at odds with the Governing Council at Chi Omega for more than ten years" over the issue of shutting down chapters rather than accept forced admission of women whom the council felt were undesirable membership material. By the mid-1960s, Chi Omega had removed all discriminatory clauses from the constitution and the bylaws but, as Johnson explained, "the Governing Council still insist[ed] upon 'the right to choose its own members' as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights of the Federal Constitution and withdr[ew] chapter[s] rather than give in on this point." This meant that Chi Omega's unwritten rule on discrimination still remained in effect. Johnson thought it was "foolish to lose chapters on this basis" and noted that both Collins and Dyer were "reactionary persons who [were] using 'the right to choose' as a stick with which to fight off integration."⁸⁰ Johnson may have disagreed with the Governing Council and seen their real intentions with the use of "freedom of association" in membership, but she did not step up to challenge their decisions. Her primary concern, it seemed, always was to present herself as an objective researcher. Although, in later years, some colleagues had referred to her as a "social activist," a reporter noted that the term "enrage[d]" Johnson. "I get so mad; I get so mad," she remarked, with fists clenched, during a 1982 interview. "I've never marched. I've never held a sign. I

⁷⁹ Thuesen, "Taking the Vows of Southern Liberalism," 284-324.

⁸⁰ Guion Johnson to Mrs. Judson D. [Alice] Willis Mease, March 3, 1964, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 32, Chi Omega Correspondence, 1964.

believe in standing in the background – and writing about it.”⁸¹ Even if that was the way she viewed her work in retrospect, many of Johnson’s assignments for Chi Omega placed her squarely on the side of conservative action. While in reality, she found distasteful the methods used by Mary Love Collins and other national Greek-letter officers in upholding membership restrictions, Johnson had to be mindful of how the expression of such a position could endanger her social standing or her husband’s career.

Mary Love Collins wanted all sorority members and alumnae to remain on guard. She reminded them that they were under no obligation to discuss their membership policies with any groups or individuals. In Collins’s correspondence with Guion Johnson from 1953, the two women discussed the possibility that some persons, unfriendly to Greek-letter groups, sought to use surveys or questionnaires to collect data on the organizations’ membership clauses for use as negative publicity. They specifically mentioned the case of University of Michigan psychologist, Dr. Daniel Katz, who wanted to circulate a survey at Michigan State Normal School featuring questions that Johnson described as “loaded.” The purpose of the survey, she felt, was to conflate the respondents’ answers to certain questions, allowing Katz to use the data to link unrelated ideas or practices in ways that portrayed sororities and their members in a negative light. To make her point, Johnson noted that questions requested that students “check all those items which apply to yourself at the present time.” She singled out a question that featured statements “characteristic of emotional immaturity.” Johnson feared that “even the mature student would feel that he would be obliged to check some of the statements and thus give an entirely false picture of his emotional pattern.” She characterized Katz’s intent with the survey as “trying to establish ‘the fact’ that the student who hates his parents, is self-conscious, worries over sex, also

⁸¹ Elizabeth Dowling, “Historian Gives Books a Poke in the Bindings,” *The Raleigh News and Observer*, November 17, 1982, in GGJ Papers, Series 16, Box 142, Folder 1591, 1982.

hates Negroes, Catholics, and Jews.”⁸² Johnson worried that a naïve and impressionable college student could be lured into false statements by answering a survey like the one distributed by Dr. Katz.

Significantly, another piece of correspondence between Johnson and Elizabeth Dyer, also from 1953, seemed to suggest that it was not atypical for Chi Omegas to harbor prejudice against blacks, Catholics, and Jews. Dyer wrote of a letter that she had received from Alma Belle Womack, a Chi Omega in Louisiana. Womack had been awarded a scholarship to participate in a “six-week course on Human Relations” at the University of Kentucky, organized by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, a group formed in 1928 to address issues of interfaith significance.⁸³ Dyer explained to Johnson that a “Professor Lovejoy of the Sociology Department of the University of North Carolina” had conducted the course. She apparently wished to make Johnson aware of the fact that Lovejoy, a graduate student in sociology at UNC at the time, was teaching what both she and Womack thought were inappropriate lessons.⁸⁴ Dyer described Womack as “horrified at the methods used” in the Human Relations Course. These included what she described as “two weeks of indoctrination on Catholicism and the discrimination practiced against the Catholics” and “four weeks spent on [the] Negro.” Womack reported that “she never heard such bigots as the Catholic leaders they had to listen to,” and that she “was outraged at the pressure to make negro and white fraternize.” She said she “would never have believed that any group of educators would so misrepresent a course not only to teachers, but also to the Ministerial Association and the Board of Education” in Baton Rouge, who had chosen the scholarship participants. When participants received a questionnaire at the close of the course,

⁸² Guion Griffis Johnson to Mary Love Collins, April 17, 1953, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, April-June, 1953. The actual survey was not included in the correspondence.

⁸³ “The Purpose and Program of the National Conference of Christians and Jews,” *Journal of Educational Sociology* 16, no. 6 (February 1943), 324-326.

⁸⁴ “In Memoriam, Albert Edwin Lovejoy, Ph.D. 1957,” *UNCurrents*, University of North Carolina Department of Sociology, Summer 2009, <http://sociology.unc.edu/departments/news/news/2009>, website accessed October 4, 2010, 10.

one question asked, “If you had known what this course was to be, would you have taken it?” “Emphatically no!” was Womack’s answer.⁸⁵ Ironically for Womack, Lovejoy probably found the answer he was aiming for with responses like hers. Her emphatic “no” seemed to demonstrate that those individuals most in need of retraining in human relations were also the ones least likely to accept the new lessons.

Dyer further noted, “of course we know of the overwhelming numbers of Catholics and negroes in Louisiana and also of the tense situation that exists among southerners but even so the details really shocked me.” Dyer’s comment showed that she, as a non-southerner, attempted to separate herself from Chi Omegas like Alma Belle Womack, who she believed would inherently express greater hostility about relations with minority groups. Dyer closed the gap between herself and the supposedly more sensitive southerners, however, when she passed along a narrative of the entire episode that included an admission that *she* was also shocked by the lessons of the course. “I have been wondering what kind of a person Dr. Lovejoy is,” she finished, suspiciously.⁸⁶ Dyer’s purpose appeared to be to deliver a reminder to Johnson of the link she and other Chi Omega leaders assumed between groups or individuals that promoted social equality and communist agitators.

The NSA and Challenges to Sororities’ Membership Restrictions

Many sorority leaders in this period felt that individuals such as Dr. Katz and Dr. Lovejoy seemed to be out to expose sorority members and alumnae as racial and religious bigots. While the hurtfulness of being left out of sorority membership (no matter the race or socioeconomic background of the individual) remained the foundational issue, public discussions about membership discrimination gradually shifted toward concerns over racial and religious discrimination by Greek-letter groups. Many sorority women also seemed to believe that those

⁸⁵ Elizabeth Dyer to Guion Johnson, August 11, 1953, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, July-September, 1953.

⁸⁶ Elizabeth Dyer to Guion Johnson, August 11, 1953, GGJ Papers.

who criticized their restrictive membership clauses should be suspected of subversive activity. The national sorority leaders would soon find, however, that those openly critical of their membership clauses came from more diverse backgrounds than they had originally thought.

One of the groups that the NPC saw as a distinct threat was the National Student Association (NSA). The NSA had been formed by a group of American college students returning from the first World Student Congress in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1946. National Student Association literature from 1950-1951 described the group as filling the “long-existing need for a representative intercollegiate organization designed to serve the American student community, and to promote student interests and welfare.” The NSA listed in its aims and purposes a dedication to:

Maintain academic freedom, stimulate and improve democratic student governments, develop better educational standards, improve student welfare, promote international understanding, guarantee to all people equal rights and possibilities for education and foster the recognition of the rights and the responsibilities of students to the school, the community, humanity and God, and to preserve the interests and integrity of the government and constitution of the United States.⁸⁷

During the 1950s, the group took “left-wing positions,” supporting such issues as aid to education and a ban on nuclear testing. It also established a “very liberal position on civil rights and civil liberties,” before those causes gained popularity. The second president of the NSA, serving during 1948-1949, was an African American student, James Theodore “Ted” Harris of LaSalle College in Philadelphia. While branded a leftist organization, the NSA actually fought off a communist takeover in the 1940s and “retained an anticommunist line in foreign affairs” throughout the 1950s while failing to take a decisive stand on issues of racial integration.⁸⁸ As J. Angus Johnson contends in his history of the NSA, by the late 1940s the group:

⁸⁷ “United States National Student Association,” 1950-1951, NPC Records, Fraternity Affairs File, 1941-1985 (41/82/9), Box 1, National Student Association, 1950-1951.

⁸⁸ “NSA Contemplates Its Shattered Image,” *The Washington Post*, February 20, 1967; Schwartz, ed., *American Students Organize*, 219; Johnston, “The United States National Student Association: Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student, 1947-1978,” 226.

had settled into a *modus vivendi* of racial discrimination. It would stand, as a matter of policy, opposed to segregation. It would choose non-segregated cities for its national offices, and continue to hold integrated regional meetings in the South. When the debate moved beyond lofty principles to the specifics of domestic policy, however, consensus proved more difficult to achieve.⁸⁹

Still, the NSA's platform of civil rights for all students deterred many southern campuses from affiliating with the organization. In 1948, one third of the NSA's chapters were located at colleges in the Northeastern states of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania while only five southern campuses had joined.⁹⁰ At the University of Mississippi, student leaders twice voted against affiliating with the NSA, first in 1948 and again in 1952. In the latter instance, the student senate (after voting 22-12 not to join) decided to allow the student body to vote on the measure. The students voted 640-124 not to join the NSA.⁹¹ Students and others affiliated with "Ole Miss" feared that if they allowed a group that supported civil liberties for all individuals to gain a foothold on the campus they would be opening the door to the breakdown of their racially segregated society. Johnston argues that by the early 1950s, the NSA's civil libertarianism drew criticism from right-wing student groups, such as Students for America (SFA), led by Robert Munger, a student at Los Angeles City College and later Pepperdine University.⁹² Students for America was the follow-up organization to Munger's National Collegiate MacArthur Club, which had proposed General Douglas MacArthur as a 1952 presidential candidate. In 1952, Munger addressed a meeting of the National Interfraternity Council where he called attention to the NSA's antidiscriminatory rhetoric and support for federal

⁸⁹ Johnston, "The United States Student Association: Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student, 1947-1978," 226.

⁹⁰ Johnston, "The United States Student Association: Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student, 1947-1978," 152. Johnston does not list which four southern universities aside from the University of North Carolina (as Guion Johnson tells us) were members of the NSA in 1948.

⁹¹ Charles W. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 33-35.

⁹² Schwartz, ed. *American Students Organize*, 805.

funding of education, and described the student group as “the most insidious left-wing organization now operating on the American campus.”⁹³

In a 1956 letter to a fellow Chi Omega, Guion Johnson noted that she was “not as alarmed by NSA as Mary Love, Gus [Augusta Jordan Glenn], Lola Hanavan, and Elizabeth [Dyer] [all members of the Chi Omega Supreme Governing Council]. I think they consider it far more powerful and effective than it is.” Johnson reminded that both the American Association of Deans of Women and the Association of Deans of Students supported the NSA and had appointed members to serve on the NSA board. She did not share the opinions of the Chi Omega leaders who felt that the NSA was “communistic.” As she pointed out, UNC had hosted an NSA chapter from the time of the organization’s inception but she felt that “the question of discrimination ha[d] NEVER been an issue” on the campus.⁹⁴ Again, it is unclear whether Johnson meant that she believed discrimination had never been an issue in the Epsilon Beta Chapter of Chi Omega, or within the whole of student organizations on the UNC campus, or the whole of the university itself. Two NSA presidents were from UNC. Allard K. Lowenstein, a 1949 graduate who later became a lawyer and political activist, served as the third president of the organization in 1950.⁹⁵ Richard J. Murphy, a 1951 graduate of UNC who was appointed Assistant Postmaster General by President John F. Kennedy and later served as the Democratic National Committee leader, became the NSA’s president in 1952, following Lowenstein.⁹⁶

It was the NSA’s commitment to equal rights that the NPC perceived as the primary threat, particularly in regard to Greek-letter groups’ membership clauses. The NSA made no secret of their disdain for fraternities’ and sororities’ discriminatory policies. On at least one

⁹³ Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 805-806; Johnston, “The United States Student Association: Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student, 1947-1978,” 222-223.

⁹⁴ Guion Johnson to Ann [Kiel] Sterling, March 28, 1956, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 31, Chi Omega Correspondence, January-March, 1956.

⁹⁵ Biographical Note, Allard K. Lowenstein Papers, 1924-1995, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, <http://search.lib.unc.edu/search?R=UNCb2157594>, website accessed October 9, 2010.

⁹⁶ Biographical Note, Richard J. Murphy Papers, 1933-2002, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, <http://search.lib.unc.edu/search?R=UNCb4918641>, website accessed October 9, 2010.

occasion the NPC, curious as to just what the NSA was up to, recruited a collegiate sorority member to report on the NSA's annual conference. In September of 1950, a Kappa Alpha Theta, and president of the Women's Student Government at Syracuse University, sent a "confidential" report to former Theta national president, Margaret Banta, detailing the events and attendants at the NSA conference that August.⁹⁷ The young woman began her report by stating that she did not "believe that the organization [was] Communistic, as such." While she had "expected to find the minority groups [Jewish and African American students] in the majority," she was "surprised" that "in general, the students there were 'typically' college men and women." In her mind, it seemed, the typical college student was white, Christian and relatively apolitical. She also may have used the word "typical" as a descriptor to mean that the NSA members *appeared* just like any other college students, an alarming prospect during the communist scare of the Cold War period. She said there were "quite a few Jewish students...representing various schools, and also a number of Negro students, but definitely not in the majority." She was most surprised that, of the NSA's 350 member schools, a "disproportionately large number" were Catholic schools and "especially girls' schools." Typically, Catholics were staunchly anticommunist and often socially conservative. Her comment also suggests that she was taken aback by the number of female students involved in what could have been termed an activist organization. Perhaps she had expected that the NSA membership would be heavily male, if not also largely composed of what she saw as *atypical* college students. "The most radical" group in attendance, she reported, was the "New York Metropolitan Region," including "New York University, Long Island University, Columbia, Barnard, etc." After receiving the letter, Banta underlined the references to the New York area schools and to the description of their "strong leaders...who did all the talking, propagandizing, etc." The reporting Theta wrote that her "own personal feeling" was that the

⁹⁷ Margaret Banta was the wife of George Banta, Jr. His father, George Banta, Sr. founded the George Banta Publishing Company, the primary publisher of materials for Greek-letter groups based in Menasha, Wisconsin, in 1912. Banta Jr. also worked for the company. See Baird, *American College Fraternities*, 17.

NSA was “very liberal” – another phrase that apparently caught the attention of Banta’s pen. While she described the NSA as “ripe,” suggesting that, “Communists could move in and take over,” she felt that there were “enough highly intelligent, and truly American students who are interested in the NSA, to prevent it completely.”⁹⁸

The young woman wrote that she was “disappointed to find that the fraternity members attending the [NSA] Congress did not wear their [sorority or fraternity] pins.” She and another Theta, from Colorado A & M, had worn theirs and asked some of the other girls why they chose not to wear their pins. (She did not say what schools the pinless sorority women attended.) The girls’ response was that “they didn’t think they should...or else thought that they felt NSA’ers looked down on the Greeks.” Parenthetically, she commented that she “still [could not] see why” the girls would have thought they should not wear their pins. The difference of opinion between she and the pinless Thetas at NSA demonstrates an important division in thought among sorority members, showing the way that some sorority women were coming to view Greek-letter groups. The Thetas who chose not to wear their pins clearly felt that they had something to hide as members of sororities. Since, apparently, they were not there as NPC or Kappa Alpha Theta spies, but of their own volition, they should have had no reason to conceal their affiliation with a Greek-letter organization. Yet, they had no reason to advertise it either. While the Theta said she was not aware of much antifraternity feeling at the conference, she also noted that, on the other hand, “there was nothing said *for* [emphasis mine] them.” The fact that several Kappa Alpha Thetas (and, perhaps, members of other sororities and fraternities as well) had decided *not* to wear their pins, suggests that they found troubling the actions of their own groups and sought to distance themselves from the conservatively positioned Greek-letter organizations. These sorority women may have thought that they would not be taken seriously by a more liberal-minded, inclusive group, like the NSA if they appeared as delegates from elite, white, exclusive

⁹⁸ Syracuse student to Mrs. George Banta, Jr., September 21, 1951, NPC Records, Fraternity Affairs File (41/82/9), Box 1, National Student Association, 1950-1951.

clubs. Although the NSA did not take issue with individual members of Greek-letter groups or the social clubs themselves, they did take a vocal stance against the discriminatory membership clause, and some sorority members, like those trying to hide their involvement from the NSA, may have felt shame on an individual level.

Again, for the NPC, the most troubling aspect of the NSA, aside from the possibility that it could be, or become, a communist-run organization, was the group's emphasis on social equality. That black and Jewish student members of the NSA would have the freedom to associate with members of white, Protestant Christian, Greek-letter groups and have a chance to speak their minds, possibly influencing sorority women to question their organizations' membership criteria, proved a problematic scenario. With some members obviously hesitant to publicly display membership in their own sorority while at an NSA conference, the NPC had reason to fear that their members might be persuaded to see discriminatory clauses as unnecessary, or wrong. If that line of thinking were to spread among the collegiate sorority members, the NPC and the national sorority officers could have on their hands a distinct clash of ideology between student and alumnae members. The NSA "has taken a stand against discrimination in fraternities," the Syracuse student wrote to Banta, "and urges the student governments to take action according to the Michigan Plan."⁹⁹

The Edgewater Conference

Even at southern universities, where undergraduate student bodies remained largely segregated until the 1960s, administrators wrote to sororities' national offices requesting that they clearly state whether or not they had restrictive clauses, and if so, to explain the criteria for membership.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, both university administrators and sorority officials sensed that change

⁹⁹ Syracuse student to Mrs. George Banta, Jr., September 21, 1951, NPC Records, Fraternity Affairs File (41/82/9), Box 1, National Student Association, 1950-1951.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Wallenstein chronicles the desegregation of southern, non-black universities. By 1956, several black students, including undergraduates, attended "historically nonblack schools in the former Confederate states," including the University of Virginia, Virginia Polytechnic and State University, the University of

was in the air. The sense of impending change led a number of concerned sorority and fraternity alumni to take further measures toward safeguarding the exclusivity of their Greek-letter societies. Particularly concerned with the potential danger of young, impressionable, possibly confused, collegiate members becoming antagonistic toward the discriminatory policies outlined in their own sorority or fraternity constitutions, or upheld by verbal agreement, these alums met to strategize ways of strengthening their arguments for exclusivity. First meeting in 1952 at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, the group came to be known as the Edgewater Conference. While not all NPC and NIC groups joined the Edgewater Conference, its members and their ideology should not be viewed simply as the “lunatic fringe” of those avowedly against removing discriminatory membership clauses. The conference included highly respected NPC women such as Mary Love Collins, who had great influence over the official directives of Chi Omega, and Kappa Delta alumna, Julia Fuqua Ober, both of whom had influence over *all* NPC member sororities through their work as delegates. Passed at the first meeting, the conference resolution stated that the organization held “the common interest of the belief in the inherent values of collegiate fraternal organizations and the right of self-determination in the selection of members thereof.”¹⁰¹ By 1954, Edgewater described itself as:

A group of Fraternities and Sororities and individuals that feel its chief contribution against Communism is to put emphasis on the right of voluntary association protected by the Bill of Rights and the 14th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.¹⁰²

North Carolina, North Carolina State College, the Woman’s College of the University of North Carolina, the University of Arkansas, the University of Texas, Louisiana State University, and the University of Tennessee. The following southern universities did not enroll black *undergraduate* students until after 1960: the University of Georgia (January, 1961), the University of Tennessee (January, 1961), the University of Florida (September, 1962), the University of Mississippi, (September, 1962), Clemson College (January, 1963), Texas A&M (June, 1963), the University of Alabama (June, 1963), the University of South Carolina (September, 1963), Louisiana State University (June, 1964), Auburn University (1965), and The Citadel (1966). See Wallenstein, “Black Southerners and Nonblack Universities: The Process of Desegregating Southern Higher Education, 1935-1965,” 34-35; Genevieve Morse to Douglas M. Knight, July 20, 1965, Duke University Panhellenic Records, Box 2, Membership Statements on Non-Discrimination, 1965; Maxine Blake to Douglas M. Knight, July 19, 1965, Duke University Panhellenic Records, Box 2, Membership Statements on Non-Discrimination, 1965.

¹⁰¹ Edgewater Conference (J.B. Baird), 1967-1982, Box 13, Wilson Heller Papers (41/2/52).

¹⁰² Edgewater Conference Minutes, 1962, Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity Records, National Officers, Edgewater Conference File, 1953-1993 (41/93/31), Box 1, Appendix.

Sorority and fraternity alumni continued to conflate the issues of maintaining Americans' *freedom* from communism with the *freedom* to discriminate against other Americans. While conference participants believed that communism was "the basis of [their] trouble," the possibility of a religiously and, even more disconcertingly, a racially integrated membership, were matters that produced the most concern.¹⁰³ Although they preached to the choir at these gatherings, the discussions provided brainstorming sessions and allowed members to share their fears and angers in a guarded environment.

The Edgewater Conference members hoped to devise legal means to challenge those critics who wanted Greek-letter groups to do away with the discriminatory clauses.

While the Interfraternity Research and Advisory Council (IRAC), which had formed during World War II, operated as an informational network, a public relations firm, and a source for legal advice for Greek-letter organizations, Edgewater focused solely on ways to combat challenges to sorority and fraternity discrimination. The IRAC, too, launched investigations into organizations it considered unfriendly to Greek-letter groups, but clearly believed it held the moral high ground over the efforts engaged by Edgewater. In his dissertation on white fraternities in the post-World War II period, Anthony James explained that Lloyd G. Balfour, jeweler to many sorority and fraternities, and the organizer behind IRAC, felt that Edgewater was "gaining a reputation as the 'Ku Klux Klan of the fraternity world.'"¹⁰⁴

Minutes from meetings of the Edgewater Conference demonstrate the arguments that the group attempted to use in support of their discriminatory policies. The alumni tried to make an important distinction in their closed membership by stating that there was "nothing undemocratic," or unconstitutional about discrimination on any basis in "purely social realms." Instead, they argued, that for an individual or group to be discriminating in their social relationships was entirely natural. Greek-letter groups' proponents spun the issue so as to claim

¹⁰³ Edgewater Conference Minutes, 1962, 26.

¹⁰⁴ James, "The Defenders of Tradition," 67-68, 83.

that being discriminating was a positive trait – it showed restraint and good taste and it also allowed freedom of choice “Such discrimination shows only that we prefer to associate with *our own kind* [emphasis mine], and it does not show that we desire to deny anyone a natural right,” explained a lawyer speaking to the group ¹⁰⁵ His reasoning smacked of the intolerance shown by many white southerners’ to racially integrated public spaces during this period ¹⁰⁶ He argued that forced legislation to remove discriminatory clauses would not actually end discrimination Instead, it would just “irritate those people who are now of an ‘intolerant’ nature,” but would not make them “tolerant ” Attempting to demonstrate, he explained

When the university authorities compel one certain chapter or one certain group to accept any certain number or any one Negro, all that [that] compelled acceptance does is accentuate the difference in the races[] [E]veryone knows that proper education, which is designed not to accentuate, but to play down the difference in the races, is the only way to eliminate this intolerance[] [B]y forcing Negroes into the associations with white persons who do not want them, they, of course, will be forced into embarrassing situations, situations which cannot but hurt the cause of tolerance ¹⁰⁷

In the same passage he claimed that, “everyone kn[ew]” that education should help diminish differences between racial groups Somewhat illogically, however, he was also suggesting that institutions of higher education should allow practices, which *taught* that racial segregation was socially acceptable

Sorority and fraternity chapters at racially desegregated schools, and chapters that considered accepting an African American or Jewish member, received special attention from the Edgewater Conference Likewise, the topic of chapters that were under pressure by university

¹⁰⁵ Lee, *Fraternities Without Brotherhood*, 4, Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity Records, National Officers, Edgewater Conference File, 1953-1993, (41/93/31), Box 1, Minutes, May 29-30, 1953, 26-27

¹⁰⁶ Numan Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance Race and Politics in the South During the 1950s* (Baton Rouge, LA Louisiana State University Press, 1967), Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton, NJ Princeton University Press, 2007), Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions The South in the 1950s* (Chapel Hill, NC UNC Press for Smithsonian National Museum of American History, 2000), 241, Kevin Kruse, *White Flight Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ Princeton University Press, 2005), Matthew D Lassiter, *The Silent Majority Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ Princeton University Press, 2006)

¹⁰⁷ Lee, *Fraternities Without Brotherhood*, 4, Edgewater Conference Minutes, May 29-30, 1953, Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity Records, National Officers, Edgewater Conference File, 1953-1993, (41/93/31), Box 1, 27

administrators to disclose the details of their membership clauses elicited frequent discussion by conference participants. The conference kept up with situations of concern regarding membership, giving regular reports on those schools. For example, in 1953, President William S. Carlson, of the State University of New York (SUNY), began investigating the discriminatory practices of Greek-letter groups in an effort to remove all racial and religious discrimination in membership selection. While local fraternities (not affiliated with national societies) generally complied with the desired changes to admissions policies, the chapters of national groups met SUNY's requests with "stubborn resistance, evasion, and subterfuge." While the university "consider[ed] all facilities under its supervision [including fraternities] to be part of its educational operation," the results of the administration's self-study revealed that SUNY had "actually permitted the development of a double standard of admission to its facilities – a fair one for its classrooms and an unfair one for many of its social fraternities." The university gave the nationally affiliated chapters until October 1958 to sever ties with their national organization, or be shut down. On November 8, 1954, the United States Supreme Court upheld this decision, ruling for "the right of public institutions to define the policies that govern fraternal groups on their campus."¹⁰⁸

Speaking specifically of the investigation at SUNY's Buffalo State College, alumnae at the Edgewater Conference stated that administrators had repeatedly asked sorority members if there was anything in their rituals that stated they could not "initiate colored people." They had reportedly asked, if any girl could be initiated, "even though she [was] Jewish." One of the groups was reported to have responded to the former question by saying that they did not have any "such clauses," but that they would not "initiate a Negro student to prove the fact."¹⁰⁹ Ruth Neidig, an alumna of Pi Kappa Sigma sorority said that her sorority tried to get around this type

¹⁰⁸ Lee, *Fraternities Without Brotherhood*, 6-7, 54.

¹⁰⁹ Edgewater Conference Minutes, May 29-30, 1953, ATO Records, 42.

of questioning by answering “generally” that they “had nothing in [their] constitution.”¹¹⁰ Clearly having engaged in subterfuge to evade the SUNY investigators, Neidig confided to the conference members that, “We have an unwritten law, but we [did not] tell them that.”¹¹¹

The Edgewater Conference tried to link these inquiries about their policies to the presence of NSA chapters in the vicinity or on the campus. Mary Love Collins’s comments on NSA during the 1953 Edgewater meeting show that she did not believe the group as harmless as did the Theta reporting on her attendance at the NSA conference meeting two summers before. In describing the NSA to Edgewater members unfamiliar with the group, Collins explained with an air of mystery, “Now, no one knows what NSA is. All we do know is what we get from their official publications.” She pointed to the NSA’s “Bill of Rights,” as the root of the problem.¹¹² Collins and the Edgewater group probably took greatest offense at sections four and twelve of the NSA Bill of Rights. Section four declared the right of every student to:

Exercise his full right as a citizen in forming and participating in local, national, or international organizations for intellectual, religious, social, political, economic or cultural purposes, and to publish and distribute their views.

In concluding, section twelve declared students’ rights of “equal opportunity to enjoy these rights without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, religious creed, or political beliefs.”¹¹³ Collins believed the group’s program designed to end discrimination on campuses was the primary issue with which to contend.¹¹⁴ Yet, she seemed to suggest that eliminating discrimination was just the tip of a much larger, pink-tinged, iceberg. Thus, with the NSA portrayed as the “radical” enemy, the NPC and the NIC, during the 1950s and 1960s, along with the Young Americans for

¹¹⁰ Pi Kappa Sigma (1894-1959) began at Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti, Michigan. It was an original member of the Association of Educational Sororities. In 1959 Sigma Kappa sorority absorbed Pi Kappa Sigma. See Robson, *Baird's Manual*, 792.

¹¹¹ Edgewater Conference Minutes, May 29-30, 1953, ATO Records, 42-43.

¹¹² Edgewater Conference Minutes, May 29-30, 1953, ATO Records, 44.

¹¹³ Schwartz, ed., *American Students Organize*, 1110-1111.

¹¹⁴ Edgewater Conference Minutes, May 29-30, 1953, ATO Records, 44.

Freedom, after 1960, worked to remove campuses from NSA affiliation.¹¹⁵ In a speech to Alpha Gamma Delta sorority's national convention in June 1964, Tom Huston referred to the NSA as the "left-wing confederation of college and university student governments," directing the "anti-Greek drive...in the name of civil rights."¹¹⁶ Huston's statement seems more than a little misguided, if for no other reason than the fact that a 1955 NSA study *Student Government, Student Leaders, and the American College* found that "[eighty-four] percent of the top student government leaders [had] fraternity affiliations." Ironically, while the NPC and the NIC were gravely concerned with the activities of the NSA and their supposedly left-leaning leaders, by the late 1960s it became clear that NSA was not a communist front organization at all, but was actually financed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).¹¹⁷ While the NSA had not lacked for members it *had* lacked financial backing. As U.S. officials explained, the CIA had funded the NSA since 1952 in sums totaling perhaps \$400,000 in an attempt to deter Communist subsidies. The arrangement was kept secret to protect the NSA's image, which otherwise would have been undermined if it appeared to be an agent of the government.¹¹⁸

Colleges and universities in non-southern regions of the United States that had already been desegregated or had always been open to non-white students appeared to produce the most discussion among the Edgewater Conference. Conference members believed that chapters at these schools were on the frontlines of Greek-letter societies' battle to maintain privacy in their membership selection. On the other hand, the conference considered schools in the South to be the last stronghold of conservative sentiment. Questioned about any problematic developments at the University of Georgia during the 1960 Edgewater meeting, one member, Mr. Daniels, responded, "Down in that general area I don't think we need to be concerned too much, although

¹¹⁵ "NSA Contemplates Its Shattered Image," *The Washington Post*, February 20, 1967.

¹¹⁶ Huston, "Fraternities and Freedom," 8.

¹¹⁷ "NSA Contemplates Its Shattered Image," *The Washington Post*, February 20, 1967.

¹¹⁸ J.Y. Smith, "Funds Supplied for Fourteen Years, State Dept. Says," *Washington Post*, February 15, 1967, A1.

that is not an absolute assurance we can dismiss it.”¹¹⁹ For the most part, national fraternity and sorority officers and alumni, like Daniels, felt confident that their southern chapters were safe from liberal critics who might influence university officials to investigate membership restrictions. With southern university campus culture largely mirroring that of southern society in general, social segregation of the races seemed to remain an almost certain state of affairs.

Yet, with the passage and enforcement of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the U.S. government demonstrated a commitment to ending discrimination and desegregation in higher education. Initially, the Meader Amendment to the Civil Right Act had prohibited interference in the functioning of private organizations, including sororities and fraternities. In 1965, however, Francis Keppel, U.S. Commissioner of Education, made clear that the Civil Rights Act charged individual universities with the task of eliminating discrimination by their campuses’ fraternities. Citing Title VI of the act, which disallowed federal funding to programs or activities that fostered discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin, Keppel announced that he would cut federal funding to universities that allowed fraternities to continue discriminating on the basis of race.¹²⁰ Keppel’s announcement sent new fears through the Greek-letter world. In an attempt to counter this development, Edgewater Conference members used back alley dealings in Washington, D.C. to produce an amendment to the Higher Education Bill that was designed to prohibit Keppel and the government from interfering in private organizations. With heavy lobbying by fraternity alumni in Congress, Edgewater’s efforts succeeded in the House. The Senate, after extensive debate, altered the amendment to allow for federal intervention in cases where Greek-letter organizations used university housing. In actuality, this loophole did not provide much help to the groups. While fraternities and sororities at many universities help privately property, many of the chapters had also heeded earlier calls by college administrators to

¹¹⁹ Edgewater Conference Minutes, 1960, Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity Records, National Officers, Edgewater Conference File, 1953-1993 (41/93/31), Box 1, 52.

¹²⁰ James, “The Defenders of Tradition,” 102-104; Wallace Turner, “Colleges Face U.S. Aid Cutoff If They Permit Fraternity Bias,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1965, 1, 24.

sign nondiscriminatory compliance forms.¹²¹ In the end, enforcement of the issue remained vague, particularly as chapters could still attempt to quietly practice discrimination while publicly claiming not to.

In fact, pressure had been mounting against southern institutions that continued to aid and abet racial segregation, or to foster discriminatory environments, for some time. In 1961, the board of administrators of the private Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana again faced the question of whether or not to proceed with desegregation of Tulane and Sophie Newcomb (the women's coordinate college). The university's board had elected not to desegregate during the 1950s, even though it meant that the school would likely be denied significant grant money from the Ford Foundation. On the other hand, explain historians Clarence Mohr and Joseph Gordon, Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee had chosen the path of "voluntary, if token, desegregation" during this same period and remained eligible for key research grants.¹²² By 1961, the Tulane board realized that to be a prominent research university, the school would need to compete for large research grants from philanthropic organizations like the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. On April 12, 1961, shortly after learning that the university's grant application would again be denied by Ford as a result of their admissions policy, the board issued a circumspect press release that acknowledged the racially restrictive clauses of the Tulane and Newcomb endowments and stated that "Tulane University would admit qualified students regardless of race or color if it were legally permissible." Following a protracted legal struggle to establish whether or not the endowments' clauses were enforceable, and a series of student protests against the board, which appeared to be dragging its feet on the issue of desegregation, on December 12, 1962, the board "voted unanimously to implement the policy decision of April

¹²¹ James, "The Defenders of Tradition," 109-110; Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 256-257.

¹²² Clarence L. Mohr and Joseph E. Gordon, *Tulane: The Emergence of a Modern University, 1945-1980* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 198-201, 194.

12, 1961” thus admitting two African American women, Barbara Guillory and Pearlle Hardin Elloie, for graduate study in February 1963.¹²³

Universities Seek Removal of Sororities’ Discriminatory Clauses

In order to comply with Francis Keppel’s enforcement of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, universities would have to ensure that no student organizations allowed discriminatory clauses or actions. In the cases of Greek-letter groups, university administrators requested assurances from national sorority and fraternity officers that their respective organizations’ constitutions and bylaws were free of clauses that restricted membership on the basis of race. Similar to the timetables laid out in the original “Michigan Plan” of 1950, universities in the American South sought to obtain affirmation of non-discrimination from the Greek-letter chapters on their campuses. In doing so, the universities also attempted to convince themselves that by simply asking sororities and fraternities to affirm that their membership selection processes were not bound by discriminatory clauses, they could head off all possible difficulties arising from rush at increasingly desegregating southern campuses.

On March 5, 1965 the Faculty Council at UNC “unanimously passed a resolution calling for the end to fraternity and sorority discriminatory clauses.” The groups would have until September 1, 1966 to remove all national or local discriminatory clauses. In cases where “administrations disallowed such clauses,” the *Daily Tar Heel* noted, some fraternity and sorority nationals had agreed to “waive” national membership requirements for local chapters. Panhellenic Council and Interfraternity Council leaders at UNC were unsure of the new ruling’s effect on each of the campuses’ chapters. Kappa Delta had been known to refuse compliance with nondiscriminatory statements on other campuses.¹²⁴ A 1964 survey of discriminatory clauses held by UNC’s Greek-letter groups showed that of the eight national sororities with

¹²³ Mohr and Gordon, *Tulane*, 200-234, quotes from 200 and 234.

¹²⁴ Pete Wales, “Discriminatory Clauses, Compliance Dates Set Sept. 1, 1966,” *The Daily Tar Heel*, March 6, 1965, in Office of the President, Douglas M. Knight Records, 1963-1969, Box, 14, Fraternities, 1963-1969, University Archives, Duke University.

campus chapters, four suggested some variation of membership restriction aside from the basic rush recommendation form common to all sororities and which I discussed in the previous chapter. Alpha Delta Pi and Tri-Delta reported that members “must accept Christian ritual,” while Chi Omega and Kappa Delta had “no comment.”¹²⁵

Duke’s president, Douglas M. Knight, corresponded with national sorority officers over the summer of 1965 in an attempt to confirm that the groups were already in compliance with non-discrimination or would change their policies to reflect Keppel’s edict. In his initial letter, Knight directly asked national sorority and fraternity officers if they had:

Any constitutional limitation forbidding a local chapter from accepting a Negro (boy or girl) if the chapter so wishes?... any practices designed to keep Negroes out if the chapter itself wishes to invite the person for membership?

He noted that some groups “require sponsorship from a member in the student’s home town” and acknowledged that this “might be difficult to get from members of a previously all-white group.” Knight wished to know whether any of the groups followed this practice. Not wanting to offend the national officers, Knight closed his form letter with an assurance that “Duke has the highest regard for the work of [_____] on our campus.” His reminder that the university must, “however, comply not only with the letter, but also with the spirit of the law,” seemed a plea to these officers to continue with such a commendable fashion of behavior by truthfully answering his questions.¹²⁶

Kappa Kappa Gamma national president Frances Alexander, a native of Indiana, who was currently residing in Charlotte, North Carolina, replied two weeks later. She noted that the sorority’s voluntary statement of its position on civil rights issues would be forthcoming, but that in the meantime, she would try to answer the specific questions in Knight’s letter. In a carefully

¹²⁵ Memorandum to the Faculty Committee on Fraternities and Sororities from William G. Long, Dean of Men, Re: Restrictive Clauses, October 22, 1964, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2: Fraternities and Sororities, Box 32, Fraternities and Sororities, Discriminatory Policies, 1959-1971.

¹²⁶ Douglas M. Knight to [Fraternity/Sorority officer], June 28, 1965, Office of the President, DMK Records, Box 14, Fraternities – Title VI, 1965-1968.

worded response, Alexander stated that Kappa did not have a constitutional limitation “forbidding the pledging of a Negro girl or of any girl.” Seemingly attempting to remove race from the equation, she also said that there was no “practice[e] or mechanism designed to prevent the pledging of anyone” and that Kappa used a “reference system that is informational, not restrictive” at “the request of our undergraduate members.” She pointed out that the reference system had “been in effect for many years now and is helpful in avoiding an incompatible and uncongenial relationship.” But, just as the reference system had helped sororities avoid the pledging of undesirable white rushees over the years, it could also work to avoid the pledging of black women, even as university administrators placed pressure on the organizations to confirm their “nondiscriminatory” membership practices. Alexander admitted that she “would not be able to answer” whether or not it would be “difficult to secure a reference on a negro girl.” Seeking understanding from Knight on the of the racial issue, she obliquely wrote, “I am sure you will agree...we can encourage, but not legislate personal opinions and feelings of individuals.” She admitted that some Kappa chapters *had* received references on African American women from all-white groups. While she did not elaborate on the particular chapters involved, Alexander went on to explain that, “limited by small and rigid quotas, the chapter chose to select those girls who it felt were most compatible and had the greatest potential.” This was her way of saying that the chapters had not pledged the African American women. It seems clear that, to the governing bodies of national sororities in this period, when choosing new members that were “most compatible and had the greatest potential,” a white woman would always rank higher in that nebulous category than an African American woman. With a possible hint of displeasure, Alexander noted that she “presume[d] that as the gap between our cultures narrows, there will be more and more outstanding negro girls.”¹²⁷ The tone of Alexander’s letter suggested that the

¹²⁷ Mrs. Frank H. [Frances] Alexander to Douglas M. Knight, July 13, 1965, Office of the President, DMK Records, Fraternities – Title VI, 1965-1968.

sorority would continue to find ways to avoid the pledging of African American women, despite their qualifications to be worthy and worthwhile members of Kappa chapters.

Apparently, Knight was quite taken with Frances Alexander's personal tone, and her willingness to share information about Kappa and her opinions on the issue of membership. He sent her a short, personal note three days later, separate from the official reply in his capacity as university president. In this letter, the Cambridge, Massachusetts born and Yale educated, Knight wished "to express" to her "most personally" his gratitude "for so thoughtful and honest a reply." He said that he spoke "now as an individual (a privilege that I have all too rarely these days, I find)" and agreed with her estimation that it "would seem... profoundly unwise and unjust ever to legislate quotas for any organization." Alexander had, as Knight wrote, put it "so properly," and he also felt that "individual groups have always had, and must always have, the right to make sensible choices." We should remember, however, that the phrase "sensible choices" could mean very different things to different people. It might seem sensible to members of an all-white sorority chapter to deny membership to an African American woman, but to the woman denied, and to many others, that "choice" by the sorority could signal discrimination and racism. Knight reiterated his belief that "there be no formal and legal bar" for individual groups in "taking that step," meaning, changing the processes for membership selection. He appreciated the "understanding" that she "express[ed] so well" in regard to chapters choosing as members only those women whom they deemed the most qualified and compatible, even as she acknowledged that increasing numbers of capable African American women might go through rush in the future.¹²⁸ Whether Knight thought that Alexander's comment showed her pragmatism in realizing that sororities, like white-controlled American society, would eventually have to change with the times, or whether he meant to agree with her discontent over this realization, is not clear.

¹²⁸ Douglas M. Knight to Frances Alexander, July 15, 1965, Office of the President, DMK Records, Fraternities – Title VI, 1965-1968; Douglas M. Knight Biography, Preliminary Inventory of the Douglas M. Knight Records, 1949-1970. Duke University Archives, Duke University.

While most other national sororities with chapters at Duke responded to Knight in the form of a simple statement explaining that they did not have restrictive membership clauses, Alpha Delta Pi (ADPi) and Kappa Delta (KD), like Kappa, were more lengthy in their replies. Maxine Blake, ADPi's national president, affirmed the sorority's use of recommendation forms and, like Alexander, managed to move the issue of race from the forefront of the discussion of the recommendation system. To Knight, she explained that "the Duke chapter is a very old one on our chapter roll, it receives far more recommendations than it can consider." Each year, she assured him, the chapter had to "turn down many of these, simply because of sheer numbers, and these girls are pledged by other groups, I am sure."¹²⁹ Blake assumed that less popular chapters on campus would pick up the ADPi Omega Chapter cast-offs. We know, however, that that was not always the case. And with possible African American rushees, we can surmise that ADPi would turn them down and claim that there were simply too many recommended women with desirable qualities for the chapter to take them all. In this scenario, the African American women would always end up at the bottom of the rushee list but ADPi would not have to admit that the real reason for denial was race. In closing, Blake reminded Knight that since ADPi began at the Methodist Georgia Wesleyan Female College, their ritual was based on the Bible and that they "expect[ed] members to be able to accept such Ritual." Nevertheless, she then remarked on what she felt was the sorority's religious diversity. "We have members of many, many faiths in the sorority, including some of Jewish origin." (Perhaps by many faiths, she meant many denominations of the Christian faith?) That Blake chose to name Judaism specifically seemed brought about by a need to prove that ADPi was non-discriminatory in their member selection. By suggesting that the sorority was open-minded on the issue of religion of their members, Blake may have hoped to convey the image that they were also open-minded about the racial background of prospective members.

¹²⁹ Maxine Blake to Douglas M. Knight, July 19, 1965, Office of the President, DMK Records, Fraternities – Title VI, 1965-1968.

Kappa Delta president Genevieve Forbes Morse sent a reply to Knight that neither confirmed nor denied the presence of any discriminatory policies. She did enclose a copy of KD's statement of policy regarding membership. It stated that KD was a "Christian social organization" whose purpose was "to foster the art of true friendship. "Prospective members must have qualities compatible with this purpose and the prospective life long friendships and associations which are a part of belonging to Kappa Delta." The compatibility of a candidate would be gauged on a list of qualifications, including "family, economic, and social background, educational fitness, moral standards, religion, and, in general, adaptability for group association and friendship." While the last qualification already seemed so vague that it could easily be a code word for "white," the statement went on to add that "consideration of these factors shall not exclude consideration of any other deemed relevant in any particular instance."¹³⁰ That would seem to suggest that other issues, including race, might also be brought into play and could trump the other qualifications. In a further letter, Morse wrote that the membership references were necessary because it was "quite important that the girls pledged to a chapter be compatible." She also noted that as part of a national organization, "a chapter does not have local autonomy in membership selection."¹³¹ National sororities and fraternities repeatedly fell back on the ludicrous claim that any new member would have to be acceptable to *all* members of the national organization.

By October 1967, Duke Provost Frank de Vyver reported to Knight that they were doing well in getting sororities and fraternities to sign the non-discrimination compliance forms, but two fraternities and three sororities had not yet signed the forms. Not surprisingly, KD was one of the sororities. De Vyver felt that KD's national office was stalling because the national officers were "afraid the local group might select a Negro girl." Greek-letter nationals that refused to allow

¹³⁰ Genevieve Forbes Morse to Douglas M. Knight, "Kappa Delta Statement of Policy," July 20, 1965, Office of the President, DMK Records, Fraternities – Title VI, 1965-1968.

¹³¹ Genevieve Forbes Morse to Douglas M. Knight, September 28, 1965, Office of the President, DMK Records, Fraternities – Title VI, 1965-1968.

their local chapters to sign compliance forms would face penalty of removal from campus. As a result, Duke's KD chapter (Sigma Delta) chose to sever ties with the national organization. Apparently, the local chapter "had already defied the National by selecting two Jewish girls." De Vyver explained that KD's national office had "changed the national constitution and the local President [Lucy Brady] thought all would be well." Afterward, however, Brady had reported to de Vyver that Morse told the chapter that "though the words were changed the policy was not."¹³² It appeared that KD hoped to deter the administrative officials by changing the wording in their national constitution while still adhering to an *unwritten* discriminatory membership clause.

The close of the KD chapter brought anger and disappointment from Duke's KD alums. One wrote to the Duke Loyalty Fund explaining that she would be withholding her "small contribution" on account of the KD chapter going inactive. The KD national officers had written to notify Sigma Delta Chapter alumnae of the closure, but had not given them the reason. The woman believed that the chapter was going inactive because of "the university's pressure and unwillingness to provide suitable quarters as had been promised for so long." As I mentioned previously, the sororities at Duke did not have houses, but lived in the dormitories. The alumna remarked that KD had "meant more to me in the years since college than any affiliation I had on campus." She was very upset that "Duke co-eds" would be "denied this opportunity" which had been "such a pleasure" for her.¹³³ While those other "co-eds" could join any of the other Duke sorority chapters that didn't disaffiliate from their national, Duke's administration was quite disturbed at the possibility of losing support of other university donors, particularly those that might give more than just a "small contribution." To try to mend any broken fences with alumnae of the Sigma Delta Chapter, President Knight wrote a memo addressing the situation. He explained that, "as nearly as [the Duke administration] could understand," after debate, KD

¹³² Frank T. de Vyver to President Knight, October 23, 1967, Office of the President, DMK Records, Fraternities – Title VI, 1965-1968.

¹³³ Mrs. William M. Ramey to Duke Loyalty Fund, January 19, 1968, Office of the President, DMK Records, Fraternities – Title VI, 1965-1968; Also cited in Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 257.

had voted at their national convention to remove the discriminatory clause from their constitution. Duke then planned to have the KD local president and national president, Genevieve Morse, sign a statement confirming this change. Morse, however, refused to sign and refused to allow the Sigma Delta Chapter president to sign either. This scenario, Knight reported, left the university “no legal alternative but to take action” itself. He explained that it had been a “matter of judgment” for Duke to decide that, as a desegregated university, “it was not proper to have segregated organizations operating on the campus.” Knight made clear that “what was not a matter of judgment was an opinion from an outside law firm” that the university had to “assure” itself “that sororities and fraternities did not discriminate in their membership policies.” He expressed his disappointment that the chapter had to go inactive and suggested that “perhaps in the future your president will be willing to sign the statement, and we can once again have Sigma Delta Chapter operating on campus.”¹³⁴

After severing ties with the national sorority, the chapter became a local sorority on the Duke Campus and conducted rush under the name Kappa Delta Tau. The notice in the *The Chronicle* stated that by the end of rush, the group would have formulated plans for the name, program, and other organizational details of the chapter going forward. The chapter said that it was “pleased with its independence and with the accompanying freedom to [choose] whomever they wish as members.” The local KD president, Lucy Brady noted that “the chapter ha[d] always had a very strong stand against discriminatory policy.” She said that the “chapter was more liberal than the national desired, and we decided it was worth it to us to keep our position rather than knuckle under.”¹³⁵

All southern sorority chapters, however, were not as liberal as the Sigma Delta Chapter of KD. Student activism over the course of 1960s helped alter the politically apathetic culture

¹³⁴ Douglas M. Knight to Alumnae of Sigma Delta Chapter of Kappa Delta Sorority, n.d., Office of the President, DMK, Fraternities – Title VI, 1965-1968.

¹³⁵ Dave Shaffer, “Kappa Delta Goes Local,” *The Chronicle* Vo. 64, Number 8 [n.d.], in Duke Panhellenic Council Records, 1938-1996, Box 3, Newspaper Clippings, 1963-1971.

common to many southern universities during the 1950s. Typically, sororities and fraternities had been the conservative organizations that had held power within these student communities. Student activism in issues of racial segregation, university reforms, and war protests, historian Jeffrey Turner argues, helped “expand the cultural spectrum on southern college campuses,” and helped to “open up campuses so that rebels could voice their opinions in ways that had previously not been possible.”¹³⁶ The extent to which this occurred on each campus depended upon factors such as the geographic origin of the majority of the students at a school and the overall campus culture. These aspects could render schools such as Duke or UNC very different spaces for Greek-letter groups than the University of Alabama or the University of Georgia.

With their conservative positioning in this period, national sororities and fraternities also represented a continuing commitment to the maintenance of conventional power structures in campus politics. While chapters of both Greek-letter sororities and fraternities may have engaged in the private racist displays during rush, which I detailed in Chapter Five, or espoused discriminatory rhetoric in their membership selection processes, national sororities were more inclined to try to limit explicitly political action than their fraternal counterparts. Anthony James has discussed the involvement of white fraternities at the Universities of Alabama, Mississippi, and North Carolina in white supremacist activity and performative displays of white power in party themes and skits during the 1940s through 1960s.¹³⁷ Likewise, in his analysis of the racist and segregationist tendencies of the white male Demosthenian Literary Society at the University of Georgia during the 1950s and 1960s, historian Robert Pratt describes fraternity men who protested the university’s 1961 desegregation by “serenad[ing] the [hanged blackface effigy of

¹³⁶ Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out*, 22, 264-265.

¹³⁷ Anthony James, “Political Parties: College Social Fraternities, Manhood, and the Defense of Southern Traditionalism, 1945-1960,” in *White Masculinities in the Recent South*, ed. Trent Watts, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 63-85.

African American student Hamilton Homes] with choruses of Dixie, singing ‘There’ll never be a nigger in the ____ [fraternity] house,’ whose various names they inserted.”¹³⁸

Sororities, on the other hand, hoped to keep their college members from becoming involved in activism or politics. Most sorority leaders would probably not wish to claim Margaret Trotter, a sorority member at the University of Tennessee who penned a letter to Tennessee’s Governor Frank G. Clement in 1954, explaining that, “she and her sorority sisters were ‘upset over this segregation question.’” Trotter declared that, “nowhere” in the Bible, “does it mix races, or even say that they should be mixed.”¹³⁹ Nor would sorority leaders be pleased with members who acted like Maggie DeLoach in *Heartbreak Hotel*. When, in 1956 Alabama, Maggie decides to write an editorial for the school newspaper that advocates racial acceptance and begins going around with a liberal journalist from a working class background, much of the Greek-letter community at Randolph University turns against her.

With the training of their nationals, sorority women learned to follow instructions and not deviate from the sorority-imposed expectations. The groups served as added enforcers of social expectations regarding race and the racially segregated southern society. Even as some national sorority leaders worked behind the scenes to keep their organizations white, plotting legal recourse with the Edgewater Conference members, other national officers advised college sorority women to keep mum on issues of school desegregation. In January 1961, as African American students Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes prepared to enter classes at the University of Georgia, alumnae of Zeta Tau Alpha (ZTA) wrote to their local Gamma Pi Chapter forbidding member involvement in student protests. Members of the Gamma Pi House Corporation (a group of alumnae that managed the Gamma Pi Chapter’s house) warned that, “any member or pledge...who is involved in any way in any demonstration regarding the integration

¹³⁸ Robert A. Pratt, “The Rhetoric of Hate: The Demosthenian Literary Society and its Opposition to the Desegregation of the University of Georgia, 1950-1964,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 90, no. 2 (Summer 2006).

¹³⁹ Daniel, *Lost Revolutions*, 192.

situation will lose her membership in the fraternity automatically.” In a copy sent to Dean Edith L. Stallings, the alumnae noted that “we prefer to keep our girls completely out of any demonstration against the Negroes and this is the most effective control we have.”¹⁴⁰ This refusal of collegiate member protest could be read in a number of ways. The ZTAs may have wished to spare themselves the negative publicity that could come along with having members pictured in the midst of a protest against civil liberties. They also may have worried about offending other members (most likely, other alumnae). The directive by the alumnae, forbidding the students to participate in public protest, signaled a continuance of the outdated, patriarchal belief that women should not involve themselves in politics or appear outspoken in public. This begs the question, what if the ZTAs protested in *support* of the Hunter’s and Holmes’s right to enter the university? Was protest of any nature by the sorority women out of bounds? A strong stand or protest, for or against any position, could disappoint or anger a portion of the membership.

The public position taken by Marie Burton, UGA’s Alpha Delta Pi president, during the desegregation crisis more accurately reflected the stance supported by sororities’ alumnae leaders. Burton issued a statement to the *Red and Black* that focused on the importance of education. With fears that state legislators would close UGA during the desegregation crisis, the university’s student leaders asked students to avoid violence “in meeting the problem.” Focusing on the imperative of keeping the university open, Burton explained that the “students of today are the future of this state and nation. Their education should not be interrupted, even for a short period of time.”¹⁴¹ By concentrating solely on *white* UGA students and the importance of maintaining educational opportunity for the *white* students, Burton’s comments appeared moderate and level headed while enabling her to dodge the elephant in the room, so to speak, which was the issue of racial equality at stake in the matter.

¹⁴⁰ Gamma Pi Chapter of Zeta Tau Alpha House Corporation to ZTA member, January 9, 1961, Edith L Stallings and Louise McBee, (Dean of Women, 1947-1974) Papers (UGA 97-119:2), Box 2, Folder 1 (Integration).

¹⁴¹ “Campus Leaders Ask Students to Follow Non-Violence Course,” *Red and Black*, January 9, 1961, 2.

The issue of discriminatory membership clauses brought sororities into the political realm, a space that they had attempted – or *pretended* – to avoid throughout their existence. The very visible issue of racial discrimination in the United States in the post-World War II period forced sororities, as well as all other membership organizations, to address this explosive topic, opening up questions about longstanding, implicit forms of discrimination by such groups. While the NPC and the sororities' national offices had worked, for the better part of their existence, to sell collegiate chapters as a key component of the educational system for female students on coeducational campuses, the circumstances surrounding discrimination caused the leadership to do an about-face on their position of Greek-letter groups' relationship to universities. Now that university administrations were forcing the groups to comply with non-discriminatory rules common to all student organizations, sororities and fraternities suddenly wanted to redefine their relationships with the universities so as to eliminate the necessity of compliance. Ironically, for all of national sororities' posturing about their programs for the social education and citizenship training of women, these lessons failed to address topics of racial and religious equality, leaving a serious gap in the worldview of the sorority women emerging from college into the adult world. For national sororities, being a good citizen and exhibiting social grace did not necessarily translate to shows of respect for individuals whom they deemed inappropriate for membership. In the next chapter I examine the ways in which some college sorority women reacted to these decidedly limited citizenship training initiatives as well as the ways that they responded to the membership restrictions imposed by their national leaders.

CHAPTER EIGHT: “CAN I KEEP MY OWN IDENTITY AND STILL BE A GOOD KAPPA?”¹: SORORITY WOMEN QUESTION THE PURPOSE OF THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

In a fall 1963 *Chapter Keystones* newsletter of Kappa Kappa Gamma, the sorority’s national president, Mary Turner Whitney, repeated a question put to her by many Kappa actives over the previous school year: “Can I keep my own identity and still be a good Kappa?” Apparently concerned by public criticism of sororities as social clubs that bred “conformity” and functioned through a “dictation” of rules, college sorority women openly wondered if they could continue to be “good” sorority sisters and group members while remaining true to their own ideals and expressing their unique qualities as individuals. Whitney’s retort: “Why not?” She argued that this situation was easily manageable, but frequently misunderstood by those both within and outside of the Greek-letter system. She termed this popular confusion, “the fraternity paradox.” Whitney told Kappa actives that, in actuality, “the more of yourself each of you puts into this Fraternity of ours the stronger and more interesting it becomes.” The women would not lose their identity. On the contrary, she explained, “The chances are you become a better and more interesting person in the process.”² What she did *not* say was that in becoming this better and more interesting person, a woman would need to conform to her sorority’s mode of appearance, thought and action. Even as Whitney and other national sorority leaders tried to stress the point that sororities helped women to grow as individuals, some sorority actives felt troubled by the organizations’ methods of educating current members and of choosing new members.

At the Woman’s College of Duke University in 1961, a group of women students claiming sorority membership voiced their concerns with the sorority system from the safety of

¹ Mary Turner Whitney, “A Fraternity Paradox,” *Chapter Keystones*, September 1963, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Delta Beta Chapter Records, Duke University, University Archives, Box 1, Printed Material, *Chapter Keystones*, 1.

² Whitney, “A Fraternity Paradox,” 1, 5.

anonymity. Writing under the name “SOS” – possibly standing for “save our sororities” – the women urged a reassessment of group goals and advocated that Duke’s chapters disaffiliate from their national organizations. In so doing, the local chapters would also “detach” themselves from the “growing national sentiment against national sororities.” As if directly targeting the efforts of national sorority leaders involved in the Edgewater Conference to keep National Panhellenic Council (NPC) sororities white and Protestant Christian, the members of SOS gave two main reasons for their desired break with the national organizations:

1. We can plan our life together with complete freedom to shape our program to meet our needs, interests and goals rather than having many of them controlled by removed forces.
2. We could choose members for the contribution they could make to our particular goals rather than because they conform to external standards of religion or social standing in their home communities.³

With sororities’ national leadership pulling the strings that influenced activities at the individual chapter level, some members began to chafe under the outside control. The women of SOS sought to diminish the interference of national officers in their local chapters. By gaining localized control, the Duke students hoped to redirect sorority ideals – a move that signaled a considerable disjoin between active member and alumnae goals for the groups.

The group of concerned sorority women at Duke had hit upon an issue of increasing significance for sororities in the post-World War II era. They realized that the goals put forth by their national sororities, and constantly upheld and reiterated by their national leadership, were not entirely in sync with those of many college-aged students. While the women still valued their sorority membership, they hoped to find a way to change the system to make the groups more equitable to all students and more meaningful to the individual members. As they saw it, sororities were in “danger,” of self-destruction. If the chapters and their national organizations “challenge[d] themselves... to change the policies that [were] objectionable,” SOS wrote, then

³ S.O.S. “On Sororities,” [1961], Duke University Panhellenic Council Records, Box 3, Newspaper Clippings, 1963-1971.

they might be able to “find a real place in the lives of the members” who were fighting for change.⁴ Perceptively, the members recognized that in a cultural climate that appeared increasingly hostile toward Greek-letter groups, their organizations might need to change tack to remain relevant on campus.

As I have shown in Chapter Seven, during the post-World War II era, national sorority and fraternity leadership became more intently focused on what they saw as their groups’ “rights,” as private organizations, to exclude individuals from membership based on race or religious background. Some alumni of Greek-letter groups actively sought ways to maintain membership clauses that discriminated against non-whites and non-Christians. In national sororities, these alumnae passed their ideology along to sorority leaders at the collegiate chapter level, disseminating their messages of elitism and exclusion.

In September 1962, Duke’s Panhellenic Council President finished her report to NPC area adviser, Eileen Rudolph, by thanking Rudolph for receiving her as a guest in her home during the summer and for “letting” her “read the N.S.A. [National Student Association] material.”⁵ Eileen Rudolph, an alumna of Delta Delta Delta, was an active member of the Edgewater Conference. At the 1962 meeting of the group, she reported on the situation at Duke and the agitation by the mysterious members of SOS.⁶ By fostering relationships with college sorority members, NPC advisers and national sorority officers could attempt use the women’s proximal influence to issue directives to college chapters.

College sorority women, like those involved in SOS, were concerned with their organizations’ reliance on, even subservience to, national leadership and powerful alumnae members. At the same time, these college women began to consider the possibility that reshaping

⁴ S.O.S. “On Sororities II,” [1961], Panhellenic Council Records, Box 3, Newspaper Clippings, 1963-1971.

⁵ Duke College Panhellenic President to Eileen Rudolph, September 28, 1962, Panhellenic Council Records, Box 2, Correspondence, N-R, 1952-1966.

⁶ Edgewater Conference Minutes, 1962, Alpha Tau Omega Archives, National Officers, Edgewater Conference File, 1953-1993 (41/93/31), Box 1, 96.

the sorority program could produce an experience that would be more meaningful to their lives. With the United States playing a major role in global politics, and with the intensifying civil rights struggle on U.S. soil, students who considered themselves engaged, responsible citizens began to take an interest in events beyond the campus, beyond social mixers and the building of parade floats. They wanted, as SOS declared, to “shape the [sorority] program to meet [their] needs, interests, and goals.”⁷ Social changes in U.S. during this era affected student culture at American colleges and universities. The return of World War II veterans, followed shortly thereafter by an exodus of male students to fight in Korea, changed the physical makeup of the student body at many schools. These military conflicts in combination with the heightening Cold War conflict with the Soviet Union led to new expressions of seriousness and maturity among students. Also during these years, following the *Brown v. Board* (1954) decision, campus attentions turned toward crises over racial integration. In this chapter, we will see how such changes in American culture in the post-World War II era led some sorority women to reexamine the role of the sorority in their lives and their self-development.

Rush and the Sorority System Debate

While the majority of women in the sorority system, or those standing outside of it as independents, did not challenge the organizations or their lessons, a number of women began to question the value of sororities in this period. In the previous chapter, I related the instance of the sorority members who felt uncomfortable wearing their sorority pins at the 1950 National Student Association conference. This was but one small act of rebellion among others by sorority members who were disenchanted or outright upset with aspects of these groups in which they were “sisters.” Around this same time, sorority members and their unaffiliated female peers at the Woman’s College of Duke University voiced shifting opinions on sororities’ worth to the women’s student community. Much of their dissatisfaction arose from the difficulties with

⁷ S.O.S. “On Sororities,” [1961].

rushing that I discussed in Chapter Five. Some sorority women felt uncomfortable making superficial judgments about the women going through rush. They also did not like the alumnae interference that was an unavoidable part of the recommendation system. In many cases, it appeared that the alumnae used these recommendations to make sure that the new sorority members fit *alumnae* standards for an ideal pledge. This necessitated that the woman in question be white, Protestant Christian, morally upstanding, and from a respected, if not well-connected, and financially secure family. Some sorority women began to realize that by blindly following their national sororities' or sorority chapters' time-honored "standards" for membership, they passed over many worthwhile women students. So, even if these women who questioned the rush system *did not directly challenge the national sororities' restrictive membership clauses*, some of them at least began to wonder whether the groups' time could be better spent on other activities.

As I noted in Chapter Five, anti-fraternity agitation at Duke brought about changes in the women's rushing system. During the 1945-1946 school year, a number of female students voiced their dissatisfaction with the sororities and the groups' tendency to leave students with hurt feelings, primarily as a result of rush. The administration of the Women's College sought to allow a healthy discussion of the issues among students with the hope of bringing the program more in line with what the majority of students desired.⁸ In September, 1945, the Order of the White Duchy, a secret honorary for women at the college, met to discuss the "issue that ha[d] been causing controversy on campus, namely, that of abolishing sororities."⁹ Not unlike sororities, the Order of the White Duchy (OWD) was committed to campus leadership and strove to set a good example in behavior and citizenship for the rest of the women's student body. After talking over the pros and cons of sororities at their meeting, the Duchesses (as the members referred to themselves) decided that the only thing they could do in the situation was to "guide the

⁸ Betty Jones, "Report on Duke University Agitation," October 23, 1945, Alpha Delta Pi Archives, Alpha Delta Pi Memorial Headquarters, Alpha Delta Pi Chapter Histories – Omicron, Duke University, 3.

⁹ Minutes, September 27, 1945, Order of the White Duchy Records, 1925-1968, University Archives, Duke University.

thinking [of the women students] and try and suppress any radical conversations.”¹⁰ As a group, the OWD sought to aid Dean Alice Mary Baldwin in her job of guiding female students at Duke. As a part of this work, the group quietly exerted their influence during a number of anti-sorority agitations over the years. Each rushing season seemed to bring about a renewed call by some students to do away with sororities at the Woman’s College.

Up for student debate at the open discussion on sororities on October 4, 1945, were questions regarding the positive and negative effects of sororities on the student body, and whether or not the removal of sororities from campus would remedy these problems. Both sorority and independent women spoke out on each side of the issue. Many of the concerns expressed by those speaking against sororities related to the emotional distress that could result when a woman was not asked to join any sorority, or was simply not asked by the sorority of her choice. A Tri-Delta from Suffolk, Virginia, stated that she had seen “girls come [to Duke] thinking that they could and would be accepted, but they were turned down and were hurt for years to come.” She had also seen “girls...get in the sorority of their second choice and then not be happy with that one.” With more and more women students enrolling at Duke, the Tri-Delt member felt that it was “wise to eliminate a system that... hurt so many girls.” A member of Alpha Delta Pi from New York City said that she and others felt the system at Duke was “undemocratic.” “We have had fifteen years to reach the high ideal which each sorority has sought to gain,” she explained. “Each one ‘strives’ for character, but still it takes only those who have looks or money, with few exceptions.” The reinforcement of socioeconomic status and physical attractiveness as the measures of a woman’s popularity and ability to succeed as a member of the campus community, she argued, led to the emotional stress, and even social maladjustment, of many female students.¹¹ A former Kappa Delta from Salisbury, North

¹⁰ Minutes, September 27, 1945, Order of the White Duchy Records, 1925-1968.

¹¹ “Open Discussion On Sororities at Duke University,” October 4, [n.d., 1945], Panhellenic Council Records, 1938-1996, Box 1, Reports and Evaluations (Rush and Otherwise), 1945-1959, 1.

Carolina, explained that the “whole question” about sororities at the Woman’s College “started out from the point of view of personal hurt:

I looked around my freshman group and saw girls that would never be members of sororities, and then I asked myself why. They were ordinary girls and eager to enter into the college life.... I admit that I do not feel that we are going to erase all the hurt in the world, but it has meant a lot to me to give up my sorority pin. If one more freshman on my hall feels better by my taking off my pin – if she will realize that being just a “good ‘ol girl” is all that is required to make friends, I shall feel much better. I admit that sororities have good ideals. But honestly, do you sit around and talk about and try to carry out those ideals in your meetings? If you do, fine! If you do not – think about it – and think hard!¹²

Also speaking against sororities was a member of Alpha Epsilon Phi from Jersey City, New Jersey, felt that “sororities divert[ed] interest away from other campus activities that would be more beneficial.” Unlike other organizations on campus that were “interested in something bigger than the campus itself,” and helped students “to be conscious of world events,” she argued that sororities kept them “too wrapped up in college activities” and “narrow[ed] [their] view even more.” Other speakers maintained that women could make friends and have an active social life on campus without being a member of a sorority. “I have not been in a sorority,” stated a female student from Cincinnati, Ohio. “You can get along without them and you can have just as much fun.”¹³

Sorority women like the above mentioned individual from Alpha Epsilon Phi offered a more progressive viewpoint, suggesting that, as college women, they would be better served by activities that helped them to address problems in the real world, beyond the confines of campus. An Alpha Delta Pi sophomore, originally from New York, expressed her disappointment with the sororities’ creation of social barriers. She called for the students at Duke to “get ahead in democratic thinking” and “show the United States that students are trying to find their proper place in the world and make it better.” At home in New York, the young woman had worked

¹² “Open Discussion On Sororities at Duke University,” October 4, [n.d., 1945], Duke Panhellenic Council Records, 1938-1996, Box 1, Reports and Evaluations (Rush and Otherwise), 1945-1959, 2.

¹³ “Open Discussion On Sororities at Duke University,” October 4, [n.d., 1945], 2.

with servicemen who had spent time overseas. In talking with those men she had gained a different perspective on social equality and came to see the barriers enacted by the sorority system as a part of the larger machinery that disabled national and international cooperation and efforts at world peace.¹⁴

The sorority chapter advisers and national leadership were disconcerted by the anti-fraternity action at Duke. On October 9, 1945, ADPi Grand President Caralee Stanard, penned a letter concerning the situation to members of the sorority's Grand Council. She had been in touch with other sorority national presidents and had heard that the advisers of campus chapters were asking local alumnae groups to assist in quieting the uprising.¹⁵ Kappa Kappa Gamma planned to send an officer to assess the situation on campus and they had advised ADPi to do likewise. With obvious embarrassment, Stanard stated that she had heard from Anne Garrard, an Omicron Chapter alumna who worked in Alumni Affairs at Duke, that "an Alpha Delta Pi had been one of the most convincing anti-fraternity speakers and had aired her views in a general campus meeting." That one of their own "sisters" was airing the family's dirty laundry, so to speak, represented a failure of the sorority, at some level, to educate the member about proper sorority women's behavior and conformity to group and social norms. Garrard had also explained that there was a "definite need for guidance within the groups" at Duke. She reported to Stanard that the "arguments presented for sororities at the meeting had been very weak." This led Stanard to point out that "evidently none of the girls had been coached by experts" before the meeting.¹⁶ Stanard, like other national sorority officers, recognized that this lack of communication between alumnae and collegiate members could prove disastrous to the future of sororities. In instances where chapters or entire campuses sought to overhaul the sorority system, national leaders would

¹⁴ "Open Discussion On Sororities at Duke University," October 4, [n.d., 1945], 2.

¹⁵ Caralee Stanard to Members of Grand Council, October 9, 1945, Alpha Delta Pi Archives, Alpha Delta Pi Memorial Headquarters, Alpha Delta Pi Chapter Histories – Omicron, Duke University.

¹⁶ Caralee Stanard to Members of Grand Council, October 9, 1945.

find it necessary to step in to reindoctrinate the college members who were straying from the path.

Stanard sent Alpha Delta Pi's visiting officer, Betty Jones, to Durham to report on the "agitation" at the university. Jones described the campus situation as having arisen from the complaints of freshman advisers who had "borne the brunt of the hurt feelings" from the girls who had been "disappointed in their choice in sororities."¹⁷ She echoed Garrard by noting a need for guidance among women students at Duke. When the freshman advisers had to deal with the emotional strain of disappointed rushees, Jones explained, they could easily come to see sororities in a negative light. By educating these women about "the good that sororities do in so many other ways," and teaching the sorority chapters at Duke to "emphasize the other phases of sorority life [aside from] the social angle," she believed that future agitations could be avoided.¹⁸

Jones reported specifically on five members of the Omicron Chapter whom she said were, "on the fence or... on the other side" of the argument, and were in favor of disbanding sororities. Senior Gwin Barnwell, who Jones described as a "strong leader" of Omicron, became upset after the chapter blackballed one of her freshman advisees during rush. Jones observed that Barnwell "ha[d] a natural tendency to try to state a case and win her point" and had "made her speeches in the meeting" about the sorority system. Barnwell was probably the ADPi that Minnie Allen Hubbard referred to in her first letter to the Grand Council. While Jones did not think that Gwin Barnwell was against ADPi or would "say anything that she fe[lt] might deprive her of her pin," Jones noted that Gwin "naturally ha[d] a tendency to be a crusader."¹⁹ Crusaders, of course, could be construed as liabilities if their missions were not in sync with those of the NPC sororities.

¹⁷ Betty Jones, "Report on Duke University Agitation," October 23, 1945, 1.

¹⁸ Betty Jones, "Report on Duke University Agitation," October 23, 1945, 1.

¹⁹ Betty Jones, "Report on Duke University Agitation," October 23, 1945, 2.

Jones also profiled Jean Tommasi from New York in her report. Jones described Tommasi as “the most outstanding of the younger girls in the chapter.” She also noted somewhat disapprovingly, however, that Jean had been “brought up in a very democratic way by her family.” Jones explained that while doing work with returned veterans, Jean had “gotten the idea that sororities were not progressive and were undemocratic.”²⁰ After talking with Tommasi, Jones believed that she had helped her to see the error in trying to undo the sorority system at Duke. While Jones did not explain what she said to Tommasi, she reported that when done with her talk, “[Jean] merely remarked, ‘Well, you have brought all of my arguments to dust.’”²¹ Without knowing what reasoning Betty Jones gave to Jean Tommasi, it seems difficult to imagine how the young woman could have been so easily swayed by the adviser. Some Duke sorority women at the open discussion actually argued the Mary Love Collins/NPC line (and soon to be the Edgewater Conference line) that sororities were demonstrating democratic ideals by upholding “the right” to associate with those whom they chose.²² Yet, since Tommasi did not buy their reasoning at the forum it is unclear how Jones’s comments could have changed her opinion so quickly.

Perhaps Jones suggested to Tommasi that sororities’ programs of character education helped prepare young women to become better U.S. citizens. As we have learned in Chapter Three, this argument held significance for many Americans in the late 1940s and early 1950s during the uncertainty of war, both hot and cold. We cannot be sure of what transpired during their talk, but it is also possible that Tommasi could have simply agreed with Jones in an attempt to divert her scrutiny. Jones may have insinuated that women who were pushing for radical change, such as the end of sororities, or who indirectly accused the apparently upstanding and majority white, Anglo-American, sorority alumnae and national officers of being undemocratic,

²⁰ Betty Jones, “Report on Duke University Agitation,” October 23, 1945, 2.

²¹ Betty Jones, “Report on Duke University Agitation,” October 23, 1945, 2.

²² Betty Jones, “Report on Duke University Agitation,” October 23, 1945, 3.

might find themselves branded as subversives in a time when the threat of communism seemed very real – and FBI and government action against suspected communists was becoming commonplace.²³ Jones reported that after their meeting, Jean Tommasi went to all chapter meetings and actively aided in rushing girls for Omicron Chapter.²⁴

Jones described the three other members of Omicron who were active in the agitation as girls that “sway[ed] with the wind,” were weak in their convictions, and in one case, suffered from a “definite inferiority complex.” The woman whose negative attitude Jones believed was influenced by an inferiority complex was “one of a pair of twins” whose “mother ha[d] always seemed to prefer the other one.” This, Jones said, left the woman “always taking up for the underdog – regardless of the circumstances.”²⁵ Jones attempted to apply popular psychology in these cases to show that the women were somehow “maladjusted” and thus more likely to have character flaws that would make them liabilities to the sorority. Instead of depicting the members as rational women, concerned about the contemporary direction of sororities, Jones simply identified them as mentally or emotionally defective and thus, apparently more susceptible to the idea that sororities set a bad example of behavior and were harmful to young women. In Jones’s opinion, a strong woman and good leader among the sorority members would see the righteousness of the sorority’s position and would stand up for the system, not be ready to turn in her sorority pin at the slightest disturbance. While Kappa Delta Patsy Foutz had happily and voluntarily turned in her pin, Jones did not ask the dissenting ADPi’s to turn over their pins. She feared that doing so would make the girls “martyrs to the ‘cause,” heightening the ill-will resulting from the situation, and further portraying sororities in a bad light.

Although the sororities’ national officers believed that providing appropriate “guidance” to the chapters at Duke, would bring an end to the instances of agitation involving sorority

²³ Schrecker, *Many Are The Crimes*, 211-212; Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 1-10.

²⁴ Betty Jones, “Report on Duke University Agitation,” October 23, 1945, 2.

²⁵ Betty Jones, “Report on Duke University Agitation,” October 23, 1945, 2.

women on campus, the issue cropped up year after year. In the fall of 1950, 1951, and 1952, the Order of the White Duchy recorded discussions on campus about the value of sororities. In 1951, the anti-sorority feeling reached a “fever pitch” and the Panhellenic president, “had gotten so upset that she had called National [the NPC].” Dean of women Mary Grace Wilson wanted the OWD to exert their influence to return the campus to control.²⁶ To give all students of the Woman’s College, as well as some Duke alumnae, a chance to voice their opinions in a sane and constructive manner, the OWD established a sorority evaluation committee to administer a questionnaire designed to determine the perceived benefits and detriments of sororities on campus.

A total of 769 women returned the survey on sororities. Of those women, 511 were sorority members while 258 were independents. Among the respondents, forty-five percent were in favor of “improving sororities,” while twenty-three percent favored the current system; seventeen percent wanted “complete abolition” and fifteen percent were for “gradual de-emphasis.”²⁷ The sorority evaluation committee provided a selection of suggestions made by those polled for ways to change the current system. Some of these included requests to:

Improve the rushing system, delay rushing, have sophomore rushing, eliminate pledging and abolish sororities painlessly, give sororities more responsible work, organize independents, provide more sorority-fraternity contacts, make the dorm the center of campus life, do not limit the number of pledges, have enough sororities so that everyone who wishes to may join.²⁸

Significantly, some sorority women thought that the sorority experience could be improved by adding more opportunities for contact with Duke fraternities. Perhaps these were among the 196 sorority women polled who felt that their membership did not offer them better dating opportunities.

²⁶ Minutes, October 18, 1951, Order of the White Duchy Records, 1925-1968.

²⁷ “Report of the Sorority Evaluation Committee,” 1951-1952, Box 1, Reports and Evaluations (Rush & Otherwise), 1945-1959, Duke Panhellenic Council Records.

²⁸ “Report of the Sorority Evaluation Committee,” 1951-1952.

Even after the tabulation of survey responses, however, the report of the sorority evaluation committee only gave the Panhellenic council and the administration *ideas* as to what work they might undertake to improve the acceptance of sororities at Duke. The suggestions sounded much like the ones that college women repeatedly voiced when criticizing sororities. Typically they failed to explain in detail how the campus and the sororities would make the changes or enact alternative methods. By stating that they wished to “improve rushing,” the women *were* expressing a valid point – that there was an inherent problem in rush as it existed. The problem was in finding some other way to run the sorority membership drives. Suggestions for changes that had to do with the scheduling of rush and the elimination of a pledge quota would not find favor with the NPC. The NPC and the national leadership of the individual sororities appeared to believe that they had been perfecting the rush process for the past half century. In reality, the desires of women students on a campus or two was not going to cause the nationals to overhaul their rush systems.

The upheavals caused by campus discussions of the worth of sororities would continue at Duke over the next two decades. Since the Woman’s College had no sorority housing, all of the female students lived together in the dormitories. This intermingling of sorority and independent women may have enabled these conversations to take place more easily than if the two groups had been spatially separated by place of residence. Additionally, Duke’s student newspaper, *The Chronicle*, regularly printed editorials during rushing season that questioned the value of sororities. When writing to the NPC area adviser, Eileen Rudolph (Tri-Delt), in September 1962, Duke’s Panhellenic Council president reported that, “*The Chronicle* printed its usual nasty editorial again last week.” She noted that the paper’s editor was against fraternities and sororities as had been the editors over the previous three years.²⁹ In an October 1961 editorial, *The Chronicle* “wish[ed] to emphasize the relatively small part which sororities do play on the

²⁹ Duke Panhellenic Council president to Eileen Rudolph, September 26, 1962, Correspondence, N-R, 1952-1966, Box 2, Panhellenic Council Records.

campus.” The editors mentioned that most women became best friends with those in their dormitory since the campus lacked sorority houses. This seemed, to the editors, to lessen the groups’ authority on campus. Sororities’ “necessity” was further diminished, the editors wrote, because “many of the advantages and opportunities which they offer are also made available by other campus organizations.” They noted that sororities “duplicated” the social projects of the YWCA and that the school already offered “many campus-wide or fraternity-sponsored parties and dances.”³⁰

The Order of the White Duchy made a record of the ups and downs of campus sentiment toward the groups. Although the Panhellenic Council had agreed to work on improvements following the sorority evaluation, it is unclear whether they were able to deliver any meaningful changes. For instance, the White Duchy was aghast at Panhel’s idea to have the “losers” of rush – the women cut by sororities – “attend a free movie at the quad flicks.” Apparently, the Panhellenic Council thought that this might cheer up the women who had just been denied membership in a sorority. The OWD felt that this would, instead, “put the cut women on display and make them feel even more ‘conspicuously’ out [of Greek life].” The White Duchy also sought to mediate the uproar caused by sororities holding rush parties in the dormitories, an issue that they felt Panhellenic should have taken measures to prevent. Again, the “cut” women would feel the hurt of denial even more by being in such close proximity to the parties. By 1959, the OWD noted that six of its members were anti-sorority, “[sorority] membership notwithstanding.”³¹

When the SOS agitation broke loose in 1961 there was already a movement within Panhellenic to present incoming women students with an acceptable alternative to sorority membership. In an August 1960 letter to Ellen Huckabee, Dean of Undergraduate Instruction at

³⁰ “Up From Obscurity,” *The Chronicle*, [Late Sept.-early Oct., 1961], Correspondence, A-D, 1947-1966, Box 2, Panhellenic Council Records.

³¹ September 22, 1959, Minutes, 1959-1960, Order of the White Duchy Records, 1925-1968.

the Woman's College, Panhellenic president explained that she was "firmly convinced of the fact that you can be very happy at Duke without being in a sorority." She thought that rush was "a wonderful opportunity to meet people," since women would learn to "recognize girls outside [of their] dorm and sorority all year long." Yet she also wanted Panhellenic to "take as much hurt out of rush as [they] possibly [could.]" The Panhellenic president believed this goal was a manageable one by presenting the students, and particularly the freshmen, with "the proper attitude toward rush."³² A speech given to freshman women by the Duke Panhellenic Council president in these years described the proper attitude toward rush as one where the individual showed interest in each sorority, but also acknowledged the variety of activities on campus and that sorority membership was not required for social involvement at Duke. The speaker wanted to remind the women that since they were new to campus, the emphasis on fall rushing might make sororities appear a more significant part of campus life than they actually were.³³

In 1961, the Panhellenic Council provided first-year women the chance to read letters about the sorority system written by anonymous upperclasswomen – two were sorority members, two were independents. The women shared a glimpse of their experiences, which included widely divergent views. One woman related how her sorority had meant a great deal to her years at Duke, while another noted that, "many times" she did "not realize the existence of a Greek society on campus."³⁴ Each of the women represented a different take on the sorority system but the common theme of their letters urged freshman to give careful consideration to their decision of whether or not to join a sorority. Because of the special situation at Duke, they explained,

³² Duke Panhellenic president to Ellen Huckabee, August 24, 1960, Correspondence, N-R, 1952-1966, Box 2, Panhellenic Council Records.

³³ Untitled speech by Panhellenic President, n.d. Speeches, 1956-1970, Box 3, Panhellenic Council Records.

³⁴ Letters to Freshmen, Fall 1961, Sorority System Debate, 1947-1966, Box 3, Panhellenic Council Records.

where the lack of sorority houses placed sorority women in dormitories among the non-affiliated women, a woman could be happy as either an independent or a sorority member.³⁵

That a woman could be quite happy *not* being in a sorority was not the type of message that national sorority leaders and NPC officers would like to hear uttered by a campus Panhellenic Council president. As evidenced by Alpha Delta Pi Grand President Caralee Stanard's 1945 letter regarding the sorority agitation that I discussed earlier in the chapter, the leadership of NPC sororities liked to keep a close watch on the situation at Duke and to intervene when they deemed it necessary. The alumnae leaders found it crucial to maintain control over student activity. If a sorority chapter or college panhellenic was left without guidance, the national sorority leaders began to fear, the collegiate members could easily fall under the influence of groups the alumnae saw as suspicious. Organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the NSA, the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) presented new ideas about social equality and student action that might lead sorority women to question their membership in Greek-letter groups. The NPC leaders began to view such groups as unfriendly and worried that they might influence the younger women to take up radical ideas such as abolishing their own sororities. As the college sorority members chafed under the control of the alumnae leadership, incidents such as the 1961 SOS campaign at Duke could result.

At the 1962 meeting of the Edgewater Conference, delegates noted that they had been "asleep at the switch" in regard to the situation at Duke.³⁶ National Panhellenic Conference area advisor, Eileen Rudolph (Tri-Delta), read the second SOS letter to the Edgewater conference members. At the same time, she criticized the Panhellenic Council at Duke for inviting the anonymous SOS authors to the Panhel meeting to discuss their concerns and how the council might address them. Rudolph had questioned the Panhellenic president's decision to try to work

³⁵ Letters to Freshmen, Fall 1961.

³⁶ Edgewater Conference Minutes, 1962, ATO Archives, 96.

with the agitators, comparing the move to “inviting a robber into your living room to sit down and discuss what he is going to take.”³⁷ Sorority alumnae, like Ernestine Grigsby of Tri-Delta, instead, hoped to educate their members with the idea that good citizenship in this period was synonymous with “conservatism, or anti-communism, or Americanism.”³⁸ These terms, which were apparently interchangeable in Grigsby’s mind, represented the ideals of sororities and fraternities in the decades immediately following World War II.

Several women at the Edgewater Conference meeting believed that Duke’s sorority issues resulted from the lack of sorority houses and the presence of administrators whom they believed were “opposed” to Greek-letter organizations. With concern, the conference members recalled the instance of women de-sistering in the 1940s. “This is the history of Duke, ‘as Duke,’ stated Julia Fuqua Ober, Kappa Delta National President and NPC delegate. The sorority leaders felt that since the campus of the Woman’s College of Duke University opened in 1930, sororities were “not as strong in their minds as the student activity group.”³⁹ Not the preeminent campus activity, it seemed, sororities were just another club at the Woman’s College. In the view of the NPC leadership, this was not an acceptable status.

“This is a bad situation,” Ober observed. In her view, Duke sororities sent “representative delegates to certain organizations with the most distasteful resolutions.” While Ober did not name any group in particular, another Edgewater member reminded the conference members that Duke sorority women were attending the YW[CA] Conferences in the same period as de-sistering occurred. The women were “coming back [from the YWCA Conferences] and that was the instigation of their turning in their badges.” The YWCA and YMCA had, for a number of years, been under suspicion by members of Greek-letter groups.

³⁷ Edgewater Conference Minutes, 1962, 96.

³⁸ Edgewater Conference Minutes, 1962, 26.

³⁹ Edgewater Conference Minutes, 1962, 97.

In 1957, Chi Omega National President Elizabeth Dyer sent Chi Omega advisers and traveling secretaries a letter that included a newsletter called “The Record We Must Face.” It contained materials, Dyer explained, that would show them “what fraternities are up against.”⁴⁰ The newsletter listed the YWCA and the YMCA, as well as the NSA, as adversarial organizations. Specifically, the write-up noted that one of the major objectives to arise out of the 1954 National Student Assembly of the YWCA and YMCA was for Y members “to work on sorority and fraternity members to eliminate discrimination of race, color, creed and national origin.” They “especially...urge[d] northern members to work on their brothers and sisters in the South!” Wryly, the Record’s author noted, “They [YW-YM] are still at it.”⁴¹

The YWCA and Progressive Thought in the South

The YWCA had been a haven for progressive ideas in the South since the first quarter of the twentieth century. In 1920, as historian Frances Sanders Taylor explains, the student YWCA “committed itself to the creation of a harmonious interracial world.” The southern division of the student YWCA, which included groups in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Louisiana, became the primary white student group in the South pressing for interracial cooperation during the early decades of the twentieth century. “Inspired by the message of social Christianity, disturbed by the racial tensions of post-World War I America, and challenged by black YWCA members to confront racial prejudice within its own organization,” Taylor notes, the white student YWCAs championed the lofty goal of interracial understanding and cooperation.⁴² Of course, by taking such a stand in the South, the student YWCAs would take heat from white southerners who saw the groups’ liberal ideas on the issue of race as a sign of radicalism. By promoting interracial cooperation, the YWCA and the

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Dyer to Chi Omega Counsellors [Traveling Secretaries], January, 1957, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 31, Chi Omega Correspondence, January-March, 1957.

⁴¹ “The Record We Must Face,” January, 1957, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 31, Chi Omega Correspondence, January-March, 1957, 2.

⁴² Frances Sanders Taylor, “‘On the Edge of Tomorrow’: Southern Women, The Student YWCA, and Race, 1920-1944,” (Ph.D. Dissertation: Stanford University, 1984), 6, 79.

YMCA additionally provoked the ire of NPC and IFC sororities and fraternities, who began to view the groups as subversive organizations.

At Duke University in the mid to late 1930s, the student YWCA began to address “interracial relations.” During the 1934-1935 school year, the YWCA designated February as “racial problems and interracial relations” month. The chapel programming by the group’s interracial committee included Dr. Howard E. Jensen of the Sociology Department speaking on the “Costigan-Wagner Bill,” an anti-lynching bill that was currently being debated in the United States Congress, Dr. Yeo, a Chinese medical student speaking on “Student Life in China,” and “Miss Marjorie Bright, director of dramatics at the North Carolina College for Negroes (now North Carolina Central University), in a dramatic program.” The YWCA report also noted that Mrs. Elbert Russell spoke on “various races[,] their customs and their costumes” at the February general meeting. To accompany Mrs. Russell’s presentation, “twenty Duke women were dressed in the countries on which [she] touched in her talk.”⁴³ From these events, it seems that the YWCA women were taking initial steps in familiarizing themselves with the experiences and issues of non-white peoples.

To contemporary sensibilities, however, some of these programs might seem somewhat problematic. From the report, it is unclear in what tone Mrs. Russell introduced her topics. The “parade of races” type of presentation could run the risk of reinforcing cartoonish images of dress and mannerisms from different cultures. With the addition of a costume event for the Duke women, the program sounded more apropos for an elementary school class lesson than for a group of intelligent college women. Further, the fact that Marjorie Bright, a professor from the African American college in Durham, seemed to have performed “a dramatic program” and apparently did not give an accompanying lecture about dramatics suggests that the white students

⁴³ Annual Report of the YWCA of Duke University, 1934-1935, YWCA of Duke University Records, c. 1925-1985, Box 1, Historical Reports, 1929-1936, 3; Walter White, “The Costigan-Wagner Bill,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1934, 16.

and their advisors might not have been ready for an African American guest who appeared to be anything other than a performer.⁴⁴ Again, while we cannot know exactly what Bright included in her program, the YWCA's series of interracial programs in 1935 seemed to endorse a passive sort of interracial relations. However, as the white YWCA members watched these speakers and performers and learned about laws or cultures that pertained to "Other" people, they certainly encountered new knowledge, which may have led them to new ways of thinking.

Only by sharing experiences with individuals from different races could the white YWCA members take their learning to the next level. On several occasions throughout the school year, groups of Duke students visited the Negro College in Durham; twice the YW invited the African American students to the Duke campus.⁴⁵ The YWCA's report did not elaborate on what had transpired during these interracial gatherings, or if any YWCA members from either school disapproved of such events. We can assume that this interaction went well, for the next year, the women's organizations continued their affiliation.⁴⁶

Also in the following year, perhaps to reduce the chances of negative attention, the YWCA's World Fellowship Committee subsumed the work of the interracial committee. The World Fellowship Committee "had as its chief aim the initiation and furthering of a peace movement on campus," and worked with a comparable committee from the campus YMCA toward that aim. The YWCA reported that "as part of its inter-racial relations program, the [the World Fellowship Committee] entertained a group from the YWCA from the North Carolina College for Negroes."⁴⁷ It would appear that the Duke YWCA members found these events beneficial since in the 1937-1938 school year the World Fellowship Committee outlined plans for further cooperation between the groups. They recommended that:

⁴⁴ Annual Report of the YWCA of Duke University, 1934-1935, 3.

⁴⁵ Annual Report of the YWCA of Duke University, 1934-1935, 5.

⁴⁶ Annual Report of the YWCA of Duke University, 1935-1936, YWCA of Duke University Records, c. 1925-1981, Historical Reports, 1929-1936, 7.

⁴⁷ Annual Report of the YWCA of Duke University, 1935-1936, 7.

A definite program of race relations should be undertaken. Suggested: a. Visit Negro schools, b. Visit Negro institutions, c. Cooperate with N.C. College for Negroes on exchange programs, d. Studies in race relations, e. Friendship program of some sort for races represented here at Duke.⁴⁸

In 1938, the YWCA seemed to be following through on these suggestions. The Human Relations committee, which included the Industrial group, the World Fellowship Group, and the Race Relations group, continued working on issues of social concern beyond campus. Specifically, the Race Relations group “stud[ied] race problems,” and “had taken some interesting trips to the Negro Insurance Company [North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance in Durham]⁴⁹ and to the YWCA.” They also “sponsored an open forum discussion led by Miss Thyra Edwards, a well known Negro social worker.” Edwards spoke on her recent trip to Civil War-torn Spain where she had been a volunteer working with children.⁵⁰ The Duke YWCA seemed poised to enact change but that potential would go largely unrealized until the 1950s and early 1960s as the group’s social justice work appeared to diminish, perhaps as a result of World War II and the anticommunist activity in the interim.

As white southern student YWCA and YMCA members discussed the need for interracial work and, in the 1920s and 1930s, began to hold conferences that included African American religious leaders as well as student delegates from the African American campus Y groups, some southern whites construed the student Y’s drive toward desegregated meetings as a threat to the racial status quo in the region.⁵¹ In a 1928 letter written to V.L. Roy, president of the State

⁴⁸ Report of World Fellowship Committee for Years, 1936-1937, YWCA of Duke University Records, c. 1925-1981, Historical Reports, 1937-1938.

⁴⁹ North Carolina Mutual Life is an insurance agency started by African Americans, John Merrick, Dr. Aaron McDuffie Moore, and Charles Clinton Spaulding in Durham, North Carolina in 1898. Today “it is the oldest and largest African American life insurance company in the United States.” See North Carolina Mutual Life, About Us, <http://www.ncmutuallife.com/newsite/pages/about.html>, website accessed September 30, 2010.

⁵⁰ Winter Report of the YWCA, 1938, YWCA of Duke University Records, c. 1925-1981, Historical Reports, 1937-1938, 2.

⁵¹ “Brief Historical Sketch, Southern Student YMCA-YWCA Conference Relations, 1929-1944,” Series 3 (Box 31), Rise of the Interracial Conference in the South, Anne Queen Papers, 1930-1985, 1,7; W.C. Jackson to V.L. Roy, June 21, 1928, Series 1, 1928 Blue Ridge Association: African American Delegates, Willis D. Weatherford Papers”, 1911-1969.

Normal College in Natchitoches, Louisiana, Walter Clinton Jackson, vice-president of the North Carolina College for Women discussed the situation at the annual white southern student YWCA conference, held at the Blue Ridge Assembly in Black Mountain, North Carolina. Evidently, President Roy was concerned about the prospect of interracial activity at the meeting and Jackson wrote to him in an attempt to assure him that the event maintained proper racial decorum – meaning that it upheld racial segregation – in social situations.

To establish a commonality of thought on the race issue, Jackson highlighted his own Georgia upbringing and explained that he was “a Southerner through and through.” He was, he wrote, “so completely imbued with Southern life and so devoted to it” that he expected that they shared “in large part, if not wholly, the principal points of view” on race relations.⁵² With the expression “Southern life,” Jackson alluded to the racial status quo that sustained white supremacy in the South. He briefly explained that three “Negro fraternal delegates” attended the conference but “were housed and had their meals in Asheville.” As a witness to the African American delegates’ participation at conference, Jackson noted that, “nothing happened at Blue Ridge that could be construed as offensive or improper or undesirable.” From talking with the white delegates and YWCA leaders at the assembly, he saw that the presence of the African American delegates helped foster greater understanding of the “inter-racial situation.” Jackson observed that he did “not believe that [the African American delegates’] presence [would] contribute in any degree to the undesirable results that we think of in connection with the intermingling of white and black.” He was firm in his explanation to Roy that his “own position with reference to inter-marriage of the races of their eating together, etc., [was] very clear,” and that he had made this understood to the students in his classes.⁵³ Jackson was trying to assuage whites’ fears that meetings, discussions, and cooperation between black and white students would lead to

⁵² W.C. Jackson to V.L. Roy, June 21, 1928, Series 1, 1928 Blue Ridge Association: African American Delegates, Willis D. Weatherford Papers”, 1911-1969.

⁵³ W.C. Jackson to V.L. Roy, June 21, 1928, Series 1, 1928 Blue Ridge Association: African American Delegates, Willis D. Weatherford Papers”, 1911-1969.

a breakdown of racial segregation, followed by social mixing between the races, and whites' greatest fear, interracial sex and marriage and biracial children.

It was this same fear that led NPC and NIC leaders to label the student YWCA and YMCA groups as suspect organizations in the post-World War II decades. As the YWCA and YMCA continued to advocate social equality as a basic tenet of Protestant Christian faith, NPC and NIC saw them as enemies to their cause of "freedom of association." They feared that college sorority and fraternity members, would be swayed by what they saw as inflammatory YWCA-YMCA ideology, and would come to see "discrimination" even in private social circles as wrong. That change, they believed, could place the entire premise of sorority and fraternity membership policies into jeopardy.

As feminist historian Sara Evans has noted, most white southern women who joined the Civil Rights Movement in its early years "came to it first through the Church."⁵⁴ Although, as she observes, "southern Protestantism in the 1950s was in general as segregated and racist as the rest of southern society, it also nourished elements of egalitarian idealism, especially among college-educated young people."⁵⁵ Campus religious denominational organizations as well as community churches provided these women with a window of progressive thought and action.

Many sorority women were among the membership of the YWCAs student branches as well as religious denominational groups, such as the Baptist Student Union, the Canterbury Club (Episcopal), the United Methodist Student Movement, and the Presbyterian Student Association. In the late 1940s and the early 1950s, more students, like the women at Duke, began to show greater interest in national and world issues as opposed to maintaining a limited focus on the campus social scene. In this environment, some sorority women began to find that the work of

⁵⁴ Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 35.

⁵⁵ Evans, *Personal Politics*, 29.

the YW or their campus denominational clubs more meaningful to them than their sorority activities.

During these years, the YWCA, in particular, offered a new perspective for a number of women students. The YWCA stressed “social responsibility” among its members. The social responsibility commission of the YWCA at UNC existed to “help the students relate their faith to social responsibility and action.” Committees working in the field of social responsibility offered “opportunities for serving the community and gaining insight into the needs of people” both “Negr[o] and white, healthy and sick... children and adults.”⁵⁶ These opportunities for interracial interaction helped southern student YWCA and YMCA members confront the white supremacist ideology of their upbringing.

Students grappled with how to address the issue of “interracial activities.” As white student YWCA-YMCA conferences moved to include their African American student counterparts, questions could arise among some white southerners over the appropriateness of the meetings, particularly in the Jim Crow South. In February 1948, the YMCA at UNC issued a “tentative” statement on the matter that was “not for publication.” With a nod to their common faith, white YWCA-YMCA members declared that “racial discrimination and segregation” as it currently existed was “sinful.”⁵⁷ The group explained that the demand of religious organizations to participate in interracial conferences would result in greater understanding between black and white Americans. They referenced the leadership of traditional religious institutions on the race question, noting the emerging feeling within the Protestant churches of the United States that the church should take a stand to support racial equality throughout the South as well as the rest of the country. “In 1947,” they explained, the Protestant churches “had made more than 100

⁵⁶ YWCA Annual Report, 1953-1954, Campus Y of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Records, 1906-1976, Series 1 (Box 2), Subseries 1, YWCA Advisory Committee, 1940-1953.

⁵⁷ “Statement of the University of North Carolina YMCA, Interracial Activities,” February 13, 1948, Campus Y Records, Series 1 (Box 2), Subseries 6, Cabinet, YMCA, 1947-1949.

pronouncements on race, calling for equality, justice, and brotherhood.”⁵⁸ In their statement, student members also voiced concern over the negative image portrayed on the global stage by Americans’ acquiescence to the continuing racial injustice in the United States. In recognizing the irony of the U.S. proclaiming itself the leader in world democracy while maintaining racial inequality and denial of civil rights to individuals within its own borders, white student YWCA and YMCA members appealed to Americans to reexamine their religious teachings and seek racial conciliation.

At UNC in 1951, two sorority members, influenced, in part, by their religious beliefs, reached conclusions about their membership similar to those reached by the sorority women at Duke in the late 1940s. Frances Drane (Inglis) and Nancy Iler (Burkholder), senior roommates and members of Pi Beta Phi, both chose to de-sister from the sorority when they came to feel that the organization and its attendant activities did not represent the best use of their time. Both women were members of the campus YWCA and active in their respective denominational fellowships at UNC. Drane was the president of the YWCA and vice-president of her sorority, while Iler had been president of the Panhellenic Council. They each valued the friends they had made in Pi Phi, but they also both felt that sorority rush was a hurtful way of choosing new members.

Nancy Iler had transferred to UNC from Ward-Belmont College in Nashville, Tennessee as a junior in the fall of 1949. (At this time, unless women’s families were local residents of Chapel Hill, they could only attend the university as juniors and seniors.⁵⁹) She had witnessed summer rush parties held in her hometown of Saint Petersburg, Florida, and knew many older women who had been involved with the organizations. Iler remembered being “curious” as to “what they were all about.” As an out-of-state student matriculating at UNC, she was “anxious to have some friends and some social life.” “I really never thought about not joining,” she said. “In

⁵⁸ “Statement of the University of North Carolina YMCA, Interracial Activities,” February 13, 1948.

⁵⁹ Dean, “Women on the Hill,” 10.

a way, [I] felt that [sorority membership] was something that everyone who had the means to do, did.”⁶⁰ Iler appeared a good fit for Pi Phi. As she recalled, “I jumped in and did everything. I helped build floats and decorate for dances and just felt that I was in a fine place right then at that time.” The chapter even presented her with its “model pledge” award.⁶¹

A native of Edenton, North Carolina who had grown up in Marion, North Carolina, Frances Drane attended Saint Mary’s School in Raleigh before transferring to UNC as a junior. Greek-letter membership, she noted, had seemed “a very natural thing to do” when she arrived in Chapel Hill. Her father and uncles, who had also attended UNC, had been members of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity and she had cousins who were members of Zeta Psi fraternity. When she went through rush, Drane recalled feeling most comfortable at Pi Phi, probably in part because her older sister, Rebecca, as well as a close cousin had also been members of the chapter. “It was a popular thing to do,” she remembered. “If you really wanted to be *in-in*, it was *the thing* to do.” “But,” she noted, “certainly, not everybody was in” [the groups], and not everyone was interested.⁶² Much like Iler, Drane settled into sorority membership as just one of a number of campus activities in which she was involved.

Drane was very active in the YWCA and the Canterbury Club, the Episcopal student group. Looking back, she felt that Gay Currie, UNC’s YWCA executive director, had “had her eye on me from the minute I stepped on campus.” Currie knew that Drane had been president of the student body at Saint Mary’s and that her uncle was Frank Porter Graham, who until very recently had served for many years as president of the university. She saw Drane’s leadership potential early on.⁶³ In both the YW and the Canterbury Club Drane interacted regularly with both sorority and non-sorority women. She remembered, “being very impressed with a number of very strong independent leaders” that she met through other campus activities, and thought,

⁶⁰ Nancy Iler Burkholder Interview, telephone interview conducted by author, May 11, 2010, 3.

⁶¹ Nancy Iler Burkholder Interview, 3.

⁶² Frances Drane Inglis Interview, interview conducted by author, June 4, 2010, Edenton, NC, 2-3.

⁶³ Frances Drane Inglis Interview, 3.

“Aren’t you wonderful? You are yourself and you are doing all this without the help and backing of a sorority.”⁶⁴

By the start of their senior year, and their second as Pi Phi’s, that Nancy Iler and Frances Drane began to feel uneasy with some aspects of sorority life. “Rush was...one of the several big reasons that I left the sorority,” Iler remembered.⁶⁵ The rush experience from the perspective of the rushee was stressful for many women, but being among those making the decisions on whom to invite back and who to cut from the rushee group seemed even worse to Iler:

I first experienced the fall rush when so many women, I think over 200, were anxious for a sorority bid. The discussion that went on, the way we were judging others seemed so superficial. Looking at their attractiveness, their family connections or relatives. There were pretty pushy actives who were pushing for their favorites. And then, after rush season, only about fifty percent of the women wanting sororities were placed because there were not enough places for them. I felt literally ill after that experience.⁶⁶

After the experience with rush, Iler questioned her involvement with the sorority. By this time, she was involved in a number of other campus activities including the YWCA, the Wesley Foundation, the Student Party of student government, the Valkeries (the women’s honorary), and the Florida Club. Iler had also met and began dating Bill Burkholder, a veteran attending school on the G.I. Bill. He was not in a fraternity, but was also active in the Campus Y and the Wesley Foundation. As she found these other outlets for her time and energy, taking part in the various events required by the sorority no longer seemed so important. Iler recalled that the numerous requirements “became such a burden and a guilt trip.”⁶⁷

Her increasing ambivalence about Pi Beta Phi sisterhood “built up gradually.” She felt that her “eyes were really opened” after her second rush experience and her attendance at the YWCA/YMCA retreat held at Montreat in the North Carolina mountains. The teachings of the YWCA and the YMCA, Iler believed, “helped us to follow our Christian beliefs and principles

⁶⁴ Frances Drane Inglis Interview, 7.

⁶⁵ Nancy Iler Burkholder Interview, 4.

⁶⁶ Nancy Iler Burkholder Interview, 4.

⁶⁷ Nancy Iler Burkholder Interview, 8, 13.

and live out from day to day the best moral values.” The YWCA programs that stressed “the Bible and Christ’s teachings” she said, helped the students in dealing with social justice issues and questions of racial integration.⁶⁸ To some NPC officials, however, the YW and YMCA’s teachings merely seemed a cover for subversive activities.

France Drane, too, felt that the rush decisions of sorority women were based on superficial assessments of rushees.⁶⁹ She had, additionally, been exposed to new perspectives on college Greek-letter culture while attending YWCA-YMCA events away from campus. In particular, Drane recalled a “Y” leadership training program held in Berkeley, California during the summer of 1950. A group of around thirty YWCA and YMCA members lived together in a co-op, Prospect House, in Berkeley, while taking classes at the Pacific School of Religion. The group had lectures and discussions at the house and Drane remembered these as “the eye-opener that made me re-think my involvement with the sorority.” “I’d never heard people question the rightness of having sororities, or the role they played in accenting superficial social values.” It was the involvement at the training school that started her thinking “I’m not sure I want to be a sorority member.”⁷⁰

When Drane returned to Chapel Hill in the fall, she shared her doubts about sorority membership with her roommate, Nancy Iler.⁷¹ At UNC in these years, there was some discussion about the future of sororities on campus. The Faculty Committee on Sororities and the Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, the latter of which formed in the fall of 1948, frequently sought to address issues stemming from the rush process. In an attempt to ensure that every female student who wanted to join a sorority could do so, Dean of Women Katherine Kennedy Carmichael hoped to institute a plan that would bring a new national sorority chapter to

⁶⁸ Nancy Iler Burkholder Interview, 8, 13.

⁶⁹ Frances Drane Inglis, Interview, 6.

⁷⁰ Frances Drane Inglis, Interview, 13.

⁷¹ Frances Drane Inglis Interview, 14.

campus every two years.⁷² In these years, Iler also remembered that a small group of women on campus were interested in alternatives to the sorority system:

We didn't have a large group supporting this idea but the more research we did, we were discovering that this was not unheard of in other schools. We found out that Stanford [University] and Goucher [College] had both done away with sororities. And Francis knew about Davidson [College], which had luncheon clubs instead of sororities, where small groups would meet together as a family [group] and encourage each other and have parties later. [Those were] rather unstructured, a lot looser kind of group.⁷³

When social clubs were not beholden to a governing body of alumnae outside the college and when they had fewer members, they appeared to function in a more easygoing, enjoyable manner. Similarly, at Ward-Belmont, where Iler had spent her first two years of college, all students were members of small social clubs, not nationally affiliated Greek-letter sororities. "Everybody was a member of a club. Everything seemed very democratic and we were all almost on pretty equal footing there."⁷⁴ Katherine Carmichael, however, was not a proponent of disbanding the NPC sorority system, and so the women students' research and ideas for alternatives did not go far. Drane remembered a conversation she had with her uncle, Frank Graham, on the matter. Graham had not chosen to join a fraternity while he was a student at UNC. "It was not his idea of the way a university should be," Drane explained. While he likely shared his niece's concerns with the Greek-letter societies on campus, he advised her to be pragmatic about the situation. As she recalled, he said to her, "Look, you're going to be leaving here. [In attempting to overhaul the sorority system] [y]ou're starting something you can't follow through on."⁷⁵

When changing the system was not an option, a personal decision about sorority membership could help ameliorate the feelings of disillusionment. Together, the two women made their decision to de-sister from Pi Phi. Some people, Iler recalled, "were shocked:"

⁷² Katherine Kennedy Carmichael to Pahnellenic Council president, October 20, 1948, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 33, Sororities: Pledging/Rushing Policy, 1945-1956.

⁷³ Nancy Iler Burkholder Interview, 7.

⁷⁴ Nancy Iler Burkholder Interview, 2.

⁷⁵ Frances Drane Inglis Interview, 9.

They could simply not imagine anyone doing this. So many people wanted to get in [to the sorority.] Just to walk away was...there had been seemingly no huge, noticeable thing that was so terrible. To try to explain it was not easy.⁷⁶

In a letter to Chi Omega national leader Mary Love Collins, Chi Omega's advisor at UNC, Guion Johnson, wrote of the episode, that sororities on campus "received unfavorable publicity... because of the resignations of two leading Pi Phi's." The uproar caused by the Pi Phi's' actions, Johnson explained, had led to much concern throughout the state over the sorority system at UNC.⁷⁷ It is unclear exactly how Guion Johnson may have viewed what, to some, seemed the scandalous de-sistering of the Pi Beta Phi members. She suggested that the event had cast shame on the university, but quickly moved on to explain to Collins how the positive work of the Epsilon Beta chapter of Chi Omega that year was helping to smooth over any lingering indignation among UNC's Greek-letter alumni.

Foremost in that category seemed to be the public relations coup also known as the Chi Omega Distinguished Service Award. Johnson noted that the university administration "was greatly pleased" with the award presented the previous year. At a recent meeting, UNC Chancellor Robert Burton House and Dean of Women Katherine Kennedy Carmichael had "suggested" to Johnson that, "the Chi Omega award would greatly help to offset the unfavorable comments going about the state because of the disaffection in Pi Phi." Not coincidentally, the award also benefited the Epsilon Beta chapter. The Chi Omegas had informed Johnson of their belief that the "presentation of the award [the previous year] to a highly prominent and distinguished resident of Eastern North Carolina greatly helped them... in rushing girls from that area who in years passed [sic] [had] pledged Pi Phi."⁷⁸ While it seemed that Pi Beta Phi floundered temporarily, Johnson suggested that Chi Omega stepped in to save face for the UNC

⁷⁶ Nancy Iler Burkholder Interview, 15-16.

⁷⁷ Guion Johnson to Mary Love Collins, February 8, 1951, GGJ Papers, Series 3.1, Box 30, Chi Omega Correspondence, 1951.

⁷⁸ Guion Johnson to Mary Love Collins, February 8, 1951.

sorority system and at the same time, gain the attention of desirable, incoming rushees. The presentation of the Distinguished Service Award was a win-win situation for Epsilon Beta.

It is unclear how Johnson felt about Iler's and Drane's choice to leave their sorority. From her existing correspondence in this instance, she appeared most concerned about the overall image of the UNC sorority system. Perhaps she would have given a more thorough opinion on the de-sistering had the women been members of Chi Omega, but that also might have resulted in comments on par with what the sororities' national leaders wished to hear. We can imagine, though, from our knowledge about Johnson's personal beliefs, as well as her thoughts on some of her own sororities' leadership decisions, that she may have understood their dissatisfaction.

In the end, both Iler and Drane had to make the personal decision that was right for them at that point in their lives. Neither woman expressed regret about leaving the sorority. Drane stated that she "never" regretted de-sistering; "It was the best decision."⁷⁹ When looking back, however, Iler said she felt that she "was a little bit... naïve to think that [her] actions could make any difference," or actually change the sorority system. The decision was more about peace within her own conscience. She did note that many of her Pi Phi sisters were and have continued to be very friendly after the episode. As such, she still considers them as her "sisters." "I still love so many of my sisters there," she reflected. Some of the women have told her that "especially now, later in life, [they] understood some of [her] thinking and feelings" in choosing to leave the sorority.⁸⁰ The passing of time allows for the mellowing of thought and perhaps changes in attitude, but both women, through their decisions, showed that even during the conformist culture of the 1950s, individual sorority women would stand by their personal beliefs at the expense of group image.

While we do not know what Johnson *truly* thought about the Pi Phis choosing to de-sister, there is some evidence that she might have viewed the feelings of uncertainty of purpose

⁷⁹ Frances Drane Inglis Interview, 20.

⁸⁰ Nancy Iler Burkholder Interview, 15.

among sorority members in a different light than did ADPi alumna Betty Jones at Duke. In December of 1958, Anne K. Riggins, a member of the Epsilon Beta chapter, wrote a thoughtful, four-page letter to Johnson that detailed her hopes for and concerns with the contemporary sorority experience. Clearly, Anne felt comfortable sharing her thoughts with Johnson and seemed to believe that Johnson would take her concerns to heart. This, as well as Johnson's atypical life as a sociological researcher, community organizer, and highly involved and respected member of many women's clubs and councils, suggests that she may have appeared as a role model for young sorority women interested in challenging some of the more frivolous aspects of sorority life. Unlike the women who formed SOS at Duke in this same period, Anne apparently felt free to speak her mind, unhindered by fears of retribution from others on campus.

Anne's home address was on Park Avenue in Manhattan's Upper East Side. As a Carolina "coed," she brought ideas that were simultaneously old-fashioned and avant-garde ideas to sorority activities in Chapel Hill. Her reflections appear similar to the ideas espoused by some of the sorority women at Duke during the 1940s. Although Anne did not wish to do away with sororities at UNC, she did express the desire to make the experience more relevant to the lives that the members would most likely lead after graduation. "This past summer and fall," she wrote to Johnson, "I have given a great deal of thought to the aims, achievements, hopes and problems of our Chi Omega Chapter in Chapel Hill – trying to evaluate some of its fundamental purposes and potentials in an effort to further extend and interpret those into the lives of the girls who follow." Anne noted that some of her Epsilon Beta sisters were "among [her] closest and most lasting friends," but admitted that, "there rang a chord of yet deeper potential within the sorority as a whole which I feel is perhaps not fully realized." "Particularly, in retrospect," she wrote, "It appears that one of the most valuable functions of sorority living lies in its unique opportunity to create a linkage between the college experience and the infinitely broader role we are called upon

to fill after graduation.”⁸¹ Anne viewed the purpose of the sorority in much the same way as national sorority leaders hoped the groups would be seen. Perhaps to a much greater extent than most of her Epsilon Beta sisters, she formed a specific opinion as to what sororities should do on campus and how that ideal goal should be met. Her reflections evidence a young woman who believed that sororities held the seeds of positive influence for their members but that were not living up to the full potential that such organizations could offer.

During her time at Chapel Hill, Anne “often had occasion to wonder at the application of these principles, to wonder what in fact [they] were pointing to in the life beyond, to wonder primarily at the too-heavy concern for the [illegible, lightly?] social activities [illegible]. She wondered if a “shift in the emphasis of these activities could rectify the problem (e.g. possibly a community program not unlike some of the projects fostered by the Junior League).” Yet she noted:

upon further consideration I grew to realize that ‘activities’ alone, whatever their emphasis, can be no more [or] less than an expression of basic attitudes – and that hence to shift activities is only to treat the symptoms of an ailment instead of getting at the core from which they spring.⁸²

She felt it was “a wasteful shame” that many women “regard[ed] the sorority as little more than a base for social operations in college – and too often simply as a source of social prestige in their lives after college.” Although the members lived, worked, and played together, Anne said that they “seldom thought together.” Instead of the sorority’s activities “effectively radiat[ing] outward,” she felt that their activities “collaps[ed] inward to fill...a thoughtless vacuum – or obscure it.” To make her point, Anne listed a number of Epsilon Beta “activities” that helped to establish the general “attitude” among the group that she found distasteful. She disdained the “hours and hours of float-making (primarily for [their] own prestige in competition), the hours and hours of dance decoration (primarily for [their] own enjoyment), [and] the electioneering and

⁸¹ Anne Riggins to Guion Johnson, December 19, 1958, Guion Griffis Johnson Papers, 1873-1987 (#4546), Series 3.1, Folder 275.

⁸² Anne Riggins to Guion Johnson, December 19, 1958.

beauty queen campaigns which too often emphasize[d] the winning over other sororities.”⁸³ These activities were typical among sorority chapters nationally. Anne noted that these were only a few examples but that they were significant in their relevance to the formation of an attitude of which she did not wholly approve.

Anne sought to return Chi Omega to activities that more clearly enacted the group’s ideals as she and other members had learned them. She asked Guion Johnson if it would be possible to “initiate a new tradition,” but one that she noted, “ha[d] existing roots in the standards and purposes of Chi Omega.” Like the first generation of sorority women who had held their meetings to provide a supportive environment and encourage intellectual exchange, Anne hoped that the Epsilon Beta chapter could resurrect the tradition of choosing a sister to “read” on a topic each week at the chapter meeting. The woman could choose from “infinite” possibilities: a discussion on an academic topic, a “perceptive analysis of a world situation or national policy,” a reading of her original work, or a “discussion of values.” The only requirement would be that the sister, “present a paper or a talk that would be worth the thoughtful consideration of the group.” Anne looked, optimistically, at such a program as a way to “awaken if not all at least many to a more comprehensive and honest consideration of themselves and the world for which they will be responsible.”⁸⁴

Anne was hitting at a fundamental problem for the young women who began to have trouble reconciling the daily, light-hearted, social activities of sorority life with their interest in larger world issues that often took place beyond the confines of campus life. Particularly for white, sorority women in the South, the world encapsulated by their college and sorority existence effectively shielded them from encounters with racial injustice. A sorority chapter at a southern university, as described by Anne in her letter, and as was often the case during this period, was not generally a place that made time for discussions of social equality – be it in

⁸³ Anne Riggins to Guion Johnson, December 19, 1958.

⁸⁴ Anne Riggins to Guion Johnson, December 19, 1958.

matters of race or gender. While it is impossible to know the exact number of sorority women at UNC who had doubts about the worth of their membership, or even what circumstances might have led to their doubts, it is important to realize that some sorority sisters recognized flaws within the sorority system and wanted to eliminate those problems for the benefit of all members and, albeit indirectly, the betterment of the larger population.

Anne admitted to Johnson that she had “had no contact whatever with the process of ‘rush,’” but felt “certain that each Chi Omega must be chosen for what she [could] be expected to contribute to the group – in a deeply personal way.” The fact that she described her *impression* of rush as a deeply meaningful process built around an attempt to select young women who embodied certain desired traits in personality, intelligence, and character suggests that she had a somewhat idealistic image of the sorority and its function at this point in time. Perhaps once Anne had had a chance to view rush from the side of the sisters instead of that of the rushees, she would come to see the exercise much as Nancy Iler and Frances Drane had observed it. As I have argued, the collegiate sorority members and alumnae often failed to adhere to fair practices in their selection of new members. Anne’s misunderstanding, or idealized picture, of rush may have been indicative of a larger disconnect between her *conception* of a contemporary sorority and its *actual* activities.

Although Anne wrote that she was already in correspondence with five other Epsilon Betas about her “proposition” and that they had all been “encouraging,” this did not mean that the majority of the chapter would actually support the new program. The institution of the program would certainly lengthen their weekly chapter meetings and, to many sisters, would probably sound more like schoolwork than the opportunities to socialize, for which they had likely joined the sorority in the first place. For a sorority sister to prepare a chapter presentation would mean more work, and would call for preparation time that she might not have available. With the number of activities the sororities already required of their members, even one more –

particularly when it resembled a homework assignment and not something like a dance or a mixer – might not be seen as feasible. While there is no record of how Guion Johnson responded to Anne’s letter or whether or not the chapter chose to enact programs that might change the “attitude” of the sorority, Anne’s comments show the important fact that some sorority women did want to change the direction of the typical sorority existence.

As students’ interests during this period shifted to encompass a wider scope of events beyond the campus stage, a space also opened for students to become more critical of campus activities carried on by their peers. While there had always been the possibility of individual sorority women criticizing aspects of their respective sororities or the Greek-letter system, it was not until the post-World War II decades that the sororities began to acknowledge and address women’s growing dissatisfaction with their programs. Through an examination of the conversations among sorority women at several southern universities during these years we can see a pattern of emerging concern which, in turn becomes a point of interest and indeed, alarm, for national sorority leaders and NPC delegates.

By the mid to late 1960s, the college Panhellenic Councils at Duke and UNC saw the need for sororities to revamp their image on campus. A March 1967 report by UNC’s Panhellenic Council aptly titled, “Panhellenic Plans a New Image,” acknowledged the problems caused by sororities, such as “pressure to conform, cliquishness, high expenses, unnecessary stressing of social values and snobbishness.”⁸⁵ They noted that “the social compassion and acceptance of differences so indigenous to student culture emerge[d] in many minds as being diametrically opposed,” to the sorority membership selection process. In an attempt to change this impression, the Panhellenic report suggested that the rush recommendation system needed “explanation and revisions if it is to be acceptable to the new American generation.”⁸⁶ One difficulty in making

⁸⁵ “Panhellenic Plans a New Image,” March, 1967, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 33, Sororities, Panhellenic Council, 1940-1977, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, 2.

⁸⁶ “Panhellenic Plans a New Image,” March, 1967, 2.

rush and many aspects of sorority life acceptable to the college students of the 1960s was that the changes would not sit well with many sorority alumnae. Finding a way to mediate the two different perspectives proved a challenge that often seemed too great to overcome. The college Panhellenic Council advised that the sorority alumnae “need[ed] to decide what things need control and what do not in American women.” With that comment, the report explicitly stated that alumnae should reevaluate their desire to control the collegiate sorority members with the aim of diminishing their involvement in the sorority programs on campus. At the same time, they advocated for the students on the council to take the lead in making decisions about what issues they wanted greater freedom to address at the collegiate level.

The lead author of the report reserved her most stinging criticism for rush. She demanded that sororities “look carefully at the image they present in rush with their silly little Alice in Wonderland parties and their vague criterion for selection.” She felt that the local chapters could actually use *greater* guidance from their nationals in their selection of girls who would “make sorority life meaningful.” She referred to this guidance as “training in developing strength and recognizing worth in other human beings.”⁸⁷ Instead of simply passing along ideas for rush party themes, she hoped that the alumnae would offer instruction in identifying worthy new members. As we have seen in the previous two chapters, however, it was often the alumnae leaders of the nationals that sought to perpetuate the desirable member “stereotype” that the UNC Panhellenic Council wanted to avoid.

The Panhel report’s author attempted to downplay the role of race, which was increasingly involved in issues of membership selection following the racial desegregation of universities in the South. She noted that this “training” to select new members, so badly needed by sorority members, was “a much bigger thing than taking a girl because she is or is not a Negro.” While the college Panhellenic was able to sidestep directly addressing their opinion on

⁸⁷ “Panhellenic Plans a New Image,” March, 1967, 4.

race in membership selection, they were more straightforward in making a point about what they saw as the outmoded guidance that the local chapters received from alumnae. Instead of learning “manners and all the social graces that a girl can absorb,” the lead author advocated that, “a woman in our world must be able to learn the ability to recognize and develop strength personally.”⁸⁸ Seemingly a novel concept in a group that thrived on conformity, she wanted the sorority to help women learn to think for themselves and have the courage of their convictions. Her word choice in referring to the contemporary sorority members as “women” and those that had routinely received the training in social graces as “girls,” demonstrated a distinction in her mind about the independence and the maturity of the sorority woman of 1967 as opposed to those of a decade or more before. With statements like these, sorority women of the late 1960s foreshadowed changes in thought and action that, in a few short years, would become publicly recognizable as principles of the so-called second-wave feminist movement.

Clearly advocating for change, some sorority women attempted to work within the system to transform what they saw as its faults. Their efforts, however, often appeared to end in disappointment. In September 1967, the president of the Panhellenic Council at Duke, Bunny Small, resigned her post while issuing “the challenge that sorority women [were] not honest with themselves about Greek life.” Small delivered a speech to sorority presidents, rush chairmen and campus leaders in which she derided rush’s “dehumanizing” function. She had hoped that her presidency would help build a greater sense of community while overcoming the “attitude of ‘parochialism’” that she saw as a part of the Greek system. Small said that Panhellenic had “changed the structure, but that [was] not enough.” A real community, she argued, would “not depend on selective membership, but can develop wherever there are people.”⁸⁹ Small also

⁸⁸ “Panhellenic Plans a New Image,” March, 1967, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 33, Sororities, Panhellenic Council, 1940-1977, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Records, 1920-1991,” 4.

⁸⁹ Janis Johnson, “Panhel President Quits Sororities,” *The Chronicle*, September 20, 1967, in Duke Panhellenic Council Records, Box 3, Newspaper Clippings, 1963-1971.

deactivated from her sorority and called for other sorority women who were “middle-of-the-roaders who never address themselves to the moral question of Greek association,” to also end their memberships.

Small added a new dimension to sorority criticism with her suggestion that membership in Greek-letter groups might be a moral wrong. Her distaste for sororities’ system of selective membership led her to feel that the groups taught and reinforced in their members socially undesirable ways of interacting with others. By enforcing a value system that taught sorority women to look down on those women who did not meet their membership criteria, Small appeared to believe that sororities were failing in their training of good citizens. If sorority membership hindered a woman’s ability to show awareness of and compassion for those with whom she came in contact as well as limited her interest in issues of social justice, some women no longer desired to take part.

That some young women now viewed sorority membership as a moral question was of grave concern to some alumnae leaders. The manner in which these national officers seemed to react to the college sorority women’s unrest exhibited just how wide the generational gap in thinking had become. In attempting to address social issues of their day, such as the Civil Rights Movement, the war in Vietnam, or the budding women’s movement, college members became, in the eyes of alumnae, crusaders “mixed up in the dissident affairs” of the time.⁹⁰ In August 1969, Alpha Delta Pi Area Advisor for the NPC’s College Panhellenics Committee, Maxine Blake, issued a report on her visit to the University of North Carolina Panhellenic. Blake was distressed by the fact that the college Panhellenic at UNC and the campus in general was, as she put it, “very determined and set in its ways, yet vastly influenced by free thinking and a great desire to promote the welfare of the individual.” While promoting the welfare of the individual might

⁹⁰ Blake, Maxine, “Report on Requested Visit to University of North Carolina Panhellenic,” August 21, 1969, NPC Records, College Panhellenic Committee (41/82/40), Box 1, College Panhellenic Area Advisor Reports of Workshops, 1964-1969.

sound like a positive step for a college Panhellenic, Blake apparently took this to mean that UNC Panhel placed interest in the individual ahead of the image of campus sorority chapters and Panhel. To women of Blake's generation, the tendency, and even the insistence, of some sorority women of the late 1960s and early 1970s to ignore what alumnae saw as the "best interests of their member groups," was a radical shift in thinking. This shift, where individual chapters or members appeared to want to strike out on their own, marked a change that, to women like Blake, seemed destined to damage sorority life as they knew it.⁹¹

Concomitant with her criticism of the UNC Panhellenic Council, Blake voiced concern over student activism on the UNC campus. She cautioned the NPC that:

Black militants are at work at Chapel Hill, SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] is getting under way, 'anti-recommendation' feeling was expressed, and [Panhellenic members] felt they should express opinions on world affairs.⁹²

Her comments show an adherence to familiar NPC themes of fear and distrust of liberal-leaning organizations. She also betrays the link between their fears of liberal groups and racial integration. By prefacing her statement with the warning about "black militants," Blake creates for her audience the impression that the subsequently noted student activism was somehow a result of interference by African American students. This harked back to the NPC line on "freedom of association" and its implicit connotations of racial separation as a part of the "freedoms" for white individuals, their organizations, and institutions. Blake's comment also provides a hint at the unspoken, and apparently unwritten, NPC line on the racial desegregation of higher education. Since the fight for "freedom of association" in Greek-letter membership reached a fever pitch as post-WWII era black Americans began to push for equal rights, we can read this concern as an attempt at a *de facto* segregation on historically white campuses at a time when the presence of even a handful of black students caused alarm for many whites.

⁹¹ Blake, Maxine, "Report on Requested Visit to University of North Carolina Panhellenic," August 21, 1969.

⁹² Blake, Maxine, "Report on Requested Visit to University of North Carolina Panhellenic," August 21, 1969.

Like the Panhellenic Council at UNC, the Emory University Panhellenic Council also strayed into what Blake felt was a questionable level of autonomy. In May 1968, she characterized the Emory Panhellenic President as “an idealist and free thinker, if I ever met one.” In a report to the NPC that was peppered with sarcasm, Blake noted that the president “informed” her “that ‘sorority 1968 needs remodeling.’” Blake then described how the young woman quoted Martin Luther King, Jr. as she “told the College Panhellenic that, she, too, ‘had a dream’ . . . whereby every individual must be considered on merit.”⁹³ The willingness of the white, southern, college sorority women to identify with contemporary social activists, and for one of them to invoke the words of the recently assassinated Martin Luther King, Jr., appeared to Blake, on the whole, as idealistic grandstanding without substance.

Yet, the Emory Panhellenic President’s remarks seemed in tune with those produced by other Panhellenic Councils that wished to remake the image of the college sorority. “A number of sources” had informed Blake that the Panhellenic president was “antagonistic to anyone from NPC coming in.” If that was indeed the case, it seems to suggest the Emory Panhellenic took a position similar to that expressed in the 1967 report by the UNC Panhellenic Council that equated, in part, the remaking of sororities’ image with a reduced role of alumnae control over their programs. Up until the 1967-1968 school year, the group at Emory had sent a copy of their minutes to their Panhellenic Advisor, Evelyn Wait (Phi Mu). The new president’s unwillingness to involve alumnae advisors came off as hostility toward the alumnae even if the Emory Panhellenic had just wished to dial down their reliance on alumnae.

When Blake’s visit facilitated the conversation between the collegiate members and the alumnae, it became clear that the two groups of sorority women held different ideas about future goals for sororities. Much to Maxine Blake’s consternation, the Emory Panhellenic had decided

⁹³ Maxine Blake, “Memo Concerning: Sororities and Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia,” May 22, 1968, NPC Records, (41/82/40), College Panhellenic Committee File, Box 1, College Panhellenic Area Advisor Reports of Workshops, 1964-1969.

among themselves that they wished to provide “upperclasswomen interested in fall rush” with details about the inner-workings of rush, including “the Quota-Limitation system” and “the methods of voting on membership in the various chapters.” Blake and Wait “protested” the proposed informational session, saying that it “was no business of outsiders.” It was just this sort of attitude that had built up “outsiders” negative opinions about sororities in the first place. Blake reported that their protests met “a wall of resistance.” When she and Wait suggested that the Panhellenic “might better try to sell their prospects on the values of joining a sorority,” the younger women replied “that’s lollypop stuff.”⁹⁴ Their impertinent response demonstrated an obvious disconnect between the mindset of the college sorority member and the alumnae. What the college members saw as an important opportunity to offer a frank explanation of the confusing and intimidating rush system for prospective members, the alumnae saw as a betrayal of private practices. On the other hand, while the alumnae felt sure that their perennial message – that sororities taught the “lessons of ladyhood” in a fun, social environment – was still the best method to attract new pledges, the college sorority women saw that as a vague, and often, empty advertisement. While all women among each the alumnae and the student groups did not adhere to such stark assessments as did Maxine Blake and the 1968 president of the Emory Panhellenic, the incompatibility of their larger goals for sorority life in moving forward seemed to position the national groups for a difficult and self-conflicted road.

Even as some college sorority women advocated a change in the emphasis of sororities’ programs to reflect the interests of college students of the mid to late 1960s and the early 1970s, campus communities were not always willing to wait for the sororities to reform themselves. Awakened to contemporary social issues and more suspicious of organizations that appeared to represent the status quo and conventional standards of behavior, students were less likely to

⁹⁴ Maxine Blake, “Memo Concerning: Sororities and Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia,” May 22, 1968, NPC Records, (41/82/40), College Panhellenic Committee File, Box 1, College Panhellenic Area Advisor Reports of Workshops, 1964-1969.

unquestioningly join a Greek-letter organization simply because their parents had done so, or because “it seemed the thing to do.” And in this period, when the decision to join a Greek-letter organization seemed to become fraught with questions of morality, students found it easier to remain independent than to entangle themselves with a group that promoted behaviors that might make them uncomfortable. Overshadowed by the impression that they were elitist and perhaps racist clubs, sororities and fraternities seemed less enticing to the average student arriving on campus by the mid to late 1960s. At the University of Maryland, the percentage of undergraduate women who joined a sorority after fall rush declined from roughly 32.1 percent in 1955 to ten percent by 1970. At UNC, those numbers had dropped even more precipitously, from an apparent high point of fifty-eight percent in 1952 to just fifteen percent by 1968.⁹⁵

At Duke during the 1970-1971 school year, students forming a group called “Duke Women’s Liberation” posed a direct challenge to campus sororities. They argued that instead of creating a fictive kinship network among their members, sororities actually “divide[d] women because they are based on competition and selective sisterhood.” This selective process, they contended, “degrade[d] women as persons.” The women’s liberation group not only blamed the sororities for choosing rushees that fit a certain image, but also chided *rushees* for choosing to pledge a sorority based on its ability to “satisfy [their] social needs.”⁹⁶ In their view, both the sorority chapter and the rushees used one another to reach their goal of attracting men.

Again, as I have discussed in previous chapters, we see the issue of sorority chapters interested in cultivating a superficial image based largely on the physical appearance of their

⁹⁵ University of Maryland sorority statistics taken in five-year intervals from *The Terrapin* yearbook, 1940-1970, listing compiled for author by Malissa Ruffner at University of Maryland, University Archives, June 2008; Committee on Special Sorority Problems, Minutes of Meeting, October 21, 1952, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 12, Box 41, Fraternities and Sororities: Advisory Committee on Special Sorority Problems, 1950-1964; “Statistics on Formal Rush – Fall, 1968,” UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records), Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 32, General: Membership Statistics.

⁹⁶ Duke Women’s Liberation, Program and Discussion, February 18, 1971, Duke Panhellenic Council Records, Box 3, Newspaper Clippings, 1963-1971.

members. Duke Women's Liberation called the sorority women out on this matter, stating that, "sorority [rush] cut sessions reveal the fact that women are often judged on their ability to attract men." The group explained that sorority chapters chose rushees based on their ability to "fit in" with their specific chapter. But, to the sorority chapters, they argued, "fitting in" meant that "the woman in question [wa]s higher or lower on the superficial social status scale than the sorority as a whole." The women's liberation group noted that sororities' purpose in cutting women who would not "fit" their image was to eliminate the rushees whom they "considered unable to date in the same social circles or to relate to the same type of men" as the rest of the chapter. Duke Women's Liberation foresaw this "male-oriented judgment" as having "unfortunate implications for the relationships between women and 'sisterhood.'" By highlighting the point that "most men still view[ed] women in the superficial terms of appearance and physical appeal," Duke Women's Liberation claimed that in catering to male interest, sorority women gained "an excuse to view and to judge other women in these same terms."⁹⁷

Some Duke sorority women stood up for their organizations in response to the claims of the women's liberation group. In letters to the edit council of the Duke *Chronicle* they argued that Duke Women's Liberation was misguided in its attempt to boil sorority sisterhood down to a superficial group, built around fake friendships. Instead of seeking a certain "type" of member as some sort of attempt to appeal to a target group of men, the letter writers explained, their sorority chapters had helped them to form friendships with other women students, not all of whom were "beautiful with nice figures."⁹⁸ They maintained that sorority membership was "about getting to

⁹⁷ Duke Women's Liberation, Program and Discussion, February 18, 1971.

⁹⁸ Debby Godfrey, "Letter to the Edit Council, Sororities," *Chronicle*, February 19, 1971, (in Duke Panhellenic Council Records, Box 3, Newspaper Clippings, 1963-1971.)

know the girl for her own individual personality,” and that it allowed women to meet other female students outside her dorm.⁹⁹

Freshman Mary Hook went so far as to state that “for many [female students] it is easier to meet boys than girls at Duke.” Based on the male to female ratio of undergraduate students at Duke during this period, which was roughly 2:1, that may well have seemed the case to Duke women.¹⁰⁰ While Hook admitted that not everyone she met during rush “appeal[ed]” to her, she also found “many girls who shared [her] interests and who were really, sincerely interested in other people.” In her opinion, rush had actually shown her just how “*un-liberated*” she was as a non-sorority woman in a dorm, which had “restricted” her living.¹⁰¹ Hook appeared to have felt that by meeting a limited group of friends in the dormitory during her first semester, she had hit a wall. As a first year student, however, Hook may have had undue expectations about making many new friends immediately at college. Even if she had not rushed during the spring of her freshman year, she probably would have found an expanding circle of female friends through other campus clubs, new classes, and even through existing friendships with those overly abundant male friends over the course of her years at Duke.

With a bit more perspective on how sorority membership had affected her years at Duke, senior Debby Godfrey explained that even though she did not need the sorority for added social opportunities, without it she would have missed out on many friendships and good times. “Granted, sororities are selective,” she wrote, “but not any more so than any individual who chooses her own friends or selects her own roommate.” She also made the distinction that her

⁹⁹ Debby Godfrey, “Letter to the Edit Council, Sororities,” *Chronicle*, February 19, 1971; Mary Hook, “Letter to the Edit Council, Sororities,” *Chronicle*, February 21, 1971, (both in Duke Panhellenic Council Records, Box 3, Newspaper Clippings, 1963-1971.)

¹⁰⁰ In Spring 1970, undergraduate men and women students numbered 2,911 and 1,753, respectively. A measure of total enrollment (including graduate and professional schools) brought these numbers to 5,472 male and 2,476 female students. See Duke University Registrar’s Enrollment Statistics, March 16, 1970, Duke University Archives.

¹⁰¹ Mary Hook, “Letter to the Edit Council, Sororities,” *Chronicle*, February 21, 1971.

sorority did not “allow...negative comments at cut sessions” during rush.¹⁰² What Godfrey misses in her assessment is that the sorority chapter was not one individual woman making a choice of her own. As a group of women, exerting peer pressure on one another, the sorority could change an individual’s choice – whether she was aware of the fact or not. Even if her chapter did not officially allow negative comments during cut sessions, there was still a likelihood that members could gossip to their friends to spread awareness of certain undesirable, or ill-fitting, rushees. They might even have resorted to code words, known by certain sisters, that suggested whether a rushee was stylish and attractive or not.¹⁰³

Godfrey downplayed the social activities of sororities in favor of their philanthropic endeavors, which she felt were often overlooked. She questioned Duke Women’s Liberation’s preoccupation with arguing that new sorority members were pawns in a game of heterosexual appeal on campus. Of her sorority’s recent pledges, she noted, “Many of the girls selected do not even date – so how can it honestly be said that they are chosen according to their ‘potential relationships with men?’”¹⁰⁴ Godfrey is off the mark with her question because it was the *potential* for heterosexual relationships that Duke Women’s Liberation argued was the deciding factor in whether sororities selected or cut rushees. So even if “many of the girls selected” did not date at the point in time when they went through rush, the sorority saw their *potential* for heterosexual dating relationships with socially-acceptable men in the future. While Hook, Godfrey, and, likely, other sorority women viewed the accusations by Duke Women’s Liberation as an unwarranted attack on themselves, their friends, and their chapters, they failed to see that the entire sorority system quietly supported a culture that derived a woman’s value to the group from her ability to “fit” socially with a comparable group of male students. Even as these women saw their sororities as spaces to build meaningful friendships with women who held similar

¹⁰² Debby Godfrey, “Letter to the Edit Council, Sororities,” *Chronicle*, February 19, 1971.

¹⁰³ This is based on practices witnessed by the author in her own sorority experience.

¹⁰⁴ Debby Godfrey, “Letter to the Edit Council, Sororities,” *Chronicle*, February 19, 1971.

interests, the organizations also perpetuated practices that kept members subjugate to their male counterparts.

For example, annual Greek-letter events such as campuses' "Greek Week," a Panhellenic and Interfraternity Council (IFC) promotional tool, or "Derby Days," sponsored by chapters of Sigma Chi fraternity, featured activities that reinforced cultural ideals of women's bodies as entertainment sources for men.¹⁰⁵ These events included competitions among sorority chapters to perform skits and participate in games. Particularly during Derby Days, which, today, pits sorority chapters on campus against one another in skits, scavenger hunts, and games to benefit Sigma Chi's philanthropy, sorority women would find themselves in literal competition for the attention and approval of the Sigma Chi's and other male students.

A 1968 article from UGA's *Red and Black* newspaper detailed that year's derby events. Capped off by the crowing of "Miss Modern Venus," and the selection of the "Sweetheart," these included competitions such as the "Chicken Race," the "Squeeze a Sig" event, and the "Sorority Swing."¹⁰⁶ According to a 1944 description, the "Miss Modern Venus" beauty contest selected the "girl with the most perfect figure in the University, boasting measurements that combine Miss America with the Venus of old." The UGA physical education department "set and determined" these measurements, apparently lending scientific validity to the proceedings.¹⁰⁷ All of these

¹⁰⁵ Laura Mulvey has discussed the voyeuristic gaze of the male spectator as it relates to film theory. She constructs the relationship of male spectator to female form as an "active/male and passive/female" binary where the male gaze imparts control and power over the objectified and sexualized female body on display. This power structure, as described by Mulvey, is roughly analogous to the heterosexually oriented, male-dominated structure of sorority and fraternity life in many of the interactions I have described in my research. Although the Derby Days skits that I discuss in the following pages also included female audience members, I would argue that the focus of *their* spectatorship was, in large part, the male spectators. The women's watchfulness of the male audience members, however, did not undermine the male dominated power relations so much as it undergirded the system. As the female audience members attempted to exhibit, what to the male spectators, would seem the "appropriate" reactions to the scenes enacted by sorority members, they looked to the men for cues about how to respond. See Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 19-22.

¹⁰⁶ Mike Howell, "ZTA, Phi Mu Triumph at Sigma Chi Derby," *The Red and Black*, May 2, 1968, 5.

¹⁰⁷ "Sigma Chi Derby Tomorrow at Two; Year's Beauty Crop Will Be on Revue," *The Red and Black*, October 20, 1944, 1.

events combined to make one of the most anticipated events of the year for those in the Greek-letter community.

“Bare legs will show; eyes will pop; and sorority pledges will drop their ‘assumed’ dignity,” read the announcement for the 1941 Derby.¹⁰⁸ Many of the events involved silly scenarios and allowed for light-hearted fun for participants and spectators. Typically, the events also provided that sorority women, Sigma Chi pledges, or both, would face some level of public humiliation. For the participants, their acceptance by their own chapter, as well as by other members of the Greek-letter community, hinged on their ability to willingly accept this type of treatment, which was, in effect, a form of hazing. While the “Chicken Race” was just that – sorority women chasing after and attempting to catch a chicken before racing back to the finish line carrying the bird – “Squeeze a Sig” and the “Sorority Swing” ran a greater risk of placing women in an uncomfortable, and sexually suggestive, position in front of the audience.¹⁰⁹ For “Squeeze a Sig,” each sorority’s team entrant would squeeze a Sigma Chi pledge as hard as she could while the pledge “was wired to register the strongest squeeze.” The required physical proximity and the audience-assumed heterosexual tension of the interaction may have been embarrassing for both the female and male competitors. The “Sorority Swing” event pitted two sorority women against one another in a pillow fight, while sitting astride a greased telephone pole, suspended over a pool of water. The first woman to knock her opponent off the pole with the pillow was the winner.¹¹⁰ The phallic imagery of the telephone pole, with female competitors clinging against it with their thighs, seems obviously intended by the Sigma Chi Derby designers as a heterosexually charged display for the audience, and a voyeuristic, sexually-exciting experience for the male audience members. As sorority women participated in these and other competitions for campus-wide audiences (both Greek-letter and independent), they often –

¹⁰⁸ Mark Waits, “Sigma Chi Derby to Be Held Saturday; Sweetheart, Modern Venus to Be ‘Tops,’” *The Red and Black*, October 17, 1941, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Mike Howell, “ZTA, Phi Mu Triumph at Sigma Chi Derby,” *The Red and Black*, May 2, 1968, 5.

¹¹⁰ Mike Howell, “ZTA, Phi Mu Triumph at Sigma Chi Derby,” *The Red and Black*, May 2, 1968, 5.

whether admittedly, or not – indulged in risqué behavior or resorted to off-color jokes to get laughs and to appear popular among their peers, and especially among the fraternity men.

During the 1962 Derby Days at UNC, the Panhellenic Court investigated the Chi Omegas for presenting a skit that the social standards committee of the Panhellenic Council felt did not live up to their standards. While the transcript of the court proceedings showed that Panhellenic “standards” were rather subjective (the members of the court could not describe any objective standards that the women had violated when pressed by Guion Johnson, Chi Omega’s advisor) the charges that the Chi Omegas had altered their skit after it passed the skit review board, were valid. These changes, the Panhellenic Court suggested, did not fall within standards of propriety for women’s behavior at the university.¹¹¹

Chi Omegas involved with the performance had revised several lines in the skit, not in an attempt to get around the review board, they claimed, but because they got a “big laugh,” from those watching the rehearsal. The Chi Omegas said that they had developed their skit “as a slam on the Sigma Chis and a slam on the ‘typical Carolina Coed.’”¹¹² The portion of the program in question appeared to parody a conversation between a Sigma Chi and a female student. In the original line, passed by the review board, the Sigma Chi remarked to a “coed” (perhaps his date), who seemed to rebuff his attempts at physical intimacy, “Aw, don’t leave; that’s old fashioned.” During the skit competition, the line became, “Lay down, I think I love you.” Another line, “I’ve never been so hot,” also entered the dialogue. The Chi Omegas said they chose these lines in particular because they were send-ups of “Sigma Chi language” – in which the Chi Omegas claimed to be well versed from having spent much time in the company of the fraternity brothers. They intended the skit to be a type of private joke between the Chi Omegas and the Sigma Chis.

¹¹¹ Minutes of the Panhellenic Court, May 9, 1962, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 33, Sororities: Panhellenic Court, 1950-1975, 1-4.

¹¹² Minutes of the Panhellenic Court, May 9, 1962, 1-2.

Puzzlingly, at the same time, the women contended that they “had no idea that [the language] was off-color at all.”¹¹³

The new lines elicited the desired audience response of laughter at the competition, but then the situation turned ugly. Widespread drinking at the event had loosened up the audience members. At the court hearing, the Chi Omegas stated that, “boys yelled things from the stands which created a lot of the filth.” Even though the women *told* the court that they did not understand the possible offensiveness of some of their dialogue, they seemed to *know* that the male audience members wanted to hear them deliver these double entendres. “You have to have risquéness to appeal to boys,” one of them said of the skits.¹¹⁴

That type of attitude worried the members of the Panhellenic Court who noted that the risqué skits reinforced the idea among men that “sororities are that way” – meaning immodest at best and sexually experienced at worst.¹¹⁵ If the Chi Omegas publicly exhibited themselves in what some female students felt were suggestive and inappropriate ways, the court feared, that image would reflect back on all sorority women. At the same time, however, all sorority women realized that they had to “play the game,” so to speak, in Derby Days as well as in other fraternity sponsored events, so that they could maintain their status position on campus. The fraternity men constructed these spaces with the expectation that women would engage in off-color language and antics. The fact that these performances were supposed to be out of character for southern white “ladies” of the 1960s made them all the more titillating for the male audience members. The attempt of the Chi Omega members to use the “Sigma Chi language” to mock the Sigma Chi’s behaviors could be seen as an exercise in empowerment, as they called the men on their use of tired pick-up lines. Yet, since the women launched this perhaps-protest within the male-created space of the sorority skit competition where they were still vying for the men’s approval,

¹¹³ Minutes of the Panhellenic Court, May 9, 1962, 2-3.

¹¹⁴ Minutes of the Panhellenic Court, May 9, 1962, 2-3.

¹¹⁵ Minutes of the Panhellenic Court, May 9, 1962, 3.

the mockery seems more like a friendly jab than a serious indictment of the fraternity men's behavior.

The following year at Duke, sorority women provided yet another example of their willingness to cater to fraternity men's desires for sexually suggestive entertainment in the new "Greek Follies" event. Greek Follies was taking the place of the Fraternity-Sorority Sing, the long-standing tradition of competitive singing performances that take place on many campuses. The Panhellenic Council announced that the 1963 Greek Follies was scheduled to include "six outstanding acts" that they had selected as well as several musical ensembles composed of fraternity members. A letter of invitation from the Panhellenic president to the brothers of Tau Epsilon Phi fraternity gave top billing to the "six outstanding acts," which, she boasted, featured "girls in hul[a] skirts, girls in leotards, girls in petti-tights, and girls otherwise attired." The obvious intent of the invitation was to draw fraternity men's interest in attendance with the advertisement of performances by scantily clad sorority women. The guys could likely care less if the KA combo, Motot and His Mashers, as well as another male guitar duo were also appearing on stage that evening, but "girls otherwise attired," the letter suggested – now *that* was something to behold. She reminded the brothers that, "with your support we can demonstrate what Greek spirit is."¹¹⁶ Apparently, a large part of "Greek spirit" involved the objectification of women.

An event that likely incorporated alcohol, Greek Follies held the potential for an audience scene along the lines of the UNC Derby Days skits. While we do not have a record of how the "outstanding acts" went over with the audience, or if anyone in attendance felt that the vibe tended more toward burlesque show and less toward a demonstration of "Greek spirit," the general inclination of sorority women to support activities that left them relegated to demeaning activities suggests that Duke Women's Liberation was on to something when they made their 1971 claims.

¹¹⁶ Panhellenic president to the Brothers of Tau Epsilon Phi, February 8, 1963, Duke Panhellenic Council Records, 1938-1996, Box 2, Correspondence E-M, 1943-1966.

Even in 1971, when the women's rights movement was well underway, sorority women wrote proudly of being selected as "little sisters" of fraternity men. The Delta Chapter of Sigma Chi at the University of Georgia (UGA) had started a "Little Sigmas" chapter for women who were pinned to Sigma Chis and for the chapter sweetheart. The Little Sigmas had quickly expanded to include other sorority women. The university's Beta Nu Chapter of Alpha Delta Pi was pleased to announce, in their *Beta Nu's Letter*, that seven of the twenty women chosen by the Delta Chapter to be Little Sigma's were ADPIs. The picture accompanying the story shows member, Inez Moore, ironing clothes. The caption reads, "Inez Moore finds out what it means to be a Little Sigma as she irons her boyfriend's bluejeans."¹¹⁷ Contentedly laboring at what looks like a pledge hazing routine, or the daily routine of a servant or housewife. Inez and the rest of the Little Sigmas apparently strove for this type of *recognition* by the Sigma Chis.

Other projects of the Little Sigmas included campaigning "to raise spirit within the chapter for intra-mural games," helping the brothers at a car wash to raise money for Easter Seals, and presenting "gifts to the new Sigma Chi initiates."¹¹⁸ (The exact nature of the "gifts" went unexplained. Perhaps the Beta Nus of ADPI were as handy with double entendres as their NPC sisters at UNC.) The chapter may have started as a way to build camaraderie among the girlfriends of the Sigma Chis, who may have belonged to various sororities or have been independents. The shared experiences of these women, however, appeared to revolve around the conventional understanding of white women as second-class citizens in a white male dominated society. For women to receive an invitation to join a group that enabled their status as helpmeets to men does not seem like a tremendous honor. The fact that the Little Sigmas and similar groups were acceptable to and even revered by sorority women of the early 1970s illustrates the point that the Women's Liberation Group made directly, and that other sorority and non-sorority women

¹¹⁷ "Little Sigma's," *Beta Nu's Letter*, Vol. 9 (1971-1972), Alpha Delta Pi Memorial Headquarters, Alpha Delta Pi – Beta Nu, University of Georgia, Chapter Histories, 4.

¹¹⁸ "Little Sigma's," 4.

suggested with their ambivalence toward Greek life: that sororities classified women in an unnatural and hurtful way, and in so doing they damaged the ability of these women to work together to overcome gender inequality in U.S. society. Particularly since sororities so effectively perpetuated as a norm for women the idea that acceptance by men was a direct measure of their values as individuals.

During the mid to late 1960s and early 1970s, we see national sororities' alumnae leaders, as well as some collegiate members, holding the line against liberal ideas of the time. With students trending toward a more open-minded, even liberal, stance on social issues, however, members increasingly challenged sororities to amend their status quo on membership restrictions and their images of "appropriate" feminine attire and behavior for their members.¹¹⁹ As members began to question the value of their sorority membership *and* as universities began the process of racial desegregation, national sororities faced their toughest challenges to date. Once southern universities bowed to external pressure in the form of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Higher Education Act of 1965 and began to allow African American students to enroll as undergraduates, Greek-letter organizations realized that it was only a matter of time before they would be confronted with a black student electing to go through NPC or IFC rush.¹²⁰ The preparation for a response to that scenario, however, was hardly straightforward since members held differing opinions on how to proceed.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the national leaders of the sororities and fraternities at these institutions, attempted to stall the university administrators in their crack down on discriminatory membership criteria, particularly in relation to race. And even when the sorority or fraternity chapters presented written documentation to prove that their national organizations had no rules about the race or religion of potential pledges, that did *not* eliminate

¹¹⁹ Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 223-228.

¹²⁰ Peter Wallenstein, ed., *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008), 241.

the possibility that the group adhered to an *unwritten* rule, understood among the local members. But even if an unwritten rule was in effect at a chapter, the likelihood that all members agreed wholeheartedly on the issue of keeping non-white or non-Christian individuals out of the group was probably decreasing in this period. Many of the white students had grown up in a world where a racially segregated society was all they had ever known. Combined with chapter peer-pressure, that may have helped keep discriminatory policies in play for a time, but the eventual conflict was unavoidable.

At Duke and at UGA in the late 1960s, the unavoidable occurred. Following the racial desegregation of these universities' undergraduate student bodies in 1963 and 1961, respectively, some African American students sought to join in on what American popular culture had promoted as the typical college student lifestyle.¹²¹ In these images, promoted in movies, books, and magazines articles and advertisements, sorority and fraternity life played a starring role in the American collegiate experience. By doing what appeared typical for the white students, African American students may have hoped to better fit in to the campus culture. With no National Pan-Hellenic Conference (NPHC) sororities on the previously all-white university campuses, African American women interested in joining a sorority had to go out for NPC sorority rush instead.

In the fall of 1968, Deborah "Debbie" Williams, an African American student at UGA elected to go through NPC sorority rush. An article by Cynthia Baugh, the first black staff member of the UGA student newspaper, *The Red and Black*, explained that UGA sororities and fraternities were "completely white" but that the "'why' ha[d] not been questioned."¹²² Williams had decided to register for rush to bring attention to the fact that Greek-life was an area of campus

¹²¹ "Desegregation at Duke University: Documents," Duke University Archives website, <http://library.duke.edu/uarchives/history/desegregation.html>, site accessed June 19, 2011; Robert A. Pratt, "The Long Journey from LaGrange to Atlanta: Horace Ward and the Desegregation of the University of Georgia," in Wallenstein, ed., *Higher Education in the Civil Rights Movement*, 107.

¹²² David Kross, "A Step Forward for Women's Rights: UGA in the 1960s," *The Red and Black*, March 28, 2002; Cynthia Baugh, "Black Rushee Relates Experience; Describes Reaction as 'Priceless,'" *The Red and Black*, October 1, 1968.

life that had remained closed to black students and largely separated from the student activities in which black students were involved. In the article, she described the sorority women's and other rushees' reactions to her presence as "priceless." Many women expressed "surprise" and "interest" that Williams appeared at rush events, but did not ask her, "just why [she] was there." Still, Williams recognized that rush was an activity where, Baugh noted, "prejudice draws a line between friendship and racial differences." Baugh explained that Williams experienced no "outright ostracism" but that she noticed "the little things that characterize the so-often muted undertones of racism prevalent in situations where people are confronted with the idea of integration." Williams saw that "several of her acquaintances were waiting with her for the rushee buses," but that "none of them spoke or seemed to recognize her presence."¹²³

At all sixteen sorority houses, Williams sensed tension and nervousness on the part of the white sorority sisters who came out of their houses to greet the rushees and saw her among the group. While she was "met with the 'standard procedure' of smiles and "How are you?" and "Where are you from?" Baugh wrote, there remained "the problem of who would take [Debbie] into the house and introduce her around." Apparently, at each sorority, women did come forth to escort her into the house without noticeable difficulties in their highly choreographed rush movements. Williams was surprised to find that she was even asked back to the next round of parties at three of the sororities. At that point, some of the sorority women asked why she was going through rush. She explained that she was there to make the point that white sororities had "made no effort to encourage participation by black students." Baugh noted that "the possibilities of a black sorority h[ad] been discussed," but nothing had come of it as of the previous school year. Williams wanted the white sororities to understand that with black students at the university, they would have to accept the fact that more and more black women would be seen

¹²³ Baugh, "Black Rushee Relates Experience; Describes Reaction as 'Priceless.'"

going through rush. Still, she remarked, that did not mean “that all black students that come here want to be part of a sorority or fraternity.”¹²⁴

As a commentary on the conflicted nature of the white sorority women’s opinions on racial integration, Williams said that, “some of the sorority girls she had talked to during rush were glad to see here there.” In some instances, the women told her that they “thought a black sorority would be good on the campus...that it would give black students the chance they wanted to identify.”¹²⁵ A desire by white sorority women for a black sorority on campus could be read two ways. This attitude might suggest a genuine interest in helping black women to gain a group of their own where they might feel more socially comfortable. It also could be a way that white sorority women hoped to deflect future instances of black women going through NPC rush. If all African American women automatically joined the African American sorority or enrolled in NPHC rush instead, then white sororities could remain, without much effort, all white.

As she closed the article, Baugh wondered whether Williams’s presence at rush had “challenge[d]” the thinking of the rushees and sorority women. Had “her motives [been] taken lightly?” “Did anyone really understand why a black student rushed white sororities?” Although they may not have represented the majority of white sorority women at the time, we can see that some members were beginning to break with the attitudes of national sorority officers on issues such as member selection and the overall purpose of the organizations. The situation among sorority women was well summarized by Williams’s final comment, on the matter of her joining rush, issued “casually” to Baugh: “Some understood, and some didn’t...some never will.”¹²⁶

The number of sorority women who “understood” may have been greater at Duke than at UGA in the late 1960s. A year before Debbie Williams registered for rush at UGA, Donna Allen (Harris), the first African American student in the School of Nursing at Duke, also became the

¹²⁴ Baugh, “Black Rushee Relates Experience; Describes Reaction as ‘Priceless.’”

¹²⁵ Baugh, “Black Rushee Relates Experience; Describes Reaction as ‘Priceless.’”

¹²⁶ Baugh, “Black Rushee Relates Experience; Describes Reaction as ‘Priceless.’”

first African American to join a Duke sorority, pledging Pi Beta Phi.¹²⁷ Still, racial relations at Duke in this period remained tense. By the end of the 1964 school year, of the six black women enrolled at Duke (three in 1963 and three more in 1964), at least four of them registered for rush. In 1963, the two women “dropped out voluntarily,” and in 1964 the two freshman who registered for rush were cut right before the round of “Formal Parties,” “attendance at which traditionally ha[d] guaranteed that the rushee’s name [would] appear somewhere on the sorority’s preferred list of students to whom bids [would] be extended.”¹²⁸

The African Americans who enrolled at Duke in the mid to late 1960s recognized Duke as a “white university” and expressed dismay over the administration’s and faculty’s lack of attention to their needs as the first generation of black students at Duke. In November 1967, members of the student Afro-American Society staged a “study-in” at the office of Duke University President Douglas M. Knight to insist that the university end its use of segregated facilities. Three days later, the university complied with the black students’ demands, prohibiting the use of segregated facilities.

Over the following year, the university administration and the African American students seemed to have made a number of false starts at discussion of the students’ grievances. By October 1968, however, the sides had agreed to form an *ad hoc* committee of black students, faculty, and administrators “for in-depth discussion of problems related to black students.”¹²⁹ Black students voiced their concerns on issues ranging from their desire for an all-black dormitory to the possible formation of an *Afro-American Studies Program*. The administration attempted to resolve a number of the student concerns, but was unable to speak definitively on

¹²⁷ “239 Women Get Sorority Bids,” *The Chronicle*, October 18, 1967, Duke Panhellenic Council Records, 1938-1991, Box 3, Newspaper Clippings, 1963-1971.

¹²⁸ Mary Grace Wilson to Dr. Devyer, Vice Provost, Re: Duke sorority membership, July 6, 1965, Woman’s College Records, 1928-1974, Box 39, Sororities, 1957-1966, Duke University Archives.

¹²⁹ Frank L. Ashmore, “History of Afro-American Relations Prior to February 13, 1969,” Issued by Duke’s Vice President for Institutional Advancement, March 7, 1969, Black History at Duke Reference Collection, 1948-200 and n.d., Box 1, Folder 5: Reports, Memos, Etc., 1965-1992, Duke University Archives.

some issues, such as the desire for an African American student advisor within the university administration.¹³⁰ By leaving future outcomes open-ended, the Duke administrators and faculty may have tried to keep the Afro-American Society from backing them into a corner, but they did also not succeed in building trust with the students who desired changes.

In February 1969, the Afro-American Society organized “Black Culture Week,” an event endorsed by President Knight, and designed to “educated the white students at Duke” and “educate the white masses.”¹³¹ On the morning of February 13, 1969, immediately following the close of Black Culture Week, African American students again launched a protest to call attention to what they saw an inability on the part of the university to enact meaningful change in a timely manner. A group of fifty to seventy-five black students occupied the Allen Building, the home of the university administration, renamed it the “Malcolm X Liberation School,” and issued a list of demands to the administration. These stemmed from the unresolved student concerns that surfaced during discussions by the *ad hoc* committee the previous fall. That afternoon, university administration requested that the students leave the building to begin a “peaceful discussion of the issues,” but it was only when confronted with the possibility of police harassment that they relinquished control of the Allen Building. Meanwhile, a group of mostly white students had gathered outside the building and it was this group that faced off with police, who responded by launching tear gas into the crowds.¹³² Against this backdrop of racial tension at Duke, Donna Allen joined a traditionally white sorority.

Prior to desegregating the Duke Nursing School and the North Carolina Beta Chapter of Pi Beta Phi, Donna Allen had already been a pioneer of racial desegregation in the state. During the 1963-1964 school year, she was among a small number of black students chosen to

¹³⁰ Frank L. Ashmore, “History of Afro-American Relations Prior to February 13, 1969.”

¹³¹ “Black Week Symposium officially begins today,” *The Duke Chronicle*, Feb 6, 1969.

¹³² “Campus Protest: Duke University, 1967-1969,” Duke University Archives online exhibit, <http://library.duke.edu/uarchives/exhibits/allen-building/index.html>, website accessed September 30, 2010.

desegregate the white high school in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.¹³³ This experience of trying to prove herself as a student but also as a representative of the black community in the town seemed to have influenced Allen's efforts to blend in and do well, not stand out or appear difficult to the white southerners who would be watching her every move. While she had hoped to have the "black experience" by attending the nursing program at Fisk College in Nashville, Tennessee, Allen, again, found herself in a white educational setting when she chose to attend Duke instead on a full scholarship.¹³⁴

Allen was the only African American student in the nursing school and Hanes House, the dormitory for nursing students, was located on Duke's West Campus while all the other female students lived on East Campus. "I was totally on that other part of campus," she recalled, "and that sense of isolation just rose up again."¹³⁵ At least, among the other students at Hanes House, Allen found a group of women for whom their studies were a common goal. In a 1969 interview for the *Duke Alumni Register* Allen explained that her relationships with her fellow nursing students made her experience at Duke much easier to bear than her three years at the white high school in Elizabeth City. "It's a very close-knit group," she said of the nursing students. "Everybody fits in and it made me feel real close. I wouldn't leave."¹³⁶ Allen explained that most of the friends in her immediate circle "were from the North and the West, but not so much from the South."¹³⁷

She saw the situation for black students elsewhere on the Duke campus with a different lens. The fact women students on East Campus had a variety of interests, activities, and academic majors led to distinctions that made it easier to self-segregate. As a result, Allen said,

¹³³ Donna Allen Harris Interview, December 4, 2008, Oral History Program, Duke Medical Center Library and Archives, 2.

¹³⁴ Donna Allen Harris Interview, 11-12.

¹³⁵ Donna Allen Harris Interview, 13.

¹³⁶ "Interviews: Merrill Ware, Bob Creamer, Donna Allen," *Duke Alumni Register* Vol. 55, no. 2 (1969), 32.

¹³⁷ Donna Allen Harris Interview, 14.

she “gather[ed] that the blacks all stick sort of together. As far as mingling is concerned, there’s not much of that.” She also stated that if she “was having as rough a time as some of them [the black students] say they’re having, I would leave.” The article’s author felt that Allen had a “capacity to view both races with a certain detachment” and noted that it had “not endeared [her] to members of her own race at Duke.” While Allen had participated in the Afro-American Society during her freshman year, her attempts to get the other black students to “mingle” and “get in with” the white students were met with “antagonism.” She did support a number of the initiatives of the Afro-American Society, such as the drive to eliminate tokenism by recruiting more black students to Duke, and the demand for the university to place an African American in an administrative positions so that the black students could have someone in an authoritative role “that they [could] identify with.”¹³⁸ Additionally, Allen recognized a lack of institutional support for her own position as a black woman in the nursing school. Just as she had during her trying years at the white high school, Allen “just wanted to do what she needed to do and not fail folk at home, just go ahead and finish.”¹³⁹ She did not remember, “being mentored, being brought under someone’s wing, [or] having someone to talk to on a regular basis.” Allen explained her viewpoint on her situation the time: “Duke was looking [for African American students], I was there, I was a token, that was it. So I relied on my friends.”¹⁴⁰

Allen does not recall why she and her roommate pledged Pi Beta Phi. She also does not remember whether there were some sororities she “may have been told [she] couldn’t try out for,” or if Pi Phi “was just one of a few that [she] may have been steered toward going for.” Allen is also fuzzy on what activities she did with the sorority. “I seem to remember having a big sister in the sorority at some point but I don’t remember much about what happened.”¹⁴¹ She did recall

¹³⁸ “Interviews: Merrill Ware, Bob Creamer, Donna Allen,” 32.

¹³⁹ Donna Allen Harris Interview, 24

¹⁴⁰ Donna Allen Harris Interview, 17.

¹⁴¹ Donna Allen Harris Interview, 15, 25.

one sorority related costume event at Hanes House where she dressed as “pepper” and her roommate was “salt:”

I look back on it and think. I don't remember anything degrading... Whatever we did, I don't know, I just remember that. But I don't remember anything degrading, so I'm just leaving that alone. I'm not asking about it, nothing. We just did it and that was it.¹⁴²

That Allen has so few memories of her experiences in the sorority suggests several things. While at Duke, she sought to keep her head down, to do well in class, and to graduate from her program. With an intent focus on schoolwork, Allen may not have been very involved with the sorority's activities and thus has little memory of them. There is also the possibility that she may have blocked thoughts of this unpleasant time from her mind. That is not to say that her sorority experience was necessarily a negative one, but that she may have not wished to remain engaged with thoughts and experiences from her time as a student at Duke. If she was ambivalent about the sorority, then she may have subsumed these memories within the other remembrances of Duke.

Following fall rush in 1967, the Duke *Chronicle* asked Panhellenic president, Connie MacLeod, to comment on the historic event of Donna Allen pledging a white sorority. MacLeod responded, “This is a personal matter between the woman and the sorority, but of course I'm delighted to see Pi Phi get a girl who wanted them.”¹⁴³ MacLeod's carefully worded statement seems to place responsibility in the matter on Allen, and not the sorority or Panhellenic. As MacLeod noted, Allen “wanted *them* [emphasis mine].” Apparently, a fair number of the Pi Phi's must have wanted Allen, too, but MacLeod does not attribute that sentiment to the entire sorority or even the entire chapter. She seems to acknowledge the fact that a black woman joining an NPC sorority could be a sticky issue among some on campus, including the Pi Beta Phi members themselves.

¹⁴² Donna Allen Harris Interview, 15.

¹⁴³ “239 Women Get Sorority Bids,” *The Chronicle*, October 18, 1967, Duke Panhellenic Council Records, 1938-1991, Box 3, Newspaper Clippings, 1963-1971.

By the late 1960s, the slowly growing number of African American students on historically white university campuses in the South led to requests for chapters of historically black fraternities and sororities. At UGA, African American students founded the Zeta Pi Chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. on May 10, 1969 and the Zeta Psi Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. on November 11, 1969.¹⁴⁴ With the full support of the UNC's Department of Student Life, several African American students founded the Psi Delta Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. on February 16, 1973, and were followed shortly thereafter by the establishment of the Kappa Omicron Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. on July 21, 1973.¹⁴⁵

At Duke, NPHC fraternity and sorority chapters arrived in 1974 and 1975. A February 1976 article in *The Chronicle* discussed differences between black and white Greek-letter groups at Duke. "Pride is the difference between black and white fraternities," explained Reche Williams, president of Omega Psi Phi. "We stand for brotherhood, leadership, and positive effects in the community." Lisa Cooper, president of Alpha Kappa Alpha further differentiated her sorority from historically white sororities, noting, "We emphasize service projects rather than social activities."¹⁴⁶ In 1976, the National Pan-Hellenic Council at Duke estimated that thirty percent of African American women on campus joined one of the two black sororities. Only six to seven percent of African American men joined the three black fraternities at Duke. Cooper

¹⁴⁴ "National Pan-Hellenic Council Chapters at UGA, Alpha Phi Alpha," <http://www.uga.edu/nphc/chapters/chapterPages/AlphaPhiAlpha.html>, website accessed September 16, 2010; "National Pan-Hellenic Council Chapters at UGA, Delta Sigma Theta," <http://www.uga.edu/nphc/chapters/chapterPages/DeltaSigmaTheta.html>, website accessed September 16, 2010.

¹⁴⁵ "Psi Delta Chapter History," The Psi Delta Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., <http://www.unc.edu/psidelta/>, website accessed September 16, 2010; Frederick W. Schroeder, Jr. to Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., September 27, 1972, UNC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, Series 10, Subseries 2, Box 32, Fraternities and Sororities Correspondence, 1969-1978; "Chapter History," Kappa Omicron Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., <http://www.unc.edu/dst-ko/>, website accessed September 16, 2010.

¹⁴⁶ Karen Elbert, "Black Sororities Expanding, Fraternities Cite Racial 'Purity,'" *The Chronicle*, February 20, 1976, Black History at Duke Reference Collection, 1948-2000, n.d., Box 1, Folder 19: Student Organizations: Black Fraternities and Sororities, 1976-1982, Duke University Archives.

explained that there were black women in the white sororities at Duke. “All black women have to make the choice whether to be associated with the blacks or whites.” Of course, when Donna Allen arrived at Duke, there was no choosing between a black or white sorority, but rather, choosing whether or not to join one of the white sororities. Whether she might have made a different choice if the option of a black sorority had been available is unknown. Williams, meanwhile, felt that the black fraternities would always remain racially segregated. Oscar Mayers, president of Kappa Alpha Psi, the most recent addition to the NPHC chapters at Duke, went further by suggesting that racial segregation was a desirable state for both black and white fraternity members. “To integrate the fraternities would impurify them.” He felt that “if there was too much mixture of culture the purpose of the fraternity would be lost.”¹⁴⁷

While Mayers’s quote seems eerily reminiscent of the Edgewater Conference members’ arguments, it is important to note a distinction in the case of African American (as well as other minority group) sororities and fraternities. These social organizations, with a limited membership base, could offer a significant support system for the handful of black students on majority white college campuses. Like the first white sororities at formerly all-male colleges, these organizations provided a source of identity and gave the isolated student a sense of belonging. The national organizational structure of the NPHC sororities and fraternities lend themselves to many of the same problems that I have highlighted in the NPC sororities and NIC fraternities, such as conformity, elitism, enforced heteronormativity, and hazing. Yet, it is also crucial that NPHC groups exist as an equal alternative for African American women and men who desire Greek-letter affiliation but have been, and in some cases still are, denied membership in historically white groups, or who simply would rather be in a close-knit social group with people who they feel share a common cultural background.

¹⁴⁷ Elbert, “Black Sororities Expanding, Fraternities Cite Racial ‘Purity,’” *The Chronicle*, February 20, 1976.

Since Donna Allen did elect to join Pi Beta Phi, and Debbie Williams made a public display of the discrimination in sorority rush at UGA, and an unknown number of women had misgivings about their sorority involvement as did Nancy Iler Burkholder, Frances Drane Inglis, Anne Riggins, and Bunny Small, we can recognize that the image of the perfect, white sorority faced challenges that defied its uniformity. Forces both within and outside of national sororities pressed the organizations to change with the times. At this critical moment, sororities appeared ready to either revamp their entire programs or retreat into a nostalgic past that they hoped would absolve them from having to address challenges to their private authority.

Many alumnae hoped that chapters at southern universities would be less susceptible to liberal thought or to aligning themselves with progressive student groups on account of the fact that many of the chapters' members had grown up in a culture that normalized racial and gender discrimination. As I have demonstrated, however, not *all* members wished to uphold the social status quo, whether within their sororities or within the greater society. Yet, the fact that there remained such a discrepancy in thinking within the ranks of white college sorority women suggests that calls for changes in the groups' programs could be effectively silenced by a conservative majority of some sorority sisters and alumnae. The work to change the direction of white, Greek-letter sorority programming stalled in the face of disunity. Instead of refocusing their mission in this period where greater numbers of college women found them unnecessary, sororities rode out the storm to resurface the following decade in more hospitable social waters. Sororities experienced a resurgence in popularity and, with their core values and membership standards intact, stood ready to convey them to a new generation of young women.

CONCLUSION

An Alabama Polytechnic Institute (later Auburn University) campus flyer from the late 1950s reads: “Slave Auction Sponsored by Kappa Alpha Theta to help the Campus Fund Drive, November 16 – 3:00 p.m. in the Upper Quadrangle.” In smaller print, the notice lists rules for the auction, concluding with a salesman-like pitch for the event: “WHAT YOU NEED IS A SLAVE FOR A DAY: polish shoes, wash cars, ironing, darn socks, cut lawn.” The Kappa Alpha Theta slave auction serves as a primary example of the problematic mentalities exhibited by white sorority women in the mid-twentieth century. The announcement operates on two levels. Immediately, the term “slave auction” signaled the sorority chapter’s willingness to refer to the white, southern, slaveholding past and to do so in a lighthearted, or even positive, manner. With the Civil Rights Movement picking up speed in the South during these years, for some white students, the idea of a “slave auction” may have fueled their fantasies of a sustained white dominance over “unruly” African Americans. The text describing the auction rules suggested that the individuals bidding on the “girls” would be all male, stating, “You may bid either for a fraternity or for yourself.”¹ The fact that female students appeared to accept an event that celebrated and reinforced their subjugate position in American society’s gender hierarchy, evidences the way that sororities’ training conditioned their members to see themselves in relation to men. By asking fraternity men and other male students to imagine (and treat) sorority women as “slaves” who would perform menial chores, Kappa Alpha Theta propagated popular beliefs that men should “expect” women to submit to their whims – whether in the tasks described by the flyer or in sexual situations. Taken together, the messages expressed in the Kappa Alpha Theta “slave auction” flyer exhibit how sororities’ social training provided women with a conservative view of society and their place within it.

¹ “Kappa Alpha Theta Slave Auction Flyer,” n.d. [c.1956-1957?], Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs Records (AU RG-793), Auburn University Archives, Ralph Brown Draughon Library, Auburn University.

While the above example took place at a sorority chapter in the South, the issues it raises about sororities are not exclusive to the region. My study has focused on the ways that sororities established themselves in the South and expanded alongside the acceptance of coeducational institutions of higher education. At the same time, I have analyzed white, Greek-letter sororities as a national movement to show how the organizations influenced women's behavior and self-images on a national level. My examination of these groups at both the national and southern, regional level, illustrates the manner in which the organizations' rules and standards reinforced, at the national level, issues that were central to Americans' understanding of a southern-specific culture. The veneration of the mythic, white southern "lady," the allegiance to the "Lost Cause" mentality, and the widespread acceptance of institutionalized racial segregation all fed into sororities' agendas and images on the national stage. Acknowledging the universality of these issues among sorority women has allowed a clearer picture of the actions taken by these national organizations over the period of this study.

From their inception as foundational clubs for female students on newly coeducational college campuses, to their place as social groups orbiting men's fraternities, white, Greek-letter sororities occupied a significant and very visible, yet conflicted, role in college life over the twentieth century. Starting as local clubs and expanding into national organizations, sororities connected networks of women across the United States. These networks, in turn, functioned to disseminate sororities' ideals for white, middle and upper class womanhood to their selected membership while at the same time influencing the behavior of countless white women outside of membership, who may have looked to sorority women as paragons of American womanhood. The establishment of sorority standards as "appropriate" models of American womanhood, national sorority leaders suggested, would provide examples of "ladyhood" for non-sorority women while helping the sororities' members transition to adulthood. Along with their templates

for white, middle and upper class women's behavior, sororities purported to provide a family-like structure for young college women in the absence of their conventional families.

These factors helped sororities appear beneficial to deans of women and other campus administrators in shaping student behavior by the early twentieth century. Aligned with increasing professional and public interests in altering "abnormal" behaviors among students, deans and student personnel staff worried about students' "adjustment" to college. Primarily, student personnel dealt with concerns of how to identify "maladjusted" students and how to treat those students that administrators and school psychologists believed were displaying behaviors and emotions outside the "normal" range. Sororities, with their goal of molding women's behaviors through their guidebooks and educational training, provided deans and student personnel workers another tool in their efforts to shape "normal," contented students, who would fulfill social expectations for good citizenship.

In the mid-1950s, Kate Hevner Mueller commented perceptively on the unique space on campus occupied by national sorority chapters. "These chapters," she explained, "have had a schizophrenic history as the joint project of two very different sponsors: the paternalistic but impartial university and the absent but hovering national organization."² As I showed in Chapter Three, Mueller advocated cooperation between deans of women and national sororities to provide social skills for young women, but she also harbored concerns about the difficulties in the working relationships of the two, at times competing, bureaucratic organizations. Mueller felt that sororities' educational programs would be more useful if the national organizations would put more funding into hiring trained personnel workers to administer the programs instead of paying it to the largely untrained alumnae visiting advisors. Sororities typically put their money toward the salaries of the alumnae officers and the sorority housemothers, both of whom Mueller

² Mueller's discussion of sororities on university campuses was expanded from an article she co-authored with Doris Seward, which appeared in the *Journal of the National Association of Women Deans and Counselors* in January, 1956. See Mueller, *Student Personnel Work in Higher Education*, 444.

suggested, were amateurs when compared with specially trained personnel staff. Sorority chapters also had to finance and maintain a “fine house,” and hold “gala social affairs” to entice prospective members. These symbols of social status and excitement, when paired with the “freedom from any ‘uplift’ or supervisory restrictions,” allowed by absent and “untrained” alumnae, were the reasons, Mueller explained, that sororities chose not to spend money on specially trained women to guide sorority chapters.³

Without on-site, invested mentors who might be more interested in teaching sorority members to become strong, confident individuals, based on the members’ own abilities, the sororities’ national and local chapter goals were geared toward the affirmation of campus popularity. As I have demonstrated, a large part of sororities’ membership training was geared toward fashioning an outward image that would ensure popularity. Thus, the “appropriate” models of womanhood supported by sororities, increasingly emphasized the creation of a superficially pleasing, class-conscious personality and special attention to members’ physical appearance. While sororities engineered these characteristics among their members as a way to promote the image of a “cultured” and thus, elite status, for their chapters, each chapter also depended on these superficial characteristics to establish their popularity on their respective campuses. By presenting themselves to the other students on their campus (and to the popular male fraternities, in particular) as personable, fun, and physically desirable, sorority women hoped to secure their chapter’s position as a highly rated sorority at their college.

The groups required their members to adhere to national and local standards for appearance and behavior and to attend heterosocial events designed to place members on display for the fraternity men. In each sorority’s quest to gain or maintain status on their campus, they relied on male recognition to validate their claims to popularity. The route to achieving popularity with fraternities may have been riddled with obstacles, such as breaking school rules,

³ Mueller, *Student Personnel Work in Higher Education*, 447-448.

appearing at unsanctioned fraternity parties, or contending with unwanted sexual advances by the fraternity men. By participating in these practices to affirm their popularity, sororities reinforced gender inequality by increasing the power of male students in relation to women on campus. Ironically, sororities shifted from organizations that created safe spaces for female students on majority-male campuses to ones that facilitated *unsafe* spaces for women by reaffirming male dominance in social relations.

Instead of fighting against systems of power that limited women's options for "appropriate" behavior, sororities' networks *perpetuated* the acceptance of white women as second-class citizens in a gendered power structure, which prized white male supremacy. National sorority leaders feared social change, even in women's status and behavioral norms, as they signaled the possible upheaval of the nation's social structure and as a result, the undermining of sorority women's claims to elite status. So long as American society remained divided by and locked into hierarchies of class, race, and gender, white sorority women were at least assured of a spot "second best" to white men. The sorority women prescribed to conservative views in parallel with the maintenance of these social hierarchies, even if that meant "devaluing" themselves in the bargain.

Always careful to appear as though they were disinterested in political maneuvering, national sororities allowed their conservative policies to creep slowly, but deliberately, to the fore of their public images by the mid-twentieth century. I have illustrated the ways that these organizations, along with white, men's fraternities, adhered to conservative ideals for American citizenry, and allied themselves with similarly minded groups. And even as the national sororities discouraged, or even prohibited, their college members from participating in overtly political demonstrations – for example, those in regard to campus desegregation at the University of Georgia – national officers and National Panhellenic Council (NPC) representatives worked to promote their own limited viewpoints on issues such as whom should be allowed into Greek-

letter membership, how the sorority members should behave, and how the organizations should interact with university administrators.

As I have shown, it was national sorority leaders' conservative approach to these issues that largely defined the groups by the mid-twentieth century. With the Civil Rights Movement focusing attention on racial inequality in American society, sororities could no longer dismiss criticisms of their discriminatory methods of member selection. Instead, they embraced discrimination, arguing that their long histories as esteemed campus organizations had been a result of their ability, over the years, to use their "discriminating" taste to select only the "best" women as members. This "freedom of association," as sororities' national leaders termed it, was what, they claimed, made sororities the influential organizations that they had become. By attempting to ignore the element of *racial* discrimination in their defenses of membership discrimination, sororities' appeared, to the more open-minded individuals both within and outside of membership, to be endorsing a socially conservative ideology. For Greek-letter groups to argue that *their members* were being treated unfairly – even discriminated against – by university administrations and federal watchdogs, on account of their membership standards, is illustrative of the illogic underpinning sorority leaders' views at this juncture. As sororities' alumnae leaders saw their organizations, and by extension their way of life, under attack from "liberal" forces, the leaders redoubled efforts to police their own members while imparting a conservative agenda in their educational programming.

By the mid to late 1960s, however, sororities' programs appeared out of step with the interests of many young, white, American women. As college students sought to gain greater control over their college experiences by advocating curriculum reforms, removal of parietal rules, and social equality for all students, sororities' conservative platforms became part of the problem. National sororities were still smarting from their recent contests with various university administrations over the groups' discriminatory membership clauses. While the organizations

reconsidered their fit within the cluster of student activities on university campuses, they also contended with female students' decreased interest in sorority life. As I showed in Chapters Seven and Eight, some young women became disillusioned with sororities' hypocrisy as the groups simultaneously taught "ladylike" standards of behavior as well as discrimination against other women, whether white or non-white.

Significantly, current NPC literature reflects this difficult period for national sororities in a positive light. The NPC explains that, as universities began to remove rules of *in loco parentis*, national sororities stepped in to fill the void of programming and institutional guidance for college women. As the NPC contends, "fraternities and sororities found new ways to support students in making responsible choices."⁴ The programs that the NPC suggests helped sorority women make "responsible choices" in the years after the universities divestment include "initiatives on eating disorders, substance abuse, [and] relationship safety."⁵ Ironically, all of these programs appear to have developed as responses to issues and situations that the sororities *themselves* often produced. The NPC also does not address the fact that many young women by the late 1960s and 1970s were not interested in the types of "support" that sororities claimed to offer. The groups managed to maintain their presence on university campuses during this time, but, as I have noted, experienced a downturn in the numbers of women going through rush. While this was the case, the fact that sororities still attracted a number of female students suggests the variety of student interests in these years. As evidenced by the growth of organizations for young conservatives, such as Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), not all college students of the late 1960s and early 1970s took part in liberal demonstrations, or were even desirous of social changes in the United States. Greek-letter groups, as led by conservative alumni, could provide

⁴ *Adventure in Friendship: A History of the National Panhellenic Conference* (NPC, 2009), publication accessed at NPC website <http://www.npcwomen.org/about/history.aspx>, March 9, 2011, 10.

⁵ *Adventure in Friendship*, 10.

these students with a haven that supported the social status quo in matters of gender, race, and class divisions.

Over the decades from the 1910s to the 1970s, national sororities established themselves as highly powerful organizations for women, exacting their influence both during women's college years and throughout the course of their lives. Unfortunately, as I argue, sorority chapters gained this esteem through their physically charged relationships with men's fraternities. Sororities exerted their power over other women, and not in the groups' relationships with fraternity men. Whether or not the women joining the sororities specifically sought a conservative outlook, they stood to absorb these teachings from the organizations' training. So while sororities held great potential as sites of women's empowerment, they ended up mirroring and reinforcing a male-dominant gender structure and social hierarchies premised on white, middle and upper class norms.

A NOTE ABOUT SOURCES

The shape of this project has depended on the available sources. Since Greek-letter sororities are private organizations with closed archives, this immediately limited the most obvious source of materials for my dissertation. My original intent had been to explore the archives of one or more national sororities (preferably including a sorority that had been founded in the South) to form the base of my study. Limited access to sororities' archives led me to reevaluate my approach early on. A number of national sororities denied my requests for research – even after I explained the objective, historical approach of my project and revealed that I was a member of a National Panhellenic Council (NPC) sorority. Two groups, however, Alpha Delta Pi and Phi Mu (in neither of which I am a member) allowed me to visit their national headquarters to use their complete runs of their organizations' journals. In addition, Karen Reece, the archivist of Alpha Delta Pi, allowed me to view additional materials from specific Alpha Delta Pi chapters, including newsletters and chapter reports.

In our current culture, where liability lawsuits run rampant, I understand that many Greek-letter groups prefer to focus on their “positive” contributions to college campuses and women's social development, while keeping less favorable aspects of their stories hidden from view. Unfortunately, these efforts to limit public knowledge about the groups and their past serves to build distrust among outsiders. Indeed, as I waited while sorority archivists made requests to their organizations' national councils on my behalf, only to be summarily turned down, I, too, came to believe that the sororities must feel that they have *something* to hide. A president of a local sorority chapter at the College of William and Mary expressed interest in my research topic, but informed me that her national leaders forbade college members to provide interviews or pass information about the sorority to outsiders without prior approval from the national organization. While I found these “closed doors” frustrating, the setbacks also encouraged me to search for other ways to “read” sororities and analyze their historical legacies.

As I looked into records of college student activities and student affairs more generally for contextual clues, I realized that university archives contained sorority-related materials within a variety of collections. To gain a greater perspective on the differences in university campus cultures and sorority systems at schools across the South, I conducted research at Auburn University, the College of William and Mary, Duke University, the University of Alabama, the University of Georgia, the University of North Carolina, and the University of South Carolina. In addition, I corresponded with and received further information and materials from archivists at Louisiana State University, the University of Maryland, and the University of Virginia. Deans of women's records often included information that demonstrated the relationships between universities' Greek-letter and non-Greek-letter students, the national sororities and the dean's office, and the dean's office and the college sorority and fraternity members. Student affairs records and Presidents' papers frequently dealt with matters relating to sororities and fraternities and contained correspondence with other university administrators, national Greek-letter officers, and student members. Records of women's student organizations offered comparison points to structures and activities of campus sororities. By reading across these collections, sororities' narratives appeared, often strengthened by accompanying information in student newspapers, yearbooks and, on occasion, university archive oral history interviews.

In these searches, I also noticed another significant attempt by national sororities to shield their records. At the University Archives of Duke University (and perhaps at other archives where I was unaware of this fact) some national sororities had reclaimed their local chapter's records to keep them from researchers like myself. Duke's University Archives *did* still contain materials from the university's Kappa Kappa Gamma and Phi Mu chapters, including minute books from chapter meetings, as well as the records of the Duke Panhellenic Council. The latter collection helped me understand how sorority women at the Women's College of Duke

University related to the rest of the women in the student body and how this might be different than sorority-independent interactions on other campuses.

The largest Greek-letter specific collections I used for the project were the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) Records, the Stewart Howe Papers, the Wilson Heller Papers, and the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity Records, all located at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Student Life and Culture Archives. While the NPC did not allow me to view financial records for the organization, this was not a hindrance to my study. I graciously thank the NPC for making the majority of their records publicly available and for permitting my use of these materials with the knowledge that I was writing a dissertation about sororities. These records provided some of greatest guidance for this project. While I had been investigating sorority chapters "on the ground" at southern universities, the national programming and directives of the NPC helped present a large-scale picture of national sororities' agendas over the period of my study, encouraging me to think further about how these organizations functioned both locally and nationally.

Another large cache of sorority material that significantly aided my framework is located in the Guion Griffis Johnson Papers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Wilson Library. Johnson was a member of Chi Omega sorority and as an alumna, served as a visiting advisor, as well as the chapter advisor for the sorority at the University of North Carolina. Her papers deal primarily with Chi Omega and have provided me with a greater working knowledge of that sorority than many others. I cite examples from Chi Omega sorority frequently as a result. Again, the sources have largely dictated my focus in this project. I have not selected certain sororities to "pick on" in my writing, but have used the materials that have been left available for public consumption and of which I am aware. This means that some sororities and some national sorority leaders are discussed more often in the work than others. It does *not* mean that sororities

that received less attention in this study were not following principles similar to those I discussed in the preceding chapters.

In addition to my use of archival sources, I conducted two oral history interviews. I spoke with two former sorority members about their sorority memories and, in particular, their experiences de-sistering from their organization. I specifically chose these interview subjects to supplement information about their de-sistering that I discovered in Guion Griffis Johnson's correspondence. Taken together, the wide variety of sources I engaged for this study have yielded a stronger overall project. While I am certain that integral pieces of these narratives remain hidden in sororities' archives, the challenge of uncovering sources on this subject provided me with a richer perspective on the way that sororities worked within their surroundings.

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*The following collections were reprocessed during the completion of my dissertation. As a result, current box and folder numbers may be different from those I have listed. If interested in

these materials, please speak with the archivists at these repositories to determine the new, corresponding labels and organization within the collections.

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