

“Associated Women Sycophants”: Sorority Women and Changing Gender Roles at the
University of Kansas, 1948-1973

by
Shea E. O’Sullivan

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Approved by:

Dr. Jonathan Hagel
Thesis Adviser

Dr. Beth Bailey
Committee Member

Dr. Nicholas Syrett
Committee Member

Date Defended

Abstract:

This thesis aims to study the different social expectations of University of Kansas sorority women and the evolution of those social mores over time. Very little study on this topic has been done previously. Beth Bailey's *Sex in the Heartland* is one of the few works that discusses the Associated Women Students in relation to the sexual revolution at KU but does not include extensive discussion of sorority women's roles. From its founding in 1948 until its reinvention in 1970, the Associated Women Students (AWS) was the authority for University of Kansas (KU) women regarding all regulations and social events that placed desirability and emphasis a more socially conservative college woman. Integral to these operations were KU sorority women, who were significantly involved within the AWS and strong believers in social conservatism. Sororities utilized the infrastructure of the AWS to provide consistent and effective resistance to changes in gender roles and sexual mores for women. Historically, the years 1948-1975 at the University of Kansas are significant because it shows a regional version of change that reflects national trends.

Introduction

We have to realize what we are talking about. If we continue to pass these proposals, we will find ourselves with NO closing hours. We are here to learn, and the reason women have closing hours is because there is a difference between men and women.¹

The calm, cool spring day in Lawrence, Kansas, on March 22, 1966, did little to hide the hum of anticipation on the University of Kansas' (KU) campus. Student journalists of the *University Daily Kansan*, with their pens poised, were ready to praise or critique the outcome of the convention, and students waited with baited breath for the final tally of votes, and the decision that would dictate the social culture of campus. Building for years, the discussion of appropriate regulations for KU women was coming to a climax in the Associated Women Students (AWS) regulation convention of 1966. Delegates from all women's living groups on campus met for a continuation of the convention, after the initial meeting March 12th proved such heated discussion warranted an extension of the meeting some ten days later. Cloaked in discussions of responsibility and maturity in women were larger debates on the morality and social mores that each KU woman was expected to follow. "We are here to learn!" was the common explanation given in defense of the AWS's regulation of women's daily lives. "Women must be protected. We must realize if we vote in favor of now closing hours, this is too big a step..."²

Bob Dylan so aptly captured the American culture of the late 1960s in song, "the times, they are a-changin'." Of course, discussions of gender and sex norms were not the only things a-changin'. Change was the theme of the decade; students faced national protests of war, rallies for peace, and the sexual revolution. The debates within the Associated Women Students, an on-

¹ Associated Women Students, "AWS Convention Minutes," March 22, 1966. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

² Ibid.

campus organization composed of university women, and specifically the AWS regulation convention of 1966, exemplified the struggle on campus at a time of larger social change across the country. Some women began to question campus policies that acted *in loco parentis* and regulated their daily lives in place of their parents and inquired why no such regulations existed for their male counterparts. Others were content with the status quo.

Many sororities at KU, like Pi Beta Phi, were interested in keeping the regulations they viewed as protecting their members, while other groups were insistent upon policies that changed expectations for KU women. The 1960s were pivotal years for the female students of the University of Kansas as the women's liberation movement electrified the campus. Ultimately, the movement prompted women to reconsider what it meant to be a female student and what place they had on campus. The desire by sororities for many women to be respected "young ladies" with spotless reputations was placed alongside with new sentiments that women should be entitled to the same freedoms as men. These debates often surfaced in the same institutions that upheld the traditional expectations, such as the Associated Women Students and sororities on campus.

Research of this thesis draws from two related bodies of historical scholarship; historians that have studied changing sex and gender roles over time and historians that study fraternities and sororities. Beth Bailey studies changing sex and gender roles in her work, *From Front Porch to Backseat*, and continues the conversation in a later work, *Sex in the Heartland*, which outlines the sexual revolution at KU and presents a relevant narrative of University policies that regulated morality and was backed by the sororities to ensure the proper reputation of their women.³ There

³ Author's Note: For more material on the Associated Women Students specifically, please see Kelly C. Sartorius's *Deans of Women and the Feminist Movement: Emily Taylor's Activism*.

is much literature on the present gendered culture of today's sororities, and the issues that face these chapters at present. Sexual assault, harmful beauty standards, and underage drinking are all popular areas of discussion, and important works that yield greater awareness. However, in order to understand how current sorority women see themselves, it is necessary to understand how the longstanding institutions of Greek life have changed and how they still remain a vehicle for the perpetuation of a more conservative gender role for women.

To understand the present, the past must also be understood. The second related body of historical scholarship features several works from Margaret Freedman. Freeman's argument of sororities during the 20th century focuses on socially conservative sororities in the South, but the similarities in the Greek systems of the South and of KU outweigh the differences of geographical location. Extrapolating on Freeman's argument, this thesis argues during the years 1948-1975, KU sororities at the time of the sexual revolution became a sort of double edged sword as they had done in the early 1900s. Sororities had the potential to effect massive social change by providing women a platform to develop leadership skills and use them to advocate for change, yet this was countered within systems that enforced societal norms and demanded conformity. Additionally, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, by Diana Turk and *The Company He Keeps*, by Nicholas Syrett, will be used, all of which outlines the social conservativeness of sororities.

This thesis relies on archival records of the Associated Women Students, *University Daily Kansan* articles, and the papers of the individual sororities at KU. The majority of these sources can be found at the University Archives in the Spencer Research Library. AWS records articulated the regulations and policies to which women were obliged to follow. They embody the expectations women were supposed to adhere to and the punishments for deviation. Furthermore, the AWS kept immaculate records of their events and conventions, which read

much like a transcript and allow greater insight into the hopes and worries that were prominent during periods of change. At times, the delegates' ideas clash vehemently. The roles for women at university were often implicit, but the AWS offers examples where were explicitly stated as well. Additionally, oral history is included from women who present valuable insights into their daily life in the era of women's liberation on campus, as well as who were present during the major events in changing regulations for women.

This thesis seeks to examine sororities' roles in the Associated Women Students, an on-campus organization for University of Kansas women. By studying how the organization and the sorority women reacted to social change during the women's liberation movement, a more accurate narrative is drawn of the expectations college women were supposed to follow. The AWS advocated for policies that reinforced the notion of a conservative female stereotype – that women need protection and direction, could not exercise their own autonomy, and were recognized only by excelling in fashion and social society. This thesis argues that University of Kansas sorority women used the institutional support within the Associated Women Students to foster social conservatism in women by emphasizing values of beauty, of social excellence, and of guidance, all of which placed emphasis on decorum and propriety and created a more socially conservative gender role for women. Sorority women furthermore provided consistent and effective resistance to changes in gender roles and sexual mores for University of Kansas women. From 1948-1975, sorority women fought every battle within the AWS to keep regulations in place, but overall lost the war as gender roles for women began to modernize. As the Associated Women Students evolved in the late 1960s and early 1970s, sorority women continued to resist changes by maintaining rules and expectations within their own sorority

chapters without direction from the AWS. Many of these regulations are still in place in today's sororities and continues to craft socially conservative college women at the University of Kansas.

It can be argued that generalizing the AWS and its sorority members in this way would present a false narrative of unity against women's progress. It is certainly true that not all of the AWS's women agreed on every debated topic. Their responses ranged greatly. However, even though some supported loosening the restrictions on women, this type of change served the purpose of moral reform. In contrast, other types of activism to improve women's position on campus would be more of a moral revolution, which is the creation of new values for women and not making the existing principles consistent.⁴ In order to contextualize this topic better, this thesis will first explain the notion of the socially conservative gender role for women perpetuated in sororities. Social conservatism takes the form of attention to appearance, manners, and social excellence, and taboos of premarital sex. This thesis will examine the socially conservative gender role as related to the University of Kansas sororities and the Associated Women Students by means of university-endorsed regulations and events.

To best show this period of change among the Associated Women Students and thus sorority women on campus, this thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter one studies the formation of sororities nationally, then presents a deeper focus on KU during the years 1948-1959, examining AWS's formation and the involvement of sorority women on the University of Kansas campus to show the basis of the socially conservative expectations for KU women.

⁴ This thesis defines moral reform here as it refers to the "attempt to bring human action into greater conformity with existing ethical principles and thereby alleviate any injustice which results from the breach of these principles," which means essentially keeping the same value judgments that women should uphold. For further thought, please see: Sarah Hoagland, "Separating from Heterosexuality," in *Feminist Theory: A Philosophical Anthology*, Wiley, 2005.

Chapter two covers the years 1959-1966, showing the demand for changes in AWS regulations of women, the consistent resistance from sorority members, and the resulting changes with lasting implications. Finally, chapter three studies the years 1966-1975 to show the evolution of the AWS, and its response to the criticism by KU women, and examining sorority women's retreat into continued social conservatism. The way sororities functioned within the framework of the AWS shows a great deal about the changing social landscape of KU's campus at the time. A more in-depth focus of AWS regulation debates shows how KU sorority women's deep-rooted conservatism clashed with other groups of women on campus and adds to the greater understanding of how the sexual revolution was perceived by students. This lends complexity to the current narrative of young adults during the sexual revolution, and to the narrative of sorority women. Furthermore, examining the socially conservative background of sororities sheds light on why sororities within the AWS were in favor of events and regulations that reflected social conservatism and can indicate a better understanding of the ways they still interact on campuses today.

Chapter 1: “Ideals and Sincerity of Purpose”: University of Kansas and Conservatism Systems, 1948-1959

The changes that colored the sexual revolution did not appear overnight. Rather, the shift into the Cold War meant institutions across the United States were changing. As historian Beth Bailey suggests in her work, *Sex in the Heartland*, World War II left America highly nationalized.⁵ Public universities, like the University of Kansas, were used to unify support during the War and remained invested in the lives of local communities post war. As a result, these institutions preserved the connection of citizens of Lawrence and of the University of Kansas to the American culture. In the years after the war, people were accustomed to looking to positions of authority for direction in their public and private lives. But the cultural, social, and structural changes as a result of the War left breaches in normality that others would seek to utilize for the point of change. Lawrence, Kansas, was no stranger to such transformations, and the physical changes post WWII reflected on the surface of what was changing within. The opening of additional interstate highways via the National Highway Defense Act made joyriding to cities such as Topeka and Kansas City feasible, and as a result of the GI Bill, different demographics flocked to Lawrence. Local authority waned as Federal authority waxed, due in part from alternative means of cultural influences, such as the media and the growing economy. As the sun rose on the midcentury and the war years began to fade, so too did the appeal of authoritative positions, leaving KU students to question the status quo. While existing hierarchies did not disappear, the power to dictate social order shifted hands in the years to follow.⁶

⁵ Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: First Harvard University Press, 1999), 14-15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

Sororities at the University of Kansas, through their events, rules, and standards, perpetuated a type of woman that is considered socially conservative. Beyond political ideology or party affiliation, socially conservative sororities reinforced the notion of a traditional female stereotype – that women need a different set of rules and standards for the protection and direction of their morality and social lives, and whose accomplishments often stemmed from fashion and social society, such as dating or being “the best dressed.” Sorority women at the University of Kansas often became the most involved members of the AWS, and assuming roles as leaders in the organization and representatives of their sororities in AWS meetings. Coming from a background with a system of deeply rooted regulations, sorority women fit exceptionally well into the early rhetoric of the Associated Women Students and were active agents of resistance to changing gender roles for women.

Introduction to the Institution of Greek Sororities

The history of sororities and their values at the University of Kansas is part of the longer national history of Greek life. Writing in 1963, historian William Raimond Baird noted that the American college fraternity was an entity that followed the traditions, principles, and ideals on which America was established by her founding fathers under God.⁷ In short, he proclaimed, it was the embodiment of freedom. From the view of a male fraternity member perhaps this was true. But from a sorority member’s view, this could not be farther from the truth.⁸ Her obligation to maintain her image, and that of her sorority, often came with considerable constraints and did

⁷ William Raimond Baird, *Baird’s Manual of American College Fraternities* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Company, Inc., 1963), 3.

⁸ Author’s Note: Sororities were often referred to as fraternities in the early years of Greek letter societies.

not offer the same freedoms as a fraternity. As American popular culture suggests, sororities have played a prominent role in campus social life.⁹ Sorority women, even though they had the freedom and the potential to use their social capital on campus as an advocate for equality between men and women, instead focused their attentions to maintaining restrictions and regulations for women's behavior in order to preserve a proper and socially conservative college woman.

The first Greek letter society formed in 1776 at William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia as the fraternity Phi Beta Kappa, which existed as a secret society for men.¹⁰ Sororities did not originate until much later. The first chapter formed, Alpha Delta Pi, was founded at Wesleyan Female college in 1851, with several others following closely on its heels. By 1900, sororities existed both at white coeducational and women's only colleges. Many university administrators and parents thought a sorority offered young women a sense of community in a space that was previously androcentric, and the women, too, felt that sororities were a place for themselves to flourish academically and socially on campuses that were hostile to women students.¹¹ At universities across the United States, the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), formed in 1902 as a governing council for all sororities, sought to enforce familial values by carving out a domestic space for women so that they would prioritize their duties to their home.

⁹ Author's note: Traditionally white sororities were chosen to be studied in this thesis for several reasons: first, that they had the closest relation to the AWS, and thus the most influence over its changes, and secondly because experiences of historically ethnic Greek societies were quite different from white Greek experience prior to Title IX, and thus I could not do their experience justice in the scope of this project.

¹⁰ Baird, *Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities*, 7.

¹¹ Diana B. Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow: Sisterhood and Women's Fraternities, 1870-1920* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2004), 3.

The late 1800s and early 1900s was a time where young women were the minority on campus, and sororities offered a sense of community while creating a “home away from home” environment. This environment simulated a traditional household and emphasized the value of a domesticated woman. Furthermore, the image of protected, homey atmosphere for white young women lessened some of the worries about women on campus.¹² Important in the organization of sororities was the influence of housemothers and Deans of Women, which provided the guidance and watchful eye of a surrogate mother figure while away from home. With the addition of sorority members to function like biological sisters, a sorority woman could expect accountability from her sisters to hold her behavior to the standards of her chapter.

As it became increasingly normal for young women to attend college in the early 1900s, sorority women shifted from focusing on academics to desirable feminine qualities, like appearance and sociability.¹³ Parents realized women would be coming of age at universities, which raised concerns about lack of moral guidance. In addition to universities enacting *in loco parentis* regulations, sororities too had strict rules for decorum.¹⁴ Activities which would call one’s morality into question were strictly forbidden; young women could not smoke in public, drink, visit men’s fraternity houses alone, spend the night out of town, or have dates except on the weekends. To do any of these things without special permission from a housemother or Dean of Women was considered risqué and reflected poorly on a “lady.”¹⁵ To be wild or in bad taste with one’s dress, manners, and morals was a poor reflection on the individual, and thus on the greater sorority as a whole. This fostered the idea that a woman’s reputation was everything to

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 59.

¹⁴ Meaning, quite literally, “in the place of parents.”

¹⁵ Freeman, *Women of Discriminating Taste*, 21.

her status and emphasized outward appearances that produced a satisfactory reputation of a well-mannered and put together young woman.

These regulations correctly suggest that it was the sorority woman's responsibility to uphold standards of sexual behavior, not her male counterparts'. At the same time, sororities facilitated an increase in heterosocial relationships with men on campus, but only within the specific guidelines. In fact, some of the regulations, such as closing hours, often gave women an "out" to excuse herself from the unwanted attention of men. As sororities' focus shifted from academic accomplishments to social, it drew notice from alumnae and state legislators. Sororities were receiving threats to ban Greek life from state legislatures in Kansas, South Carolina, Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Texas, Indiana, Washington, and California and sorority alumnae decided to alleviate critiques by training members to act more in line with the organizations' ideals.¹⁶ This training was one of the major influences in creating a socially conservative sorority woman, but not the only pressure. On a broader scale, *in loco parentis* regulations enforced by sororities gave sorority women the notion they were fragile, naïve, and in need of protection. The regulations simultaneously reinforced that women were responsible for being respectable, while also granting college men a free pass on moral behavior, because "college men will be college men."¹⁷

The social constraints that sororities created and reinforced, however, were with not without corresponding benefits. The paradox of socially conservative sorority women was that they opposed the very changes that would give them the power to be heard on campus. Even

¹⁶ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 115-123.

¹⁷ Nicholas L. Syrett, *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 262.

with restrictions placed upon them that subtly reinforced societal norms, sororities had a double edge of group consciousness that provided women a platform to collaborate for women's rights, but through the strict boundaries of femininity.¹⁸ By the 1920s, sororities grew to dominate campus culture and flourished.¹⁹ The same is true of the University of Kansas. Sororities began to support the notion that women could seek professional work or social service after graduation. Yet, the advice given was always within the context of balancing outside engagements with the role of primary caretaker of a woman's home, and her family. This is the groundwork that sororities laid for the facilitation of moral reform by reinventing women's expectations while simultaneously requiring them to remain perfect examples of traditional femininity. The sororities and their members were able to promote some change in gender roles, but it was all in the confines of being a proper and polite woman.²⁰

Perhaps the envelope in the 1920s had been pushed too far and sorority women had become too independent, for even with the modernization of women's roles, the last thing a sorority wanted was an empowered woman to intimidate males on campus. This sentiment grew in the next twenty years, regressing women's position back to one which emphasized social propriety. In the late 1940s post World War II, the rising enrollment rates due to the GI Bill resulted in a sorority woman's college experience focusing more on heterosocial interaction and dating, which emerged as key in the sorority's training of the women.²¹ The implicit goal was the

¹⁸ Freeman, *Women of Discriminating Taste*, 14.

¹⁹ Margaret L. Freeman, *Women of Discriminating Taste: White Sororities, Southern Style, and the Making of American 'Ladyhood' in the Twentieth Century*. (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, forthcoming), 37.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

²¹ Heterosocial is a term used to mean the socialization of young women with young men. Implied in this term is a dynamic between the man and woman of dating and attraction.

achievement of attractive and socially excellent young women to appeal to men of the same background.²² Previous social change was thought to have gone too far, and sorority life now directed women on a path to pursuing an “MRS” degree.²³ Sorority materials, such as Alpha Chi Omega’s etiquette guide, stated that “dating is one of the concerns uppermost in every girl’s mind...the main concern for girls is where to meet the dates they desire.”²⁴ Sororities pushed for women to become well versed in engagements outside of the home but instead of careers, social excellence was favored. Women asserted their rights to recognition for their efforts of volunteerism and their organizational abilities in civic-interest campaigns.²⁵ This too, led to a standard in modern sororities of a traditional woman, who instead of pursuing her own career, should find a man and support his career through her domesticity.

With the quiet rumblings of the future feminist movement brewing in the early 1950s on college campuses around the United States, sororities received criticism for their practices. The tradition of recruiting new members was thought to be outdated and harmful, and sororities were denounced by many other on campus women.²⁶ The secret societies that had once been a source of protection for women on campus against exclusion by their male peers in the late 1800s had morphed by 1948 into a system that excluded other women from membership. This created

²² Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*, 72-73.

²³ MRS degree, commonly used as a humorous term, refers to a young lady attending higher education with the hope of finding a well-educated husband with a promising future, using the letters MRS to imply the woman becoming a future wife. Implicit in the phrase is the notion that her education is secondary to his, as she will become the homemaker after her marriage.

²⁴ Margaret L. Freeman, “Instruction in Living Beautifully: Social Education and Heterosocializing in White College Sororities,” in *Rethinking Campus Life* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming), 9.

²⁵ Karal Ann Marling, *Debutante: Rites and Regalia of American Debdom* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 119.

²⁶ Turk, *Bound By a Mighty Vow*, 115-123.

tension between sorority and non-sorority women with regard to the narrative of what a college woman should be, as women not in sororities argued that organizations were based off of competition and selective sisterhood.²⁷ Eventually, sorority women nationwide would come to question and respond to the regulations imposed upon them.²⁸ The regulation of sexual behavior and the push for propriety also affected the sorority women of KU.

By 1948, the stage had metaphorically been set. Sororities had, over the course of several decades, established values, practices, and traditions. In University of Kansas sororities that valued traditions, the principles and customs had become so deeply rooted that any major change they wished to make in gender roles for women could only be considered moral reform. The structure of sororities themselves limited them from achieving moral revolution. Women were desirous of freedom from rule hierarchies but doubted themselves and other members of their sex for their ability to handle such a responsibility.

KU Sororities and the Associated Women Students

After World War II, the enrollment boom at the University of Kansas rekindled significant worries about women attending colleges and universities. At college, these women were away from home and the supervision of their parents which raised concerns about what effect this would have on a young woman's morality as she came of age.²⁹ A major concern of parents and college administrators such as the Dean of Women's office, was preventing unplanned and out of wedlock pregnancies, and having the reputation of loose women on

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Freeman, "Instruction in Living Beautifully", 17.

²⁹ Lynn Peril, *College Girls: Bluestockings, Sex Kittens, and Coeds, Then and Now* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006). 94.

campus. As a result, the university endorsed a system of ideological controls to limit privacy and opportunity for the unmarried to have sexual contact.³⁰ On a college campus, administrators would act *in loco parentis*, meaning “in the place of parents,” creating pariental regulations but only for women. They also created an institutional body to disseminate these rules – the Associated Women Students. Importantly, the AWS was run in part by the sorority women of KU, thereby giving sorority women some control over the decisions of appropriate regulations.

Concerns about women on college campuses existed at the University of Kansas long before 1948. *In loco parentis* at KU can be traced to regulations faculty implemented in the 1870s, very soon after the University itself was founded. Students were not to loiter in the halls, frequent liquor or billiard saloons, or leave Lawrence without permission from the faculty.³¹ Although the men’s behavior was more troublesome with fights and brawls being the frequent problem, the women’s welfare, guidance, and protection was addressed first. Chancellor Snow’s wife founded the Women League at KU, consisting of faculty wives of the late 1800s. They offered the female students friendship and advice through a number of social and religious gatherings with the ultimate goal of teaching and enforcing social norms; this set the standard for high levels of university involvement and regulation in women students’ lives.

The Associated Women Students is essential for examining how sorority women at the University of Kansas resisted the changing gender roles for women, while other groups of on-campus women were more receptive to changes. Functionally, the AWS was a separate student government operating under the Dean of Women’s office, since women were not yet allowed to be a part of the overall student government. As a part of the AWS, each women’s living group on

³⁰ Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 78.

³¹ Susan Innes, *Vertical File on In Loco Parentis at KU* (Kenneth Spencer Research Library: Unpublished Reading Room Reference, 1976).

campus- sorority, dormitory or scholarship hall, had a delegation to represent their interests. In addition to delegations, many elected leaders within the AWS were also in sororities. In several cases, the resistance from sororities to change regulations can be explicitly seen in the AWS documents. At other times, the AWS's goals and events showed adherence to a conventional gender role. But through sorority women's involvement in the AWS, as leaders and participants, the conservative female stereotype is a common theme.

After the Second World War and an impressive increase in admission rates at KU, the *in loco parentis* regulations were addressed in a different way. The increase of enrollment due to the GI Bill brought different demographics of students to Lawrence and the University determined women students needed an organization to band together. In addition to having a public organization to express their needs and concerns, administrators decided in 1948 to merge all existing women's organizations into one overarching one, the Associated Women Students. The University was able to direct the AWS to fill in the role of the parents, ensuring that each



woman could participate in the same educational setting as men without being swept away by the “social whirl.”³² This was a conception about women of the time, that they needed to be cared for, looked after and monitored, so as to prevent anything untoward.

Every female student was automatically a member of the AWS, and the group met biannually to determine the types of *in loco parentis* regulations that were appropriate at KU.

³² Associated Women Students, “KU Cues,” 1949. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

The purpose of the organization, according to their constitution, was to integrate women into college life, to provide a line of communication between the women and the administration, and to protect the rights of each university woman so she could realize her potential in higher education.³³ These ideals are seen in the AWS publications, which state, “I believe in the women of the University; in their ideals and sincerity of purpose...above all I will make my standards such that I should be willing to have every woman on the campus adopt them as hers.”³⁴ These words of the KU Cues, a 1948 orientation pamphlet, introduced the Associated Women Students organization to every incoming female student at the University of Kansas, welcoming and grooming her to life at an institution of higher education. Among these words of the AWS’s constitution, other pointers elaborated on the proper decorum and poise of college women and their practical applications of such.

As an institution, the Associated Women Students in its early years reinforced the values of sororities through the rules and regulations of women’s behavior it promulgated in the 1940s and 1950s. The events, competitions and publications initially published by the group constrained women in the same ways sororities did: by valuing accomplishments in fashion and society, and by preserving the belief that women needed to be protected. As such, the initial years of the Associated Women Students can only be considered as a group concerned with moral reform of its women, keeping them within the lines of respectability. The Associated Women Students and the Dean of Women’s office worked closely with the other two councils

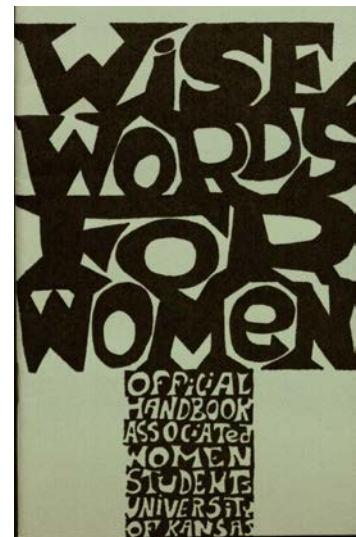
³³ Associated Women Students, “Constitution Rough Draft,” 1947. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library

³⁴ Associated Women Students, “KU Cues,” 1953. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

that governed university women, the Interdorm Council and the Panhellenic Council.³⁵ While the Panhellenic Council made all of the rules governing sorority women, such as rush week and specific regulations of sorority houses, the Panhellenic Council and Interdorm Council followed the lead of the Associated Women Students. If the AWS required a curfew for women, sorority members were no exception to the rule. As a result, the KU Dean of Women, and thus the AWS, had significant contact with all sororities and sorority members.

Regulations and Guidance for Women

The Associated Women Students at its start was a multifaceted organization, and in addition to creating and publishing the regulations, which had to be approved by the Dean of Women and the Chancellor, the AWS was also responsible for punishing those who broke the rules. Attempting to instill respectability in the female students, the AWS created visiting hours for male callers, hours for women to be allowed in men's housing, and curfews for women. In the late 1950s, KU women began to fight the AWS for more liberal regulations, which reflected sentiments of the sexual revolution and the development of women as equal counterparts to men. However, one constant theme in the AWS is that of propriety. The regulations were created in order to preserve a young woman's reputation as a proper, polite, and respectable young woman. Additional cues of how to



A 1962 example of the AWS publications. First known as KU Cues and later changed to Wise Words for Women, these pamphlets discussed the social standards of women at KU.

³⁵ Associated Women Students, "KU Cues," 1949. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

conduct one's self socially were also found in the AWS's publications. The regulations and events held were a way of preserving the socially conservative female gender role. This created a system of expectations for women that in many ways counteracted the AWS's mission to give young women at KU a voice.

One way that the Associated Women Students fulfilled their purpose of promoting propriety at the University of Kansas was by publishing pamphlets to distribute to women coming to college for the first time. These publications by the AWS were made for KU female students, by KU female students and female administration. These materials would vary in appearance with different cover art to reflect what style was popular at the time. Usually, they contained photographs of the University or small pictures to accompany the text. The first of these publications was *KU Cues*, issued from 1948 to 1956. Later, the name of the publication was changed to *Wise Words for Women* but was still distributed to first-year women. The pamphlet, which more closely resembles a little paperback book, was key to integrating new female students into KU. It contained information such as a campus map, the common lingo for things at KU, but more importantly, it contained the regulations that the women of KU were expected to adhere to, which were composed by the AWS and approved by the Dean of Women. The Woman's Creed outlined these values and hopes for KU women. The Creed reads as follows:

I believe in the women of the University, in their ideals and sincerity of purpose.
Because I am one of them, I will strive to be open minded and charitable.
I will be honest with myself. For then it follows that I will be honest with my classwork and with other people.
I will support the activities of my University in the spirit of service.
I will remember that I am here primarily to study and to learn and think.
I will take time for friendships and pleasure in the simple things.
I will broaden my sympathy and interests to include the life which is outside the campus.

Above all I will make my standards such that I should be willing to have every woman on the campus adopt them as hers.³⁶

The AWS publications sought to outline the principles set forth in the Woman's Creed by giving incoming female students the information to make the transition to higher education a little more comfortable. The language of the publication is warm and welcoming and extends almost a friendly hand to the reader. This, too, would have assured the parents of incoming students that they were under the supervision of a university with well-reasoned expectations of their young women.

While the language appears to be happy and polite, the reality is this creed outlined a type of groupthink mentality, where every woman's actions were subject to criticism from other women. Outlining so specifically the norms of decorum for KU women, the AWS thought negatively on any deviation, and as a result the participating members. Even while the AWS fostered a place for women's voices to be heard, it also made clear the topics of discussion. Having these expectations of KU women was an example of how the AWS was so deeply rooted in preserving the ideal woman that it could not make changes in the gender role for women in the way of moral revolution, since women policed themselves.

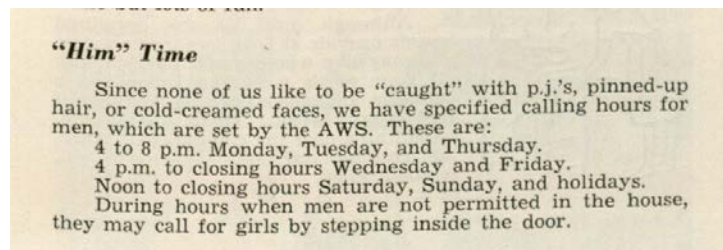
Another way the AWS sought for every woman to embody the high ideals in the Woman's Creed was making guidelines to ensure proper sexual behavior from KU's women. The KU Cues book specifically covers the regulations of women and their curfews, rules for

³⁶ Associated Women Students, "KU Cues," 1947. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

Author's Note: This source was created with the purpose of setting guidelines of behavior for KU's female students. The content of the KU Cues, and in later years, the Wise Words for Women are excellent gages of the social climate at KU. The different issues have largely the same content (curfews, calling hours, what to wear), but affords the historian an indication of the changing societal norms for women when compared all together.

serenades, requirements for leaving the university, as well as helpful hints of what to wear to different events and how to make friends on campus. In 1947, women's curfews were 10:30 pm Monday through Thursday, 12:30 am on Friday, 1:00 am on Saturday, and 11:00 pm on Sunday.³⁷ There were exceptions to these curfews for finals.

The AWS also regulated the time that men could call on KU women, which was 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, and 4:00 pm to closing time Wednesday and Friday, and 12:00 pm to closing hours on



An excerpt of the 1953 KU Cues, regulating men calling hours. (University Archives)

Saturday, Sunday and holidays. KU Cues additionally specified the times women could call on men at their places of residence and the times and places dancing parties could be held. Aside from the cover art, very little changed in the Associated Women Student's KU Cues handbook in the coming years. In the 1953 edition, six years later, the curfews for women remained almost exactly the same, with Wednesday's curfew being extended to 11:00 pm. The calling hours for men remained the same.³⁸

Notably, male students were subject to no regulations. The point of subjecting women to strict hours was to regulate their morality. It was thought that if women were required to be home at certain hours, it would leave less time for undesirable interactions between men and women.

Even though men were frequently the active party in pursuing sexual activity, as Margaret

³⁷ Associated Women Students, "KU Cues," 1947. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

³⁸ Associated Women Students, "KU Cues," 1953. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

Freeman has argued, women were the party responsible for keeping the “petting” from going too far.³⁹ If the situation did get out of hand, it would be the woman’s reputation on the line, not the man’s. This too, is another example of enforcing the notion that college women were responsible for regulating both their morality and their significant others’, leaving intact the excuse that “boys will be boys.”

Sorority women had few adjustments to make to adhere to these strict AWS rules. Women in Greek life were routinely subject to their individual sorority’s rules, which usually mimicked the official AWS rules. Men could not call later than 8:00 pm certain nights due to AWS regulations, and were only permitted in the public areas of the first floor and were not allowed in the upstairs of the sorority house, which housed the dormitories of the women. Additionally, each sorority house had a live-in housemother, who acted as the hired mother for all of the sorority house. Also referred to as the “campus mother” in the AWS KU Cues, the housemothers were expected to act much in the same way biological mothers were. Sorority women were encouraged to introduce their dates to the housemother and to approach them for any advice from personal problems to the common cold. Furthermore, housemothers were keepers of the gate, and sorority women often had to check in with her before and after date parties and receive the housemother’s permission before traveling away from campus for any reason.⁴⁰ Because of this role of accountability played by the housemother, sorority women had to find sneakier ways to circumvent the AWS’s regulations if they chose to do so.

The Associated Women Students’ rules were not always followed willingly, however. In response to unwilling participants, the AWS had a Board of Standards, created specifically to

³⁹ Freeman, *Women of Discriminating Taste*, 24.

⁴⁰ Associated Women Students, “KU Cues,” 1949. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

report wayward women and punish them accordingly. Infractions included checking in even one minute late to the dormitory, omitting to check in, or simply bypassing the residential assistant or housemother and sneaking in the fire door. As one report showed, Caroline Randsopher, a woman residing in Corbin Hall in 1957 committed all three offenses. However, the tipping point for the AWS Board of Standards came when Caroline refused to adhere to standard dress policy set by the AWS and wore slacks to evening dinner in the dining hall. Adding further insult to injury, when summoned to explain her actions to the board of standards, Caroline, “seeming extremely antagonistic” and refusing to acknowledge anything wrong with her actions, also refused to comply with scheduling a Board of Standards meeting. When the Board of Standards issued an official time for a disciplinary hearing, Caroline simply failed to attend, much to the chagrin of the AWS.⁴¹

Social excellence was seen as a most important key to a successful college career, and as a sort of expressway into popularity with college men. *She’s Off to College*, a 1940s publication whose message still held weight with college women years later, warned against the college girl who was too introverted and thus endangered “the wholeness of her college opportunity.”⁴² Interwoven within the explicitly stated regulations for women, KU sororities, backed by the AWS, also sanctioned more implicit social direction for young college women. This came in the form of social events and recognition for being socially excellent young ladies.⁴³ One such

⁴¹ Betty Huntington, “A.W.S. Board of Standards, Re: Caroline Randsopher,” 1957. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁴² Peril, *College Girls*, 94.

⁴³ Author’s Note: Social excellence, as used with sororities and the AWS, is used to mean women relating to, devoted to, or characterized by friendly companionship or relations to her friends, living group, and to college men. Used in this context, a socially excellent woman would be invited to social functions, would have impeccable etiquette and would be involved in philanthropic endeavors.

influence from the KU Greek System was the Big Brothers and Little Sisters program. Started by the fraternities at KU, this program was designed to pair fraternity 'big brothers' to sorority 'little sisters.' The women would participate in fraternities' philanthropy events, providing services such as waiting tables, welcoming guests, helping craft banners for the fraternity, and even washing cars to raise money. In return, the program intended fraternity brothers to offer friendship to the women by serenading them and throwing parties. Ultimately, the benefit to fraternity men was pretty women around the house to aid in recruitment numbers. For women, the benefit was the attention and friendship of males, since "college men will be college men, and at the University of Kansas, this [meant] among other things having attention of and from college women."⁴⁴ While perhaps practical for expanding social circles, this Big Brother Little Sister program had other implications, primarily that women needed a male figure for protection. Intended to be more of a mentoring program, the implication was fraternity 'big brothers' had a more legitimate claim to responsibility than their 'little sisters' and could offer them protection against unwanted suitors, academic advice, and guidance that women were thought unable to provide for themselves.

Even academically, KU women were not recognized as the same level as their male counterparts. Collegiate women were often stereotyped as being swept away in the social whirl of campus life and were not taken seriously as academics. Even worse than outsmarting campus men was looking the part. *Glamour* magazine emphasized this in an article titled "Brains Are Not Enough," which warned against the dangers for smart young women who did not embrace the culture of beauty along with intelligence.⁴⁵ In addition to the negative views of women as

⁴⁴ KU News Bureau, "Fraternity Big Brothers Program," 1965. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁴⁵ Peril, *College Girls*, 128.

academics, due to their restrictive curfews and limits on male calling hours, KU women were not allowed to be out late which cut into the potential studying time at libraries and opportunities for study groups, even if they had chosen to shuck the shackles of stereotypes. Notably, college men had no such restrictions and were thus free to study away from their residence whenever they wanted. Even with these disadvantages, KU women still managed to make grades, if only to be demoted into the formulaic college girl yet again. One KU News Bureau release from 1953 sums up these sentiments exactly. The headline begins, “Women may not be smarter than men, but they do have better grades and they have the University of Kansas scholarship report to prove it.”⁴⁶ Despite the headline’s implication that women are not as smart as men, the article continues to describe the all-women’s average was significantly higher than the university men’s and that sorority women of Pi Beta Phi led the Greek system in highest grades. Even the superior grade point averages of KU women failed to shatter the stereotype, fostered by the University, of campus women being not as smart as men.

The most common form of recognition given to colligate women came in the form of “Queens.” Women could be named queen of events, classes, and of their residence facilities. Greek Week Queens, a program started within the in KU Greek system, was promoted by the Associated Women Students. For one week each year, the fraternities and sororities would kick off Greek Week, which included activities such as chariot races, dances, and a tug-o-war at Potter’s Lake. The last event of the week would be to vote on one sorority member to be named Greek Week Queen. Voting criteria did not include academic accomplishments, but rather which woman was the most socially excellent. Similarly, outside the Greek system women could be

⁴⁶ KU News Bureau, “1953 Scholarship Report,” August 5, 1953. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

elected Queen of the Senior class. During Senior Day ceremonies prior to a football game, women that were nominated from their residential facilities were selected to become Queen. If crowned, the woman would be attended by several ladies in waiting and would reign the following year as the official hostess of the Senior class.⁴⁷ Frequently, sorority women were named Queen or lady in waiting. Perhaps slightly more substantial, women could also be recognized as First Ladies by the Associated Women Students. Women were elected from their residential facility, be it sorority house, dormitory, or scholarship hall for being an outstanding member and were named First Lady at the AWS's All Women's Day program. Chosen for being outstanding as a member, these women were socially excellent and involved on campus in addition to within their living group.

While these recognitions were undoubtedly given genuinely, the entire system still rang of empty praise. Rather than being acknowledged as the leaders of their communities and social circles, they were reduced to "Queens" chosen to play hostess and to "First Ladies" never presidents. Even in this system of awards given by the AWS and Greek life, the underlying implication was the best service a college-educated woman could provide was to be socially excellent. Furthermore, this system normalized women competing against each other, rather than acting together to better the position of all women on campus. The 'Queen's' leadership, while appreciated, was still confined to the gender norms of women of the day. The feminine assets that were awarded were limited to beauty, guidance, and service.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ KU News Bureau, "Queen of Senior Class," 1963. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁴⁸ "Feminine Assets Have Reward," *University Daily Kansan*, 1966. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

Women in leadership positions was something the Associated Women Students sought to instill in its members, even if their definition of a woman leader was implicitly different than male leaders. The AWS started the High School Leadership Day, in which the AWS would host potential Jayhawks and introduce them to a day in Lawrence. The high school seniors would spend the day with the AWS women, touring campus and having their questions answered about how to balance social life and academics at a university. While useful to high school girls, this program also functioned as a grooming technique for the Associated Women Students. Leading younger women by their example, AWS women exhibited how college women were poised and socially excellent and how to use these tools to succeed at KU.

Social excellence and regulations only went so far in crafting the ideal college woman; appearance played a large role for women. Attention to beauty was seen as a modern, positive step away from the stereotypical nerdy spinster that had been the negative impression of women. *She's Off to College* described external beauty as the mark of a modern coed:

Colleges are not the isolated scholastic retreats they were...Then a girl who went to college was almost by that very fact labeled a little queer, or at least considered the "studious type" not attractive to men, and she probably went on to a bookish life and a teaching profession later...Culture and knowledge have come out of hiding, and everyone realizes that an educated woman is more attractive and exerts more influence than an uneducated one.⁴⁹

KU, too, was affected by these sentiments, and the Associated Women Students sought to direct women's social presence in the most desirable way, which included emphasizing external beauty. The AWS in the early 1940s and 1950s focused considerable efforts in promoting fashionable KU women. Often stated explicitly in AWS monthly publications, implicit direction also came in the form of hosting AWS sponsored fashion shows to promote well dressed women.

⁴⁹ Peril, *College Girls*, 127.

Campus Clothesline				Purse	Gloves	Coat
Class Library Lecture	skirts sweaters blouses shirtwaists	scarf when necessary	loafers saddles tennis flats	big enough to carry your needs for the day	depends on the weather	trench coat car coat sport coat
Dates Movies Dancing Coke dates Sunday suppers Hour dances	smart skirts sweaters blouses shirtwaists	no	flats loafers	small	depends on the weather	sport or dressy
Parties Pinning Fraternity Yell-ins	wool dresses shirtwaists	no	heels 'n hose	dressy	yes	dressy
Formals	cocktail dress or formal	special clip or comb if you wish	heels 'n hose	small	short; long only for very formal	dressy jacket or coat
Plays Concerts Teas Rock Chalk	dresses suits	no	heels 'n hose	dressy	yes	dressy
Athletic events	skirts sweaters blouses	no	loafers saddles tennis	large enough for ticket and make-up	depends on the weather	sport coat car coat
Woodsies Picnics Barn Parties	slacks jeans shirts sweatshirts	cowboy hat	sometimes cowboy boots	use your pocket		jacket or sweatshirt
Church	dresses suits	preferably	heels 'n hose	yes	yes	dressy
Homecoming and Relays dances	dressy wool cocktail dresses	no	heels 'n hose	small	yes	dressy

As women attended KU their first year, the standards of dress would already be clearly stated. In each of the AWS orientation materials, “Campus Close line,” the go-to directory for campus fashion questions, could be found a few pages away from the AWS regulations.

Each of the AWS

Above: A 1962 AWS orientation guide, Wise Words for Women, states how the fashionable KU woman dresses for each occasion

orientation materials showed the different types of dress that were appropriate for social situations. Slacks

were only viable options for outdoor adventures and would be especially frowned upon to be worn on inappropriate occasions, as in the case of Caroline Randsopher, who was written up for the offense of not following dress code.

To better exemplify the correct type of fashion, the AWS also had its own fashion board. These women were elected to keep tabs on campus trends and to inform the rest of the KU women the season’s dos and don’ts. Fashionable AWS members would be asked to pose for photoshoots to exemplify the ways to dress for occasions that college women might face, such as class, fraternity formals, church, or college game day. The AWS Fashion Board was also



A photo from the AWS 1950's fashion board, which promoted the proper dress for different social events.

responsible for fashion shows for coeds, including a yearly bridal show for all women who were soon to be tying the knot.

However, the most popular show sponsored by the AWS was the yearly competition for the Best Dressed KU Girl. It was the perfect opportunity for women to showcase pride in their appearance and to feature new techniques of makeup and hair

styling. Each residential facility nominated a representative to compete in the show. The requirements to be entered were as follows:

Good figure, beautiful posture. Hair: Well kept, shining, styled in manner which becomes the girl. Make-up: enough to look pretty, but not overdone. Good grooming: not just neat, but impeccable. Dress: appropriate for girl's fashion type, suitable to custom of this area.⁵⁰

Contestants competed for the opportunity to be crowned KU's Best Dressed Girl and subsequently to be submitted to *Glamour* Magazine. If chosen among all other university women in the country, she could be featured in *Glamour's* College issue 10 Best Dressed Girls. The competition was taken extremely seriously, with many sorority women competing to be KU's new it girl.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Associated Women Students Scrapbook, "AWS Fashion Show Qualifications," 1950. University Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁵¹ Associated Women Students, "Associated Women Students Scrapbook," 1962, University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library.



Martha Yankey, a KU Kappa Kappa Gamma, is featured in a 1963 Aug edition of Glamor magazine

One KU woman, Martha “Muff” Yankey, a Kappa Kappa Gamma, won the KU Best Dressed Girl Competition sponsored by the AWS in 1962 and was then featured in *Glamour’s* August issue, which focused on college fashion trends. After her appearance in the magazine, Yankey became something of a campus celebrity. The AWS and the school newspaper, the *University Daily Kansan* (UDK) each featured her in several articles, and she was regarded as a fashion icon.⁵²

The AWS and its fashion board did not always offer constructive criticism of women’s appearances. They believed the qualifications to enter the Best Dressed Girl competition should be followed by all coeds daily. Hair was to be kept shining, makeup looking natural, and the woman was to carry her good figure with beautiful posture. Deviance from these beauty norms required the

AWS’s attention. *Mademoiselle*, a monthly newsletter published from the AWS Fashion Board, addressed some of these concerns, noting the qualifications into *Glamour* magazine and the Best Dressed Girl competition were being “painfully neglected.” Contrary to the desired “clean, shining, well-kept hair,” the AWS commented on the “messy, dull, too-back-combed hair on campus.” Instead of natural makeup, the authors of *Mademoiselle* were shocked to still see “a number of girls here at KU who absolutely look like raccoons because they line their eyelids (both upper and lower!) so heavily.” The newsletter stressed that KU’s female students should try to follow the specifications set up by the AWS and said that just looking pretty did not mean

⁵² Ibid.

losing individuality, it just “requires more time, and a little more thought about what is really attractive, and what is down-right in poor taste.” The newsletter closed with a reminder about the upcoming Best Dressed Girl Contest.⁵³

With such harsh criticism and such attractive rewards, it is understandable that the average KU woman felt compelled to adhere to the standard of beauty set forth by the AWS and its fashion board. The implications were that women needed to be beautiful and always put together to be worthy of recognition, and if they failed to do so, it would be grounds for criticism from the fashion board, or worse, being sent to the AWS Board of Standards for failure to comply with the proper dress code.

The AWS, Sororities, and the “Great Pretenders”

With such strict curfews and calling hours, the Associated Women Students regulations for women on KU’s campus suggests that administrators were worried about the repercussions if women on campus were free to interact in heterosocial relationships without guidelines. With daughters away at college, white parents in the late 1940s and early 1950s often worried about the dangers of sexual predation along with the possibility of the “wild crowd.”⁵⁴ The AWS’s purpose in instituting regulations was not only to ensure young women at KU did not damage their morality by acting inappropriately with their male peers, but also because they did not want them to become victims of sexual violence or pregnancy outside of wedlock, and men were not required to be policed.

⁵³ Associated Women Students, “Mademoiselle,” 1962. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁵⁴ Peril, *College Girls*, 144.

Even if the regulations that dictated women's decorum seemed the norm, they were being broken with some frequency. Like the social mores that prohibited sexual relations before marriage, college women often found a way around the rules.⁵⁵ Crucial to the gender narrative of this time, college men were more active in sexual relationships and women more passive, with men pursuing sexual advances. In a relationship, a woman would have to take control of the situation, minimizing the risk to their reputation while maximizing her exploration of sex.⁵⁶ The rituals of dating had bizarre distinctions between different sexual acts, such as "necking" or "petting," but for respectable women, they never publicly admitted to progressing further to premarital sex.

Women at the University of Kansas had to balance between respectability and keeping their beaux interested. The result, as suggested by the Platters hit song "The Great Pretender" and other popular culture of the time, was women often did not present their lives honestly. A woman's small lies about her past dating life were strategies for coping with conflicting societal cues. As in the case of Caroline Randsopher, offenses were taken extremely seriously by the AWS and the Dean of Women's office, for fear of looking too lax or neglectful to parents. Regardless of the reason for the infractions, be it a boyfriend or in Caroline's case, working late at the theatre department, the AWS Standards Board accepted no excuses.

Being the authority of campus decorum, the Associated Women Students sought to aid the women of campus in this conflict of social pressures. College life offered conflicting paths for women to follow; as their educational and occupational prospects expanded, a college woman's double bind was manipulated in many ways. College girls were seen in competing positions: as

⁵⁵ Ibid., 162.

⁵⁶ Win Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing up Female in the Fifties* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 121.

domesticated future wives and as glamorous beauties, as virgins and sexpots, as desirable and as prudish, adding to the image of women as “Great Pretenders.” For KU women to choose any of these definitions of femininity, some desirable attribute of another definition of femininity would have to be sacrificed. The overall implications of these incredibly strict regulations were that even though educational institutions allowed women to attend, they did not trust them with their own autonomy. College women, in the eyes of the University, of their parents, and of the AWS, were in need of guidance from other adults to make sure they did not deviate from proper standards of behavior. It is also not unreasonable to think that with so much emphasis on these standards, that sorority women also believed they were in need of others to look after them as well.



A student at Oxford University sneaks back to her dorm after hours. (College Girls, Lynn Peril)

The regulations that were imposed by the Associated Women Students to the women of KU were quite common at the time. Across universities nationwide, women students were facing the same sort of regulations. The University of Michigan’s equivalent to KU Cues, for example, devoted nine of the fifteen total pages to the elaborate rules.⁵⁷ To some extent, rules were in place to ensure the safety of women, but more often than not, safety became synonymous with controlling morality. It was thought that if women were to be chaperoned and returned at a respectable time of night, couples would not engage in sexual

activity. Yet many of these rules were circumvented or disregarded, and in reality, did little to stop sexual relations. Women would prop fire doors open to avoid housemothers when returning

⁵⁷ Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 79.

late, climb in windows, or leave their places of residence and go to a different destination than the sign out sheet stated. What “petting” could be done after curfew could be done before curfew with a little creativity. The absurd complexity of the regulations made by the Associated Women Students at the University of Kansas suggests that women were acting in contempt. The explicitly stated regulations were intended to demonstrate appropriate heteronormative dating and create distance between public reputations and private petting, but the severity of the rules made for women’s conduct suggest that it there was a high level of doubt that KU women were following them.

In the beginning years of the Associated Women Students, specific values were emphasized to KU’s women. Those values of external beauty, social excellence, and of women’s need for guidance characterized what it meant to be a coed in higher education. Rather than focusing more heavily on academics, the Associated Women Students led by example that being fashionable, being named Queen, and adhering to strict regulations were all of the proper ways to ensure its women would excel at KU. Because of the sorority system’s emphasis on group dynamics and social presence on campus, many of the women at the forefront of the AWS were also sorority women, who marched happily to the beat of the AWS’s drum.

Chapter 2: “Major Motions”: Key and Regulation Changes, 1959-1966

While the mid- 20th century is thought to be a time for radical revolution, most college women found themselves caught in limbo between two worlds. In one world, they were serenaded by college men and returning quietly home by curfew. In the other world they were lobbying against the established authorities for more individual freedom. Being a college woman was shaped by desire for individual freedoms that did not always fit within the university prescribed rules.

As the years progressed into the late 1950s, it became more and more evident that the women of the University of Kansas were not satisfied with the status quo. Discrepancies between rules for themselves and their male counterparts were becoming more noticeable, and women began to question the current policies and appeal to the Dean of Women to assist in making the changes. The regulations decided by the Associated Women Students and approved by the Dean of Women were reflective of the changing social culture of the time. As women desired more independency the regulations began to reflect this, and the University of Kansas’ role in acting *in loco parentis* actually became more prominent in discussion on campus. Regulations grew more complicated as the AWS made equivalencies between age and maturity level, deeming upperclasswomen responsible enough for the privilege of relaxed regulations in an attempt to mollify protests against all regulations and to keep some semblance of order. The KU women’s desire to exercise more autonomy over themselves was not always seen as simply as that, though. Nationally, mass media of the time picked up on the fight for fewer rules and made the explicit connection between sex and fewer *in loco parentis* regulations.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 80.

The sororities of the University of Kansas and their delegation to the Associated Women Students were essential for resisting substantive change in the resulting regulations and activities. These regulations manifested in the form of changes to curfews, calling hours, and peer-led judicial committees. While the different regulations were approved by the Chancellor and the Dean of Women, the driving force of the push for more liberal regulations were a group of the women representing dormitories and scholarship halls. Sororities played a more complicated role. Often disagreeing between themselves about what changes should be made, overall the sororities wished to amend regulations to keep them similar to the past rules to ensure that KU women's respectability would be preserved. The documents of the Associated Women Students show the pivotal years of the conversation and shed light on the discussions of morality that came into play. Specifically, they show the ways sororities reacted negatively to the prospect of relaxing moral regulations.

Small Changes

By the time that 1957 rolled around, small changes were being made to the regulations the Associated Women Students dutifully enforced. The AWS had changed the name of the orientation pamphlet, KU Cues, to Wise Words for Women. While the name had changed, the content and the purpose of the AWS publication remained largely unaltered, with some exceptions to curfews and calling hours. The Woman's Creed remained unchanged, and the closing hours for women were the same. The only thing that had been revised in May 1957 was the closing hours during sorority recruitment week. At that time, the freshman were subjected to the closing hours as stated above, while upperclassmen had the privilege of extended closing

hours until 11:00 pm.⁵⁹ Calling hours for men were extended to start at 12:00 pm to 8:00 pm Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 12:00 pm to closing hours Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, and 10:00 am to closing hours on Sunday.

The one glaring difference between the 1957 *Wise Words for Women* and the 1953 *KU Cues* is the AWS clause on alcohol consumption. In the 1957 *Wise Words*, the AWS takes a hard stance against women consuming any alcohol on campus and concurs with the University of Kansas' policy with students and alcohol.⁶⁰ This suggests a tightening of rules by the Associated Women Students. The new inclusion of the alcohol clause shows the AWS and thus the overall administration of the University, had concerns about KU women breaking drinking rules, since indulging in alcoholic beverages was thought to be unladylike. Moreover, rules need not be explicitly stated unless there is some doubt they are being followed. As college women felt like taking more and more responsibility for themselves, the AWS gripped harder on its control of campus decorum.

Comparing the AWS regulations from 1953 with regulations from 1957, shows the beginning of a change in women's regulations.⁶¹ Within a four-year time span, the hours for male callers became more lenient. The AWS began to consider the distinction of maturity between upperclasswomen and freshmen for less restrictive curfews, the AWS used recruitment week as a sort of trial period for testing out later curfews for the older women students.⁶² From the first publication of these booklets for KU women in 1947, it may seem like very little was

⁵⁹ Associated Women Students, "Wise Words for Women," 1957. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Associated Women Students, "Regulations," 1953–1954. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁶² Associated Women Students, "Regulations," 1957–1958. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

changed. However, in 1956, at the start of Dean of Women Emily Taylor's period in office, each edition of the Associated Women Students' publication became slightly laxer on female students with regard to calling hours and curfews. Most notably, for the first time KU relinquished enough rules to give seniors the decision to return to their campus home whenever they pleased. The housing facility, be it sorority house or dormitory, was allowed the option by the AWS to have women check out a key to let themselves back in at the time of her choice.

This change driven by the forceful lobbying by KU women, who began to push against the status quo of the institutions that governed their lives in the 1950s. One such woman who was privy to the process was Kala Mays Stroup. Stroup entered the University of Kansas in 1955 at a time when women began to chafe against the *in loco parentis* regulations created by the Associated Women Students. As a freshman, Stroup became interested in serving as a delegate to the AWS from Gertrude Sellards Pearson, an all-female dormitory on campus. As her involvement deepened, the President of the AWS, who was a member of Chi Omega sorority, recruited Stroup to join the sorority her sophomore year. Stroup came into her own as a leader within the AWS and was the chairwoman for the first AWS rules convention that began to question *in loco parentis* regulations. Upon graduation, she became a hall director for Corbin Hall, an all-female dormitory, and eventually would serve as the Assistant Dean of Women under Emily Taylor, and finally the last Dean of Women, continuing here connection to the AWS.⁶³

Owing to her active involvement in student affairs and her interest in the AWS's rules reformation, Stroup chaired the first AWS convention in 1958. This convention met to revise the

⁶³ "A Successful Case of Role Modeling: KU's New Dean of Women Was a Protégé," *University Daily Kansan*, 1975. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

rules and was the first of several of its kind that, over the course of several years, began the painstaking process of chipping away at the restrictions on KU's women students. She recalls the first convention, and the subsequent impact it had on *in loco parentis* at KU:

That was the year we instituted it, in 1958 or 1959. And the keys were the first thing [we changed], but only for seniors. So, they got keys, checked them in and out, but after that, everything started to crumble. People started to ask, "If the seniors have keys, why don't we all? Why are we fooling around with certain groups having keys?"⁶⁴

Unbeknownst to Kala Mays Stroup at the time, the 1958 AWS rules convention would be the crumbling keystone that resulted in the collapse of the entire system of university sanctioned regulations for women. As KU seniors received the privilege of having a key to her place of residence and returning as she wished, younger students began to question the AWS's reasoning in singling out one group responsible enough for the right to a key.

The 1962 edition of *Wise Words for Women* reflects changes that indicate the greater changing social norms at the University of Kansas for women other than just seniors. In 1962, upperclasswomen were granted the daily privilege of a longer curfew and were allowed to be out until 11:00 pm Sunday through Thursday, and 1:00 am Friday and Saturday. Freshmen women were allowed a 10:30 pm curfew Monday through Thursday, 11:00 pm curfew on Sunday, and a 1:00am curfew on Friday and Saturday.⁶⁵ Another new privilege granted to KU women in 1962 was the AWS relinquished control of calling hours for men. Now the individual sorority houses, dorms, and scholarship halls were given the authority to decide the hours for callers and were subject to approval from the Board of Standards. The 1964 *Wise Words for Women* remained on the same trajectory. The upperclasswomen were allowed to stay out until 11:00 pm Monday

⁶⁴ Kala Mays Stroup, interview by Shea O'Sullivan, October 27, 2017, transcript.

⁶⁵ Associated Women Students, "Wise Words for Women," 1962–1963. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

through Thursday, and until 1:00 am Friday and Saturday, and were allowed an extra hour on Sunday, with curfew being at 12:00 am. Freshmen remained only slightly more regulated than the upperclassmen; the freshman curfew Monday through Thursday was 10:30 pm.

By the mid 1960s, colleges across the United States were facing the same criticism from students. *Time* magazine remarked on this phenomenon in 1966 with a column titled “Students: Moods and Mores,” and stated that “At U.S. universities this fall, *in loco parentis* is suffering from *rigor mortis*.” Articles such as these were either met with alarm, or with reassurance. As the *Daily Princetonian* reported that the university had absolutely no moral right to regulate private lives and morality, Notre Dame insisted that decrease in regulations would lead to entertaining women in dormitories and was still socially unacceptable.⁶⁶ Regulations for women had national attention, yet no clear consensus.

The regulations adopted by the Associated Women Students and approved by the Dean of Women were reflective of the changing national social culture of the time. As women desired to be independent, the regulations began to show this, and the University of Kansas’ role in acting *in loco parentis* became increasingly less restrictive. This implies that while women were previously thought unable to handle themselves responsibly, administrators, such as Dean of Women Emily Taylor began to see the value in allowing women to have more autonomy over themselves and their social lives. It should be noted, however, that even though regulations were becoming laxer, the overall system was quite soundly in place. Even if women were allowed to stay out a little bit later at night, parents were still reassured they had the university and the AWS regulations to prohibit any action that would soil a young woman’s reputation.

⁶⁶ Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 80-82.

The rebellion against *in loco parentis* captured national attention because it was an entirely new concept that demanded those who were socially conservative, like sororities, to question how they view the capabilities and aptitude of young college women. “For all of us, it [*in loco parentis*] was the case at all the universities in the country,” Kala Mays Stroup commented when asked how KU women felt about the regulations, “Parietal rules for women were everywhere, in every institution. And that was one of the agreements originally made to allow women to attend college, way back when, not here at [The University of Kansas], but we adopted what others were doing. At many other institutions, it was a condition to let women attend university. They would have special housing and special rules for their protection. And those started when women started going to college”.⁶⁷ As Stroup points out, one important point is how common these regulations were at the time. In order to attend university, it was normalized for women to sacrifice some of their autonomy to university policies to simply be on campus. Changing the views of students, parents, administrators, and the general public would take a massive upheaval of societal norms.

“Conduct Code, Late Sign-outs, and Major Motions”

By the mid 1960s, national attention to the debate of *in loco parentis* regulations reached its peak, and the opportunity for changes in regulations for women were causing waves on KU’s campus. Those who fought against the strict rules often met opposition from parents and peers, rather than the administration. In 1965, the Associated Women Students revised the current regulations that were in place. While the curfews for women remained exactly the same as in the 1964 Wise Words for Women, the revised regulations offered a loophole for greater changes to

⁶⁷ Stroup, interview.

occur. Section 4 of the March 1965 AWS regulations stated “Senior privileges will be decided in the spring preceding the senior year by the delegates representing the juniors in each house.”⁶⁸

While this additional section may seem simple, it was a guaranteed opportunity to capitalize on the differences in privileges between upperclasswomen and freshmen, leaving enough open to be later discussed in following AWS rules conventions.

Lawrence was no exception to the social movements that began to polarize opinions across the country. Students came together in formal organizations to lobby for laxer regulations for KU coeds, even as sororities voted again and again against open regulations in an attempt to preserve the standard of socially conservative women. Politically active organizations on campus supporting the movement included the KU Civil Rights Council and Students for a Democratic Society. Both organizations felt that it was within their purpose to ensure the freedom of “university womanhood.” In a 1966 *University Daily Kansan* (UDK) article, the KU Civil Rights Council and the Students for a Democratic Society are quoted asking James Surface, the Provost, “What is the rationale and legal justification for discriminating against women?”⁶⁹ Surface answered the question about women directly, saying that women had different rules than men because “they need more protection and security....men can take care of themselves.”⁷⁰

Some KU women themselves were not shy to express their opinions, either. In a 1966 editorial article published in the *University Daily Kansan* (UDK), two women responded to an article from *Parade* magazine, titled, “Today’s Coed: Why is She Rebellious?” KU student Judy

⁶⁸ Associated Women Students, “Regulations,” 1964-1965. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁶⁹ Ireana Keagy and Judy McGhee, “Join Up and Help!” *University Daily Kansan*, 1966. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁷⁰ Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 95.

McGhee said that it's dangerous to protect students from themselves and their society, pointing out that college is a synthetic environment, "a cushion" which makes it much harder to adjust to reality later. If the university's job was to educate, McGhee advocated they do only that.⁷¹

The question of which women would be suitably responsible for their own residence keys was a proxy fight for the broader issue of freedom and changing sexual culture for women. In this climate of uncertainty and possibility for change, things escalated to a boiling point at the 1966 AWS regulations conference. All delegates of sororities, dormitories, scholarship halls, and married women were in attendance to finally lay to rest the discussion of keys. Each of the previous conventions had produced an increasingly complicated set of systems and rules, but the 1966 convention set out to break the previous systems of regulations and exceptions to which the AWS adhered to. As the session opened on March 12, 1966, the first proposition was made by Sellards Scholarship Hall that all KU women should have no closing hours, including freshmen. If the reaction to the initial motion was any indication, the convention would be full of contention and heated discussions.

This liberal proposition was met by the women of the Associated Women Student with mixed reception. In one corner of the metaphorical ring, the scholarship halls and the dormitories were more in favor of the proposition, stating that there should be no discrimination between upperclasswomen because they "hold the same offices, live in the same rooms, etc.; and, there is going to be conflict if they are discriminated against."⁷² In the other corner were sororities, poised and ready to escalate to verbal fisticuffs to preserve the current regulations. Conflict was

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Associated Women Students, "AWS Convention Minutes," March 12, 1966. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

accurately predicted, for not even a minute after, a representative of Gamma Phi Beta sorority spoke in opposition, stating that:

When you come to university, your freshman and sophomore years, you are away from your folds and this is when you truly determine your standards. I truly believe that we need to impose some rules on freshman and sophomore women. It is too easy to disregard whether things are right or wrong.⁷³

As the convention continued, scholarship halls attempted to delve into the heart of the proxy and made it clear to the assembly that the idea of closing hours did not determine the moral standards on campus, and again the sororities rejected this notion. Speaking under the guise of maturity and safety, the sororities were far more worried with liability to their property, their reputations, and their morality. “We have to realize what we are talking about,” stated the representative of Pi Beta Phi sorority, “We are here to learn, and the reason women have closing hours is because there is a difference between men and women. Women must be protected.”⁷⁴

Safety for women synonymously meant a safely kept reputation as well, and young women were not seen as being responsible enough by sororities to make their own decisions without guidance from a parental figure. Speaking in favor of parental permission, Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority’s delegation stated:

If it is decided in this convention today that all women care capable and mature enough to decide on their own closing, I am somewhat alarmed. I feel as though the family of the girl here at the university has something to say about her being able to take care of herself. If the family says “no” about her daughter, then I don’t feel the university has the right to give this girl permission.⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Associated Women Students, “AWS Convention Minutes,” March 12, 1966. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

Even though the Kappa Kappa Gammas were advocating for a sophomore woman to have the freedom to choose the time to return home at night, which would be considered a more liberal regulation, it was a requirement to first obtain her parents' permission.

Such heated debates continued between the sects of university women. Again, the scholarship halls and dormitories voted in favor of more liberal closing hours, and again they were voted down by the sororities' delegations. The debates on both sides used philosophical language, effectively subverted sex as the focus of the regulations and instead on themes of civility, responsibility, and citizenship that had once been the championed words of the administration. The groups were not only in disagreement of the issues, they seemed to approach the question of closing hours from conflicting views of morality and responsibility. The two distinct camps were diametrically opposed. This did not go unnoticed; the UDK frequently remarked on the "liberals" advocating for laxer regulations, and the "conservatives" who sought to keep the current system in place.

The delegation of sororities maintained throughout the convention that regulations were tools to regulate morality and sexual behavior and they were strongly in favor of keeping university-sanctioned "standards," thus appearing to be the socially conservative. Lobbying for this type of regulation is consistent with the socially conservative environment that sororities created. Of the women on campus, they knew quite well that reputations were important, and that comprehensive rules helped to keep the collective good in mind. For whatever the sorority member's individual thoughts on the proposed regulations, there is no doubt that the sorority housing corporation boards themselves had a great deal of effect on how their delegation voted.

Kala Mays Stroup, who at the time of the 1966 convention was the Assistant Dean of Women, recalled another reasoning behind the sororities opposition.

The board is responsible for the residence and for the property. University housing was a much different matter because it's really hard to sue the university. But it's not hard to sue the fraternities and sororities. And so consequently they were concerned they couldn't afford someone at the desk like the residence halls, someone to let you in and out. They [sororities] were concerned about was access to the property, they were concerned about date rape, and they were concerned about people coming in and stealing things. Now, they weren't as concerned about the safety of the women as the safety of the property and of the liability to be sued. They were all volunteers on the corporate board. They got a little squeamish... You can imagine all the horror stories one could think of.⁷⁶

Regardless of intentions of the sorority women and what they individually believed was the right course of action, they consistently voted for more conservative closing hours than did any other group of delegates within the AWS. Even with the sorority alumnae volunteers on the housing boards were breathing down the collegiate sorority women's necks and influencing their votes, the response to liberal closing hours indicates the type of social conservatism perpetuated by the larger institution of sororities.

The heated discussion and the sorority women's reluctance to sanction what they viewed as a morally questionable lack of regulations caused the convention to be continued into a second all-day meeting more than a week later on March 22. After lengthy discussions, rancorous comments, and points of order interjected by the parliamentarian, the two-day marathon of a convention adjourned. The opportunity of social change was finally capitalized upon by the dormitories and scholarship halls, much to the vexation of the sorority delegations. As a result, upperclasswomen along with second semester sophomores were granted the permission of no closing hours.⁷⁷ Freshman and sophomore women were allowed to leave overnight, provided they signed out with their intended hosts' information and an expected time of return.

⁷⁶ Stroup, interview.

⁷⁷ "Women's Rights Activism and Deans of Women at the University of Kansas," KU Libraries, n.d., <https://exhibits.lib.ku.edu/exhibits/show/deans-of-women/dean-of-women>.

As the results of the 1966 AWS rules convention became final, large amounts of resistance from parents ensued, and they could not shift attention from propriety to maturity. Concerns of peer pressure caused mothers to write to Emily Taylor, the Dean of Women, urging that peer pressure would lead women to request a “very dubious moral permission” because giving women keys was such an unrestrained liberty that could well become license, and would “definitely impair the reputation of KU.”⁷⁸ “We got some blowback from the Board of Regents. The Chancellor got a lot of letters when we started all that stuff,” Kala Stroup recalls, from her days in the Dean of Women’s office, “The letters from parents would say, ‘We thought we were sending them to KU safe, K-State still had regulations, its much safer.’ I’m shortening the rhetoric, but that’s what it was.”⁷⁹ Several days after the convention’s conclusion, the AWS reinstated hours for all sophomores in secret after pressure from parents on the Chancellor.

Even though the 1966 rules convention had shown that the standards were changing, KU women had gotten a taste for reform, and after the sense of betrayal of the reinstated hours for sophomores, the students had a different level of agreement, which the school newspaper, the *University Daily Kansan*, highlighted. In one article titled “Student Opinion Varies,” a woman was quoted saying that “there is a real feeling among the majority of women that they need more freedom,” and another woman who stated “students are here to get an education, and hours can only help you. Most girls don’t know how to regulate their lives. That’s why there are so many illegitimate births.”⁸⁰ As much as scholarship halls and dormitories discussed regulations in

⁷⁸ Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 103.

⁷⁹ Stroup, interview.

⁸⁰ Elizabeth Rhodes, “Student Opinion Varies.” *University Daily Kansan*, March 17, 1966, quoted in Beth Bailey, ed., *Sex in the Heartland*, (Cambridge, MA: First Harvard University Press, 1999) 101.

terms of gender equality and responsibility, the subtext, as articulated previously by sororities, was still about morality.

Even with the consistent and blatant resistance from sorority members to amend the regulations on women, the AWS was rerouted to set the groundwork for more rights to be held by future women students. In some sense, the sororities' fight for continued social conservatism within the AWS was successful; the rules for women at KU decreased at an agonizingly slow pace over time. In another sense, they failed. Sororities were effective at slowing the pace of sexual and social revolution, but not at stopping its inevitability. Curfews for all KU women, regardless of year in school, would not be repealed until 1969, effectively ending the University of Kansas' role of *in loco parentis* for women. With the absence of AWS sanctioned regulations, many KU women found they were able to emerge from under the wing of university guidance and were able to experience the trials of young adulthood by themselves - without restrictions.

Sororities, however, were now left to their own devices. After the upheaval of 1966 and the final blow to AWS rules in 1969, the Associated Women Students no longer regulated the curfews and calling hours for women, but sororities continued along their self-prescribed path of regulations. While the sorority women were initially in favor of having curfews, they seemed to have adjusted well to the key privileges and all that remained were individual calling hours for men.⁸¹ Generally, sororities kept calling hours, requiring guests be accompanied around the house at all times and men to remain on the main floor, and not enter the upstairs where private rooms were. Hours for guests were still enforced, with set times that beaus were required to vacate the premises. With no direction from KU administration to keep these rules, the sororities'

⁸¹ Associated Women Students, "DG Key Evaluation," 1966. University of Kansas Archives. Spencer Research Library.

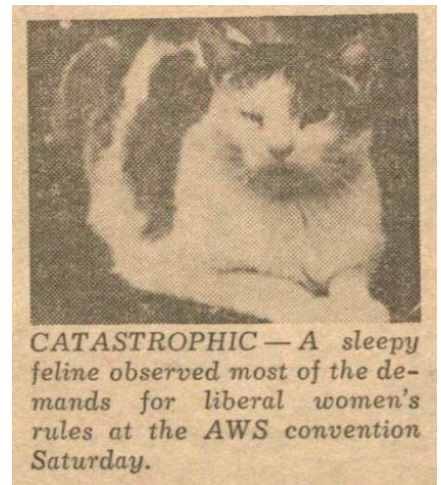
insistence for these regulations suggests that they were still stubbornly in favor of creating and keeping regulations that maintained some level of propriety and thus morality, even though the sorority women knew quite well that whatever improprieties could be done in a sorority house could much easily be done elsewhere.

Chapter 3: “Associated Women Sycophants, or Frailty, Thy Name is the Women’s Program”: 1966-1975

Relaxing parental rules removed a windmill to fight. We could pay attention to the larger issue; sex discrimination. I believe in equality, and our sole function is to produce as many autonomous adults as we can – not to keep them adolescents. If you can tell a boy you don’t like that you have to be home on time, you don’t have to make the decision. If you don’t have to be in on time, you have to make the decision. A Dean of Women typically tried to keep her students in their place. I try to tell them their place is wherever they choose.

Dean of Women, Emily Taylor
(1973)

University of Kansas Dean of Women Emily Taylor saw the results of the 1966 AWS rules convention as a step in the right direction to producing autonomous college women, even if sorority women vehemently disagreed. While many students rejoiced at prospects of laxer regulations for KU coeds, the aftermath of the convention was not all positive. After the major changes and the increased freedom due to the option of keys to residence halls and sororities, the damage to the Associated Women Student’s reputation had been done. Instead of being viewed as the largest advocate for women on campus, the AWS and its sorority leadership was now being seen as nothing but a hierarchy of fancy window dressing claiming to aid college women. Their fashion shows and frivolous events had missed the mark of what KU women needed. This came as a late revelation for the members of the AWS, though, and at this they point realized they were out of touch with the rest of campus. “I don’t know. I really don’t. I had the perception that we were doing great things...mainly because I was a leader in it,”



An excerpt from a 1966 UDK reaction to the AWS rules convention.

stated Kala Mays Stroup, leader in the AWS and Chi Omega sorority member, when asked about campus opinion of the AWS.⁸²

In the years following the convention of 1966, the parietal regulations that had caused so much uproar in 1966 crumbled in 1969 without anyone giving them a second thought. The administration, after seeing the resolve of its students to do away with archaic rules, supported the movement fully. But the aftertaste of the spectacle the AWS had made of itself in '66 remained on students' minds. To many students, the convention was considered to be a farce, with powerful factions of sorority women in the minority of campus opinion. One op-ed in the *University Daily Kansan* complained, "The convention was supposed to have decided on some viable consensus, rather, a few people were vocal on each side, the other remained funereally silent."⁸³ It was this type of dominating presence by the sororities, combined with the secretive



The headline from a 1966 UDK editorial critiquing the AWS.

nature of repealing regulations gave KU students little faith in the AWS.

Other women were less diplomatic when offering their critiques of the Associated Women Students and the values of propriety and social excellence it shared with sororities. Two women students, Nancy Gallup and Sara Paretsky, wrote perhaps the most scathing review of the AWS. Acknowledging the breadth and potential of the organization, the article, titled "Associated Women Sycophants, or Frailty, Thy Name is the Women's Program," stated

⁸² Stroup, interview.

⁸³ Bill Robinson, "It Is Far From Gone," *University Daily Kansan*, March 1966. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

the AWS failed to meet the real needs of its members. The different events offered, like First Ladies, All Women's Day, and the Best Dressed KU Girl competition "offer cake frosting to those who are crying for bread."⁸⁴ For all of its efforts, Gallup and Paretsky wrote that the only way the AWS touched the lives of the majority of women was through the regulations, excepting the few special cases of those people actively involved in its "hierarchy of programs," as Kala Mays Stroup and sororities were.⁸⁵ They noted that no KU program effectively reached women students, even though the AWS was the one existing institution with the potential to do so. Even with some of the benefits of the AWS, like career counseling for seniors and the studies of the position of women in the university, most of the energy was being allocated to the wrong efforts. The biggest critique of the "Associated Women Sycophants" was the waste of talent and power "crying for an appropriate use, an energy which is being wasted by midnight door-decorating projects."⁸⁶ The writers emphasized KU women would not respond to irrelevant projects, but instead would achieve their goals of showing women how they fit into the broader world perspective by bridging dialogue gaps and giving women students the response to their needs, not just another fashion show. Their scathing criticisms of the AWS struck a chord, and it became evident to the Dean of Women's office that in order to stay relevant, the Associated Women Students needed substantial change to remedy the disillusion it now faced from KU women.

⁸⁴ Nancy Gallup and Sara Paretsky, "Associated Women Sycophants or Frailty, Thy Name Is the Women's Program." *University Daily Kansan*, 1966. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

In the spring of 1970, the Associated Women Students responded in a revamped newsletter titled “She.” The newsletter began:

Dear KU Woman, it must have seemed strange to you that Newsweek, Time, Mademoiselle, Glamour and the Six O’Clock news, the UDK, and Vortex have brought you reports on “Feminism”...and the KU AWS hasn’t formally published any information on the changing role of women in society. Don’t take that to mean we’re unaware...We’ve been actively involved in improving women’s position in society for several years.⁸⁷

While perhaps the opening was a bit of damage control, this was the first public admission the AWS had organized themselves in the wrong way. It became clear that the organization needed to distance itself from the values and expectations it shared with sororities in order to remain relevant. Instead of being a group that led others with a close-knit core of women, the AWS needed to erase all notions of exclusivity and become an organization for all KU women, regardless of the social status of powerful living groups. Among the changed tone of the “She” publication from past AWS newsletters, the organization made another striking change: a new name for itself.

In order to shed the former associations of frivolity and inconsequentiality that had been linked to the Associated Women Students, the AWS officially changed its name in 1970 to the Commission on the Status of Women. The newsletter entitled “She” announced, “This year AWS decided to wash its face (since it couldn’t take off its bra) no more teas, no more rules and regulations—just the essentials—informing KU women of the second class position they hold on the campus and in society and asking them if they intend to keep playing bridge, drinking beer...and listening to ‘Stand By Your Man.’”⁸⁸ This was a glaring contrast to the way sorority women experienced campus life.

⁸⁷Associated Women Students, “She,” 1970. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

True to the tone of the newsletter, the events outlined were reflective of substantive change in events held by the newly coined Commission on the Status of Women (COSW). Kala Stroup remarked on the change:

A lot of people think that feminism at KU started with the February sisters, and that's not true either. So consequently, we were the Commission on the Status of Women, lobbying for more women faculty, gathering data on number of students in various fields... Change works peculiarly in a state like Kansas, change works better gradually than if it is all of the sudden.⁸⁹

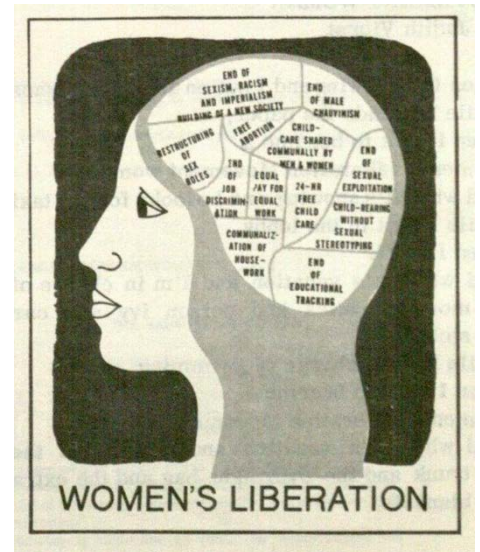
Also true to the criticisms of the AWS, there was a significant amount of discrimination directed towards the women of KU at the time that the AWS had previously refused to address. As the connotations of the ideal college woman began to change and move away from the idolization of the socially excellent, involved sorority woman, the organization faced the challenge of redirecting women into college life, and not just in social spheres but in academia too. In the 1970 issue of "She," the Commission on the Status of Women outlined its new Women Recognition Committee, which would be in charge of recognizing outstanding KU women graduates on criteria of academics, social engagement and achievements in the professional world. Also addressed by "She" and reflected in events, was the promotion of women to substantial career fields. Kala Mays Stroup, who was then Assistant Dean of Women, helped to implement strategies to address this problem.

[The Dean of Women's office] got a National Science Foundation grant to do research on talented women in math and Science programs. We researched our women, and those from Nebraska, Colorado and Missouri. We tracked what happened to national merit semifinalists when they came to colleges and their majors, because they obviously had the smarts to major in whatever they darn well pleased. It said that talented women are tended to be discouraged [from STEM majors], but they were going to college. And they were not dispersing themselves equally among the majors.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Stroup, interview.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

The Commission on the Status of Women attacked this problem head on. In the “She” publication, the COSW distributed the hard numbers for women’s potential earnings in different career fields, and the cost of being a female employee, both financially and psychologically, emphasizing the move away from the MRS degree seeking college woman. In addition to distributed written rhetoric, COSW also revamped its career counseling facilities, since the KU career counseling did as much to discourage women from entering these fields as anything else. Located in Strong Hall, the new center focused on giving viable career information and career counseling to women and named it the Emily Taylor Women’s Resource Center. Besides just the efforts of the Dean of Women office, the COSW brought in outside speakers to promote women in academia. One weekend conference in 1975, titled “Careers Don’t Just Happen,” touched on themes of planning for high school, college, and the professional world. The conference was free to any member of the public.⁹¹



A graphic from the 1970 COSW publication, “She”

Besides information on how to live a vocationally full life, the Commission on the Status of Women also provided information on promoting the woman’s position in terms of current ideology. One flyer from 1970, “Don’t You Feel Silly?” encouraged KU women to attend a meeting to learn more about women’s rights. Distributed in newsletters like “She” was literature on the feminist movement, from cartoons to poetry. Finally pursuing a more intersectional lens, speakers were brought in to address African American student, giving talks like “Maximizing

⁹¹ Commission on the Status of Women, “Careers Conference Set This Weekend at K.U.,” 1975. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

Black Potential Toward the Year 2000.” The COSW wanted to encourage women to civic and political engagement as well. In addition to conferences on wage gaps and feminist rhetoric, United States politicians were brought on campus to speak of the power women could hold in government.⁹²

While sororities were on board with career planning, and now reveled in the freedoms of no curfews after so many years of resistance, they were reluctant to entirely give up their traditions that fostered social conservatism in women. They saw nothing wrong with makeup, teas, playing bridge, drinking beer and listening to “Stand by Your Man.” They kept the calling hour rules for their individual sorority houses and kept the same regulations for men in public parlors, as it had been before with the AWS’s regulations. While the COSW was taking more of an inclusive approach to multiethnic women, KU sororities continued to discriminate potential members on the basis of race. This, they said, was their right to freedom of association, and any administrator who suggested they do otherwise was seen almost akin to a communist.⁹³

The about-face from the Associate Women’s Students activities and values to those of the Commission on the Status of Women was truly severe. Realizing the need of the women students for substantive organizations to uplift their position, the Associated Women Students took a good, hard look at itself and its purpose. By redefining itself as the Commission on the Status of Women, it rose to its potential to be the rallying voice on campus for women. Sorority women, however, watched this social change on campus from a metaphorical distance, turned around,

⁹² Commission on the Status of Women, “MPA Conference to Feature Farenthold,” 1975. University of Kansas Archives. Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

⁹³ Margaret L. Freeman, “‘Inequality for All and Mint Juleps, Too’: White Social Sororities and ‘Freedom of Association’ in the United States,” in *The Right Side of the Sixties: Reexamining Conservatism’s Decade of Transformation* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 43.

and slammed the front door of their sorority house. Even with the new path for gender roles being blazed by the COSW and the examples in female leadership from the Deans of Women, sorority values and culture remained largely unchanged.

Conclusion

The Associated Women Students, like sororities, came through the women's movement at KU intact, but not unchanged. Moving from post-World War II gender norms for women into the feminist movement, the Associated Women Students was forced to change its events, leadership style, and its name in order to remain on campus as a relevant resource for University of Kansas women. Through several other redefinitions over the years, what initially began as the Associated Women Students was then morphed into the Commission on the Status of Women in 1970 and changed names again in 2014 to Students United for Reproductive and Gender Equity (SURGE) in order to reflect all genders.

Sororities, while vehemently resistant to the incoming changes in the late 1960s, managed to adjust and evolve, and continue to thrive on KU's campus today. However, remnants of the more restrictive institution that perpetuated socially conservative female gender roles are in effect in sororities. KU sorority women today need not ask for permission to leave on weekends, nor do they have university-imposed curfews. Yet, housemothers are still a cornerstone of each sorority house, keeping tabs on the women and the property. Individual sororities on campus still have curfews for men in effect, even with no direction from university administrators. Often, men cannot stay past 12:00 am on weeknights, and 1:00 am on weekends, and are only allowed in the common areas on the main floor. Reminiscent to some sixty years ago, these rules are broken by sorority women with some frequency.⁹⁴

The unchanged nature and functioning of sororities explains why they continue to face criticism today. Even though sororities are not universally homogenized and can have different

⁹⁴ Author's Note: From my own experience within the current University of Kansas sorority system, it is often viewed as a rite of passage to sneak a man past the housemother and upstairs.

amounts of deviance from traditions, sororities in general seem to be slightly behind the times of other social changes, just as before in the 1950s and 1960s in the AWS regulation debates. Greek organizations are places that not just enforce traditional gender roles but strengthen them as well.⁹⁵ As the previous social movements pushed for gender equity, sororities now are facing challenges from new movements of intersectional feminism. One 2017 editorial in *Teen Vogue* addressed this issue, noting that from her own experience, sororities remain engulfed in outdated systems of exclusion and oppression without being able to self-analyze. Women's spaces are still needed, but they should be utilized to harness their potential to be progressive and inclusive for all women of different backgrounds.⁹⁶ Another article from the *New York Times* noted that even at more progressive universities, harmful traditions remain deeply rooted in the sorority structure: elaborate rituals, cost of dues, "rushing" and "pledging," and bans on serving alcohol at parties, which consequently put fraternity men in control of Greek social life, leaving sorority women to continue traditional heterosocial interactions with fraternity men.⁹⁷

One of the problems with sororities is the characteristically similar background, which never forces members to confront aspects of their identity that have become invisible, like economic privilege, gender, or whiteness.⁹⁸ This type of environment calls for no introspection of the overall structure of Greek life. Sororities as a whole have never been pushed to think about their impact on campus and rebrand, such as the Associated Women Students was forced to do in

⁹⁵ Alan D. DeSantis, *Inside Greek U: Fraternities, Sororities, and the Pursuit of Pleasure, Power, and Prestige* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 219.

⁹⁶ Linne Halpern, "Why Sororities Need to Embrace a More Intersectional Feminism in the Trump Era," *Teen Vogue*, August 28, 2017, <http://www.teenvogue.com/story/why-sororities-need-to-embrace-intersectional-feminism>.

⁹⁷ Bennett, Jessica, "When a Feminist Pledges a Sorority," *The New York Times*, April 9, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/10/fashion/sorority-ivy-league-feminists.html>.

⁹⁸ DeSantis, *Inside Greek U*, 21.

1970. Even though some chapters of sororities may wish to be the advocates for positive change, the structure of national sororities governing their regional chapters, and the Panhellenic system proves to be a greater obstacle. The national chapters for sororities are complicated, often involving multiple bylaws and constitutions that are decided by a governing body of alumnae that are twice the age of collegiate members. It can be difficult for sororities to move forward progressively when the outdated values of influential adults are holding them back. Regardless of the intentions, national sorority headquarters will still have the final say. Moreover, even at the local sorority house, maintaining tradition is a virtue; part of the pride of membership stems from connecting on the same experiences founding members had.⁹⁹

Recently, the current debates on sororities' next move have been surfacing in the media. Perhaps, like the discussions at the University of Kansas in 1966, this is the beginning of a greater push for social change. Following the example of the Associated Women Students, it is reasonable to think that sororities can make changes to their values to become more inclusive and open for progressive women. Changes such as removing portions of ritual that rely on the New Testament can make the experience more inclusive for those who do not adhere to Christian faith, and encouraging bringing dates of any gender to sorority functions relieves the heterosocial pressure to bring a fraternity date, since not all women are heterosexual. These are small examples of how to change the imperfect system from the inside. Understanding the systems in the past leads us to a better understanding of the current norms for sexuality and gender in the sorority woman. Ultimately, the effect university institutions and social groups, like sororities, have on college women matters because it is a significant indicator of the socialization women

⁹⁹ DeSantis, *Inside Greek U*, 217.

receive while attending college and affects what role they see themselves in for the rest of their life.

From the perspective of a current University of Kansas sorority woman, there are several glaring deficiencies that demand our attention. Rather than simply throwing our hands in the air in desperation and saying that the problem is simply too large for local chapters to address, we should stop and remember why American sororities were formed in the first place. They were created as a place for women to come together to face the gender discrimination and isolation they experienced on campus, to form fraternal bonds everlasting, and to ultimately produce educated, empowered women. Somewhere along the timeline from its founding to today, the original purpose of sororities was forgotten and remains hidden in a sea of date party t-shirts. For all of its faults, the sorority system still has the potential to promote the original ideals of educated, involved and charismatic members, devoted to empowering other women. As Margaret Freeman said, sororities can act as a double-edged sword for both promoting activeness and group think mentality. No matter how beloved, it is the responsibility of sorority women today to be introspective and critical about the effect the institution may have on campus, on themselves, and where they see themselves as women, in college and in the world.

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