



# The Southern Women's College Press: Desegregation & the Myth of Southern Distinctiveness in an Era of Activism (1954 -1970)

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The Southern Women's College Press: Desegregation & The Myth of Southern  
Distinctiveness in an Era of Activism (1954 -1970)

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of the Graduate School of Education of Harvard University  
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## **Table of Contents**

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Race, Gender, and the History of American Higher Education</b> .....	<b>7</b>
The Racial Segregation of Higher Education .....	12
The Desegregation Mandate .....	20
The College Campus, Protests, & Civil Rights in the 1950's and 1960's.....	25
<b>Chapter 2: The Student Press, The Media, &amp; Myth-Making</b> .....	<b>36</b>
The Importance of the Press & Racial Attitudes .....	41
Media & Myth-Making .....	48
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....	<b>52</b>
The Women's Colleges.....	59
The Women's Colleges— Agnes Scott College.....	62
The Women's Colleges— Columbia College .....	67
The Women's Colleges— Meredith College .....	72
The Women's Colleges— Sweet Briar College.....	75
<b>Chapter 4: The Myth of Southern Distinctiveness— Southern Heritage &amp; The Old South</b> .....	<b>81</b>
The Women's Colleges & The Myth of Southern Distinctiveness & Segregation.....	85
The Lost Cause & The Defiant Rebels .....	90
Women's College Students & The Lost Cause .....	93
Memorialization of the Lost Cause .....	107
The Lost Cause & Women's Liberation .....	113
Southern Heritage: The Old South & Serene Plantation.....	120
Leaders of the New South .....	128
American Democracy.....	137
Conclusion .....	150
<b>Chapter 5: The Sacred South</b> .....	<b>152</b>
The Women's College Students: Guardians of the Sacred South.....	156
Christianity— Redeeming the South .....	163
Conclusion .....	176
<b>Chapter 6: Southern Belles— From Apathy to Activism</b> .....	<b>177</b>
Southern Belles – Leaders of the New South .....	201
Southern Belles – Encouraging Diverse Learning & Diverse Interaction.....	209
Conclusion .....	225
<b>Implications</b> .....	<b>227</b>
<b>Appendix A</b> .....	<b>233</b>
<b>Appendix B</b> .....	<b>234</b>
<b>The Women's Colleges</b> .....	<b>234</b>
<b>Selected Bibliography</b> .....	<b>235</b>

## Abstract

In this dissertation, I examine how students at elite, private white women's colleges in the South utilized the myth of Southern distinctiveness to articulate their opinions and attitudes on desegregation after *Brown*, during a protracted period of violent resistance, civil unrest, and limited integration (1954-1970). Through a critical analysis of student newspapers, I find that the cultural myth of "Southern distinctiveness," provided easily accessible frames for students to construct and articulate their attitudes about the possible integration of black women students onto their campuses. This myth also guided students' construction of their own identity and status within the changing racial paradigm of higher education. I argue that during the 1950's to the middle of the 1960's, students utilized conceptualizations of Southern heritage, evangelical Christianity, and Southern belle ideals, to construct the myth of Southern distinctiveness. These ideals helped students position themselves as "insiders" and "experts," on desegregation, while Northern liberals and the federal government were positioned firmly as intrusive outsiders. White women students also saw themselves as the ordained preservers of a romanticized Old South, with the doctrine of "separate but equal" serving as a guiding principle. In the middle to late 1960's as students increasingly participated in cross-racial interactions, conferences, and exchanges, they started to embrace a national, American identity alongside a Southern identity. They increasingly saw themselves as the leaders of a "New South."

## Introduction

“Sweet Briar is now almost as socially, culturally, religiously, and ethnically homogenized as the milk on the breakfast table,” noted Pierre Henri Laurent, a Sweet Briar College history professor.<sup>1</sup> When Laurent criticized the uniformity of the student body at the private women’s college in Lynchburg, Virginia, it was March of 1965, and the student body was all white. Laurent was writing eleven years after the United States Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* (“*Brown*”) overturned its “separate but equal” doctrine which had given license to Jim Crow segregation in education for almost sixty years. Yet, the Supreme Court only required States to desegregate with “all deliberate speed,”<sup>2</sup> and countless States and colleges took the unhurried route to desegregation. Private women’s colleges were not legally bound by the *Brown* mandate, and thus, were some of the last institutions to integrate in the South. In fact, of the thirteen remaining private women’s colleges in the South, not one of them had admitted a black woman by 1965. Thus, as Laurent witnessed, the racially homogenous and divided Southern landscape in private, higher education remained firmly planted through the 1960’s.

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<sup>1</sup> “Professor Laurent Speaks Out,” *The Sweet Briar News*, March 17, 1965, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education* (“*Brown II*”), 349 U.S. 294 (1955), remanded the desegregation cases from the first *Brown* decision to the lower courts with instructions to “take such proceedings and enter such orders and decrees consistent with this opinion as are necessary and proper to admit to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all deliberate speed the parties to these cases.”

Nine years after the *Brown* decision, Governor George Wallace of Alabama invoked the spirit of Robert E. Lee from the “very Heart of the Great Anglo-Saxon Southland,” and infamously declared, “...segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.”<sup>3</sup> In addition to outright defiance by staunch segregationists like George Wallace, there were several factors that impeded the desegregation of private women’s colleges in the South. First, state officials and education administrators often utilized legal and policy maneuvers to defy *Brown*, such as withholding state funds from colleges, both public and private, that admitted black students. Secondly, racially restrictive covenants in charter documents often required private colleges to engage in legal challenge to admit and provide financial resources to black students. For example, when Indiana Fletcher Williams, a widower, and owner of the Sweet Briar Plantation bequeathed her estate for construction of a college, she articulated that Sweet Briar would be an “institution for the education of white girls and young women.” It took the college nearly four years of court challenges to legally bypass the covenant. Third, the threat of social and economic repercussions along with physical intimidation often created a climate in which Southern white administrators, students, and educators feared offering their support to the cause of desegregation. Finally, desegregation progress was hindered by white Southerners’ continued reliance and reproduction of the myth of “Southern distinctiveness.” Southern distinctiveness is the idea that

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<sup>3</sup> Governor George Wallace, Inaugural Address, January 14, 1963,



since the Antebellum Era, there has been a distinct southern culture, collective identity, and divine order, ordained by God himself, which is manifested in the fabric of everyday Southern life and Southern institutions. This deep-rooted myth led by Southern white elites after the Civil War, encouraged a view of the “Old South” as a nostalgic, ordered place that was worthy of protection from Civil Rights agitators, Northern liberals, and the federal government.

In this dissertation, I examine how students at elite, private white women’s colleges in the South utilized the myth of Southern distinctiveness to articulate their opinions and attitudes on desegregation after *Brown*, during a protracted period of violent resistance, civil unrest, and limited integration (1954-1970). Through a critical analysis of student newspapers, I find that student attitudes on desegregation were guided by the controlling cultural myth of southern distinctiveness. This cultural myth provided easily accessible frames for students to construct and articulate their attitudes about the possible integration of black women students onto their campuses. This myth also guided students’ construction of their own identity and status within the changing racial paradigm of higher education.

I argue that during the 1950’s to the middle of the 1960’s, students overwhelmingly utilized conceptualizations of Southern heritage, evangelical Christianity, and the Southern belle ideal to construct the myth of Southern distinctiveness. These ideals helped students position themselves as “insiders” and “experts,” on desegregation, while Northern liberals and the federal government

were positioned firmly as intrusive outsiders. White women students also saw themselves as the ordained preservers of a romanticized Old South, with the doctrine of “separate but equal” serving as a guiding principle. In the middle to late 1960’s as students increasingly participated in cross-racial interactions, conferences, and exchanges, they started to embrace a national, American identity alongside a Southern identity. They increasingly saw themselves as the leaders of a “New South.” Throughout each chapter, I note how student discourse moved from desegregation to constrained integration alongside student movements and the expansion of cross-cultural interactions. Particularly students, who experienced personal interactions with black students through interracial, off-campus activities, often disrupted negative, mediated discourses in the form of positive, personal narratives.

Since this research is situated exclusively within private, white women’s colleges (elite, racially homogenous enclaves) in the South, we get a unique opportunity to explore the interaction of class, racial, gender, and geopolitical ideologies in the formation of racial attitudes. In this research, we come to understand how the interaction of these four group identity characteristics greatly influenced white women students’ understanding of desegregation and their roles in the changing Southern landscape. For example, through the mid-1960’s, the interaction of class, racial, gender, and geopolitical ideologies defined Southern cultural norms for elite, white women and these norms served to discourage their participation in both the Civil Rights Movement and the Women’s Liberation

movement of the mid-twentieth century. Although some modern scholars have started to research how women's multifaceted identities affect their understanding of racial and gender issues, little research has analyzed the effect of race, class, gender, and regional identity collectively. Additionally, very few scholars in this field have situated their research in a Southern context, particularly during a monumental era of changing discourses around race and gender in American society. Thus, this dissertation provides a fresh look at desegregation and the Civil Rights Era by examining the attitudes of elite white women who positioned themselves as tasked with maintaining the moral and social order of Southern society. Broadly, this dissertation adds to the sociological, historical, and gender studies literature by better informing our understanding of how cultural myths are framed and utilized at the intersection of race, class, gender, and regional identity.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter 1, "Race, Gender, and the History of Higher Education" includes a historical overview of desegregation in American higher education. This chapter provides a brief history of American higher education, highlighting its development along racial and gender lines. To understand the context in which private, white women's colleges operated, it is necessary to first explore the larger historical context of racial and gender segregation in American colleges and universities. Chapter 2, "The Student Press, The Media, & Myth-Making," begins with a brief history of the American college press. The chapter continues with the theoretical basis for understanding the role of the press in the formation and reproduction of racial attitudes, including its use

of cultural myths as part of this cultural reproduction process. Chapter 3, “Methodology,” provides an overview of the dissertation’s methodology and sample cases. The first part of Chapter 4, “The Myth of Southern Distinctiveness—Southern Heritage & The Old South” explores how the ideal of Southern Heritage, served to validate opposition to desegregation during the 1950’s and early 1960’s. Particularly, I explore how the myths of the Lost Cause and the benevolent Old South shaped the Southern Heritage ideal and supported students’ resistance to desegregation. In the second half of the chapter, I explain how students in the late 1960’s students began to shift their discourse to integration, rejecting Old South ideals, and using the myth of Democratic Pluralism to construct the ideal of a New South. In Chapter 5, “The Sacred South” I explore how students utilized evangelical Christianity ideals to both, support and reject desegregation. In the final chapter, Chapter 6, “Southern Belles—From Apathy to Activism” I describe how students utilized traditional notions of Southern femininity to frame their role in supporting and rejecting desegregation. I also explore how students in the late 1960’s began to shift their discourse around desegregation from apathy towards activism. I conclude by describing the broader implications of students’ reliance on the Southern distinctiveness myth as a basis for their views on desegregation and their roles in the Southern social hierarchy.

## Chapter 1: Race, Gender, and the History of American Higher Education

To understand the importance of the *Brown* decision, it is important to understand the landscape of American higher education prior to 1954. From its foundation, the institution of higher education in the United States developed along class, racial, and gender lines. The infrastructure for American higher education was laid in 1636, when the Puritans founded Harvard College as the first institution of higher education in the United States. In 1642, nine white men at Harvard College, the sons of ministers and prominent families from England and New England, became the first college graduates in the United States. Over the next two centuries and prior to the American Civil War, colleges sprung up all over the United States. These colleges were mostly private and like Harvard, served a very small class of students who were mostly elite, white men from Puritan backgrounds. Although there were a handful of seminaries for white women in the 1700's, women's colleges started to develop much later than Harvard, forming in the early to mid 1800's, generally beginning as seminaries. This development of women's education corresponded with, among other changes, a teacher shortage from the growth of common schools and increasing labor opportunities due to the Civil War.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Irene Harwarth, Mindi Maline, and Elizabeth DeBra, *Women's Colleges in the United States History, Issues, and Challenges* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Institute on Postsecondary Education, 1997).

Some of the first of these American women's colleges included, Stephens College (1833) in Columbia, Missouri, Mt. Holyoke (1837) in South Hadley, Massachusetts, and Wesleyan College (1839) in Macon, Georgia. The most prominent of these were the Seven Sisters Colleges, which were all founded between 1837 and 1889 in the Northeast and became officially associated with each other in 1926 at the Seven College Conference.<sup>5</sup> In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century these women's colleges developed collective goals to abandon preparatory programs, attract renowned faculty, broaden opportunities for women to participate in campus leadership and beyond, as well as compete with each other in athletics and other activities.<sup>6</sup> Like the elite colonial men's colleges, these women's colleges catered to white Protestants from middle to upper class backgrounds. Some of these colleges did not knowingly admit black women or had quotas for non-white students in the late nineteenth century; others "grudgingly, and only under great pressure," admitted black women a decade later, in the early twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

In the South, most of the early higher education institutions for women were seminaries or normal and industrial schools founded in lieu of admitting white women to the public colleges for men. A handful of private, Southern

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<sup>5</sup> Lynn Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 193.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Linda M. Perkins, "The Racial Integration of the Seven Sisters Colleges," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 19 (1998): 104.

women's colleges were founded in the late nineteenth century, and offered collegiate work by the early twentieth century. The most prominent of these unofficially established themselves as the "Seven Sisters of the South," and included the current institutions of Agnes Scott College (1889) in Decatur, Georgia, Hollins University in (1852) in Roanoke, Virginia, The University of Mary Washington (1901) in Fredericksburg, Virginia, Queens University of Charlotte (1857) in Charlotte, North Carolina, Randolph College (1891) in Lynchburg, Virginia, Sophie Newcomb College (1886) in New Orleans, Louisiana and Sweet Briar College (1901) in Sweet Briar, Virginia. None of these Southern women's colleges admitted black women until the late 1960's. The only private women's colleges to admit black women on an unlimited basis in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were Spelman College, in Atlanta, Georgia, founded in 1881 and Bennett College in Greensboro, NC, founded in 1873, both Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). HBCUs are private and public institutions established prior to 1964 with primary missions to serve black students, at a time when they were generally denied admission to white institutions.<sup>8</sup>

The movement towards more inclusive, mass public higher education began about two centuries after the founding of Harvard, first in 1862 and later in 1890, with the passage of the Morrill Acts. This federal program supported the development of state land-grant colleges, generally public schools focused on

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<sup>8</sup> Julian Roebuck and Komandur Murty, *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Their Place in American Higher Education* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1993).

agriculture and engineering. The program provided states with land to build colleges and cash proceeds from land sales to support college endowments. Midwestern universities using Morrill Act funding in states such as Wisconsin, Kansas, Indiana, and Minnesota opened their doors to both men and women in the 1860's and 1870's.<sup>9</sup> Thus, public colleges provided some of the first coeducational opportunities for women in the United States.<sup>10</sup> However public, separate institutions for men and women remained the norm in the South. By 1914, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, Alabama and Texas used state funds to develop separate normal or industrial schools for white women, while schools for men offered general college degree courses.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the HBCU's, most of which were coeducational from inception, most Southern colleges and universities for white women and men were developed as single-sex institutions. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a few white women were admitted to large public universities in the South generally reserved for men. For example, the University of Alabama, the University of South Carolina, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ("UNC") all admitted women in the 1890's. However, women were generally not admitted on the same terms as men. At

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<sup>9</sup> Barbara Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 53.

<sup>10</sup> Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) offered an exception to this general trend, as the majority of these were coeducational, and black women and men attended higher education together. Oftentimes, however, women were relegated to coursework in fields traditionally delegated to women, such as domestic work, nursing, and teaching.

<sup>11</sup> Solomon, *In the Company*, 73, 84.



UNC, when women were admitted in 1897, they were required to be Chapel Hill residents and enroll as either advanced undergraduate transfers or graduate students.<sup>12</sup> In addition to these restrictions, women were often limited to certain disciplinary departments, limited to enrollment as day students, educated in separate rooms from men, and banned from campus activities.

The gender segregation in public, Southern higher education continued for decades, and a century in some cases, after passage of the Morrill Acts. For example, in Virginia in 1910 there were four full-fledged colleges receiving state support: William and Mary, Washington and Lee, the University of Virginia (UVA) and the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), none of which admitted women.<sup>13</sup> In 1908, the state of Virginia had established a higher education institution for white women, but it was a normal and industrial school—“Fredericksburg Teachers College,” which was renamed Mary Washington College in 1938 and became the women’s college of UVA in 1944. In 1972, it separated from association with UVA and became an independent, coeducational, public college. The first woman to graduate from Washington and Lee graduated in 1946. The University of Virginia admitted its first class of women in 1970, while VMI admitted its first class in 1997. This pattern of separate public institutions for women in the South, aligned with the pattern of Northeastern,

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<sup>12</sup> The University of North Carolina, Office of Institutional Research & Assessment, “Brief History,” Accessed December 1, 2016. <http://oira.unc.edu/facts-and-figures/general-information-about-unc/brief-history/>

<sup>13</sup> Solomon, *In the Company*, 56.

private Ivy League schools for men, most of which didn't admit women until the 1970's and 1980's.<sup>14</sup> Thus, established, private Southern women's colleges often provided the most viable and best educational opportunities for Southern white women to receive a comprehensive college experience from the late 1800's through the middle of the 20th century.

### The Racial Segregation of Higher Education

Higher education in the South not only developed along gender lines, but also under a Southern racial hierarchy. The system of racial inequality created separate educational spheres for black and white women, with black women often relegated to institutions with less funding and resources. From the founding of the College of William & Mary in the Virginia Colony in 1693 through much of the 1960's, higher education in the South was generally segregated by race. There are only two colleges in the South known to have offered a racially integrated higher education environment prior to the *Brown* decision in 1954. From 1865 to 1892, Berea College in Kentucky enrolled an equal number of black and white students, but in 1904, the Kentucky legislature banned all integrated instruction at schools and colleges within the State.<sup>15</sup> When the college sought to overturn the law as violating the Constitution, the Supreme Court upheld the Kentucky law as being

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<sup>14</sup> Some of the dates of the admission of women into the Ivy League colleges include, Columbia University in 1983, Princeton University in 1969, Dartmouth College in 1972, and Yale College in 1971.

<sup>15</sup> Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 23.

within the power of the State. Maryville College in Tennessee educated mostly white students, but it accepted black students before and after the Civil War until the State of Tennessee compelled it to segregate in 1901.<sup>16</sup> Although Tennessee had previously outlawed integrated public schools in an 1870 Constitutional Amendment, the law didn't apply to private schools. But in 1901, a new State law made it "unlawful for any school, academy, college, or other place of learning to allow white and colored persons to attend the same school, academy, college, or other place of learning."<sup>17</sup>

Although the Morrill Act of 1862 sought to broaden the scope and access for higher education, it failed to compel States to provide public, higher education for black students. There were only two options for black students seeking a higher education at the time the Morrill Act was passed in 1862. The first option was to attend private colleges founded for black students. Four of these private colleges existed prior to the Morrill Act of 1862 – Cheyney University (1837) in Cheyney, PA, the University of the District of Columbia ("UDC") (1851) in Washington, DC (1851), Lincoln University (1854) in Lincoln University, PA (1854), and Wilberforce University (1856) in Wilberforce, Ohio (1856). Lincoln University and Wilberforce University offered baccalaureate degrees, but Cheyney and UDC did not offer a full collegiate curriculum. Cheney University, founded

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<sup>16</sup> Ralph Waldo Lloyd, *Maryville College: A History of 150 Years, 1819-1969*, (Maryville: Maryville College Press, 1969).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

as the “Institute for Colored Youth” did not award baccalaureate degrees until 1914. UDC was founded as a normal school for “colored girls” and focused almost exclusively on domestic skills and teacher training.

The second option for black students during the Antebellum Era, was to try and gain admission to private, white colleges in the North, by “passing as white” or through standard application. A handful of black students were accepted through these routes. Private colleges were generally segregated, although a handful of black students were admitted to private colleges in the North and West, as early as 1821.<sup>18</sup> Oberlin College, founded in 1833 was the primary historically white college option for black students. By the beginning of the Civil War, one-third of Oberlin’s student body was black.<sup>19</sup> A handful of black women graduated from predominantly white colleges in the North and Midwest, as early as 1862.<sup>20</sup> Yet, these women were often non-residential students and were restricted from integrating fully into campus life. Most of the black women students attending college did so in the South. In fact, by 1910, seventy-eight percent of all black

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<sup>18</sup> Alexander Lucius Twilight, the first known black college graduate, graduated from Middlebury College in Vermont in 1823.

<sup>19</sup> Channing Joseph, “Panelists Urge African American Studies Department to Push Interdisciplinary Boundaries Ever Further,” *Oberlin Alumni Magazine*, Summer 2003, [http://www.oberlin.edu/alummag/summer2003/ats\\_09.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/alummag/summer2003/ats_09.html) (accessed November 1, 2016)

<sup>20</sup> Mary Jane Patterson was the first African-American woman to earn a B.A. (Oberlin College, 1862).

women graduates attended colleges in the South<sup>21</sup> and all of the HBCUs for black women were in the South. White women's colleges in the South did not enroll their first black students until the 1960's and 1970's. Until this period, white women generally went to women's colleges reserved for white students and black women attended historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

A little over thirty years after the first Morrill Act, Congress issued the Second Morrill Act of 1890, which developed public higher education options for black students. Nevertheless, the act did not support integration into existing white, public colleges. Instead, the Act allowed States to build racially segregated institutions if the State's legislature found "a just and equitable division of the fund...between one college for white students and one institution for colored students."<sup>22</sup> This stipulation led to the development of seventeen separate, public colleges for black students and most of these institutions did not offer standard collegiate-grade courses for over twenty-five years.<sup>23</sup> During the first decades of their operation, many of the public HBCU's were not developed by the State to truly be equal to white land-grant colleges in terms of education funding and curriculum development. For example, in 1928 a study of public black colleges found that over sixty percent of students were enrolled in elementary and

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<sup>21</sup> Stephanie Evans, *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954: An Intellectual History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 40.

<sup>22</sup> 7 U.S.C Section 323.

<sup>23</sup> United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Equal Protection of the Laws In Public Higher Education*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), 8-9.

secondary grade programs, instead of college courses.<sup>24</sup> In 1937 a study of higher education in six southern states revealed that public black colleges only received between four percent and ten percent of the total State higher education funding.<sup>25</sup> Although the federal program under the second Morrill Act developed more educational opportunities for black students than it previously had, the Act formulated an intractable pattern of racial segregation in the development of American higher education. In addition, the dual system of higher education divided by race, often provided black students with inferior, vocational training in lieu of a classic collegiate curriculum.

By the mid-twentieth century the racialized higher education landscape was firmly embedded in American society. The establishment of separate public colleges for white and black students had been backed by federal and state funding and a legal framework that supported segregation. In 1896, the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruled that a Louisiana state law requiring equal, but separate train facilities for black and white riders did not violate the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection. In its opinion, the Court noted that Louisiana's public facilities law was no "more obnoxious to the fourteenth amendment than the acts of Congress requiring separate schools for colored children in the District

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<sup>24</sup> Arthur J. Klein, United States Department of the Interior, *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities*, Pub. No. 9. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1930), 14.

<sup>25</sup> United States Commission, *Equal Protection of the Laws*, 14.

of Columbia...”<sup>26</sup> This argument was widely seen as legitimizing the continuation of racially separate educational institutions in the United States.<sup>27</sup> States were emboldened to develop their own laws prohibiting the mixing of races. By the early 1900’s several states in the South developed laws prohibiting public and private colleges from offering racially integrated programs.<sup>28</sup> By 1954, the vast majority of black graduates had attended college in the South in separate institutions from white students. In fact, HBCU’s educated approximately seventy percent of all black college graduates up until 1991.<sup>29</sup>

It is worth noting that some Southern professional and graduate schools at public white institutions accepted black students prior to the 1954 *Brown* decision, while their undergraduate programs were completely closed to black students. Two judicial precedents account for this difference. First, in 1936 a Maryland Court of Appeals ordered the admission of Donald Gaines Murray, a black man, into the all-white Maryland University Law School. At that time, the state did not offer any equivalent law school for black students. Instead of integrating the law school, Maryland offered a tuition grant program to cover tuition at an out-of-state school accepting black students. However, the Court found this unsatisfactory because Murray would still have to pay for out-of-state living costs. The Court

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<sup>26</sup> 163 U.S. at 550-51.

<sup>27</sup> United States Commission, *Equal Protection of the Laws*, 12.

<sup>28</sup> Some of these included, Tennessee Laws 1901; Chapter 7, Kentucky Acts 1904, Chapter 85; Oklahoma Laws 1907-08, Article X, Section 5.

<sup>29</sup> Roebuck and Murty, *Historically Black Colleges*, 4.

explained “the state has undertaken the function of education in the law, but has omitted students of one race from the only adequate provision made for it, and omitted them solely because of their color. If those students are to be offered equal treatment in the performance of the function, they must, at present, be admitted to the one school provided.”<sup>30</sup> Over the next fourteen years southern white public colleges and universities, except those located in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina, opened their graduate and professional schools to a handful of black students.<sup>31</sup>

The second precedent that differentiated undergraduate and graduate admissions prior to *Brown* came from the federal government in 1938. The United States Supreme Court ruled in *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* that public colleges had to admit black students to any graduate courses that were not available at the segregated, state institutions serving black students. Instead of integrating their professional educational programs, most states “sought to preserve racial segregation” through the “expensive and difficult” route of developing separate graduate schools for black student.<sup>32</sup> After the decision, however, the University of West Virginia became the first public institution in the South to admit black students to its graduate and professional schools without

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<sup>30</sup> Pearson, et al v. Murray, 182 A. 590, 169 Md. 478, 103 A.L.R. 706, No. 53. January 15, 1936

<sup>31</sup> Arthur J. Klein, *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities*, 14.

<sup>32</sup> United States Commission, *Equal Protection of the Laws*, 23.



legal challenge.<sup>33</sup> In the late 1940's, a few black students successfully challenged Southern States' admission policies and through judicial order were admitted into graduate programs, while the undergraduate programs remained opened to white students only.<sup>34</sup> The most well-known legal challenges involved the University of Oklahoma and Texas,<sup>35</sup> but in 1951, the University of North Carolina also admitted four black graduate students by court mandate. By the end of the 1953 academic year, there were black students enrolled in graduate programs in at least twenty public higher institutions in the South.<sup>36</sup>

A few state schools in Kentucky, Delaware, Louisiana and Missouri had opened their undergraduate programs to a few black applicants right before the *Brown* decision in 1954. For example, the University of Louisville, which was under municipal control at the time, desegregated in 1951 and enrolled

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Guy B. Johnson, "Racial Integration in Public Higher Education in the South," *The Journal of Negro Education* 23, no. 3 (1954): 317.

<sup>35</sup> Ada Sipuel Fisher gained admission to the University of Oklahoma School of Law, from the Supreme Court case, *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of Univ. of Okla.*, 332 U.S. 631 (1948). Heman Marion Sweatt gained admission to the University of Texas Law School through the Supreme Court case *Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U.S. 629 (1950). George W. McLaurin gained admission to University of Oklahoma's doctoral program in education, after he successfully sued in the US District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma to gain admission to the institution (87 F. Supp. 526; 1948 U.S. Dist.). After McLaurin was relegated to use separate facilities, including bathrooms and cafeterias, at the university he initiated another challenge and the Supreme Court in *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*, 339 U.S. 637 (1950) found that public professional and graduate schools could not provide unequal treatment to students solely because of their race, see also Guy B. Johnson, "Racial Integration in Public Higher Education in the South," *The Journal of Negro Education* 23, no. 3 (1954): 317.

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, "Racial Integration," 320.

approximately 175 black students in its undergraduate programs in 1952.<sup>37</sup> However, for almost a century after the Civil War ended in 1865, the vast majority of colleges and universities in the South were racially segregated. In fact, when the Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Brown* in 1954, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and South Carolina had state laws prohibiting both public and private colleges from integrating.<sup>38</sup>

### The Desegregation Mandate

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) (“*Brown*”) issued its desegregation mandate for all public education. The Court articulated that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate-but-equal’ has no place.”<sup>39</sup> *Brown* served as one of the most important court decisions of the 20th century, sparking contentious debate about the future of higher education in the United States. When the Supreme Court issued its decision, opponents of school desegregation condemned the decision and pledged to defy the mandate. They argued that the equality of racial integration was not worth disrupting the status quo of white supremacy and Jim Crow. Jim Crow was a formal and de facto segregationist landscape, which started to creep up in the South following the end of the Civil War in 1865. Headlines across the country,

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> McCandless, *The Past*, 320.

<sup>39</sup> 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

such as “Segregation Ban Presents Vast Problems,” “Defiance of Ruling Hinted in Georgia,” and “The South is Widely Divided on Segregation,”<sup>40</sup> dotted the front pages of thousands of American newspapers and emphasized how entrenched Jim Crow was in American higher education in the 1950’s. The Supreme Court only required States to comply with its desegregation ruling with “all deliberate speed,”<sup>41</sup> and countless States and colleges resisted the decision for nearly a decade. On May 31, 1955, the Supreme Court issued a second opinion in what would be known as *Brown II*. The court articulated that States should make “a prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance” with its prior desegregation ruling. However, the Court also declared that once “such a start has been made, the courts may find that additional time is necessary to carry out the ruling in an effective manner.” Again, the language of the Court did not encourage immediate desegregation and gave States rationales for avoiding and putting off desegregation in public schools.

State officials, educators, students, parents, and staunch white supremacists, used a number of tactics to resist integrating colleges and universities in the South. Legal and policy maneuvers, intimidation, and physical violence were par for the

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<sup>40</sup> *The Lowell Sun.*, May 18, 1954, *Wichita Daily Times*, May 18, 1954, *Hutchinson News Herald*, May 23, 1954.

<sup>41</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education* (“Brown II”), 349 U.S. 294 (1955), remanded the desegregation cases from the first *Brown* decision to the lower courts with instructions to “take such proceedings and enter such orders and decrees consistent with this opinion as are necessary and proper to admit to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all deliberate speed the parties to these cases.”

course in defying the desegregation mandate. For example, in Georgia, state officials passed legislation to deny state funding to white colleges and universities if they admitted black students.<sup>42</sup> In lieu of admitting black students, state officials offered tuition-only reimbursement grants for black students to attend out-of-state schools.<sup>43</sup> In Louisiana, the State Legislature required black college applicants to produce “good character” certificates from high school principals who were summarily threatened with dismissal for promoting racial integration—a violation of state law.<sup>44</sup> State political and educational authorities also retaliated against the institution of higher education, which was seen as the “recruiting grounds” for the Civil Rights movement, by forcing the dismissal of fifty-eight professors and the expulsion of one hundred and forty-one students across the country.<sup>45</sup> In 1954, when Medgar Evers applied to the University of Mississippi Law School, he was rejected as the Board of Trustees immediately added a new requirement that all applicants receive recommendations from five alumni in the applicant’s county of residence.<sup>46</sup> When Vivian Malone and James Hood tried to integrate the University of Alabama in 1963, the governor of Alabama, George Wallace, stood

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<sup>42</sup> Robert A. Pratt, *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Desegregation of the University of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia 2002).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>44</sup> Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 393.

<sup>45</sup> Clive Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance: White Southern Reactions to the Sit-Ins,” in *From Sit-Ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*, eds. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 60.

<sup>46</sup> Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 80.

in front of the admissions office to physically block the students from entering and enrolling.

College students were also complicit in opposing the *Brown* mandate. On January 9, 1961, after federal judge, William A. Bootie issued a desegregation order for the University of Georgia (UGA), Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes arrived at UGA to register for classes. To intimidate Hunter and Holmes and express their disapproval of integration, a large crowd of hundreds of students and locals burned crosses, sung songs laden with racial epithets, and hung a blackface replica of Hamilton Holmes on the campus.<sup>47</sup> In 1956, when Autherine Lucy attempted to become the first black student to enroll at the University of Alabama, students alongside, Klansmen and locals, followed a Confederate battle flag, while chanting, “Keep Bama White” and “To hell with Autherine.”<sup>48</sup> In many instances, the segregationists’ opposition to integration in higher education became even more explicit after the *Brown* decision. In a last ditch effort to preserve institutionalized white supremacy in higher education, many segregationists came out of the shadows, stood up openly, and fervently defied the Supreme Court’s mandate.

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<sup>47</sup> Robert A. Pratt, “The Rhetoric of Hate: The Demosthenian Literary Society and its Opposition to the Desegregation of the University of Georgia, 1950-1964,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Summer 90, no. 2 (2006).

<sup>48</sup> E. Culpepper Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama* (London: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Proponents of equal higher education saw the *Brown* decision as a major victory for the civil rights movement and a “challenge to the legitimacy of all public institutions that embraced segregation.”<sup>49</sup> The NAACP had been contesting racial segregation in schools since the 1930’s and won some court battles, particularly in higher education. Yet, *Brown* gave advocates a new sense of optimism and a broader legal impetus for contesting desegregation. In addition, the segregationists’ strong resistance to desegregation fueled an unprecedented wave of student activism and discourse around civil rights. Some of the most organized and long-lasting student groups around civil rights were formed in the decade after *Brown*.

The real push for desegregation in both the public and private sphere came in 1964 with the passage of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Section 601 of the Act states that, “that no person in the United States shall be excluded from participation in or otherwise discriminated against on the ground of race, color, or national origin under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Thus, public and private colleges receiving federal funds, including through federal financial aid for students, risked losing federal assistance if they practiced racial discrimination in their admissions, facilities, and accommodations. Since most public and private colleges and universities in the United States collected some type of federal funding in 1964, the Act solidified that racial

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<sup>49</sup> Charles J. Ogletree, *All deliberate speed: reflections on the first half century of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005), 124.

segregation in higher education was explicitly disavowed. Some private colleges, such as the Southern Baptist universities and colleges in the Deep South were the last to integrate, refusing to sign the mandatory civil rights compliance agreement under the Act. Nevertheless, these private colleges signed the agreement by 1970.<sup>50</sup> The Civil Rights Act was monumental in binding to private institutions of higher education the civil rights inherent in the Equal Protection Clause that previously only applied to public institutions. Additionally, prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the enforcement of the *Brown* desegregation mandate was not centralized. Desegregation orders came mostly from the judicial branch from litigation generally initiated by the NAACP and other civil rights organizations on behalf of black students. However, the Civil Rights Act developed an enforcement, monitoring, and investigatory branch to ensure state compliance with desegregation mandates. In the two decades after *Brown*, student protests, litigation from Civil Rights organizations, and the passing of federal Civil Rights laws would collectively push the desegregation of public and private higher education institutions forward. As these forces worked to advance desegregation, the campus would become a place of both support and contestation and the student newspaper captured this conflict.

The College Campus, Protests, & Civil Rights in the 1950's and 1960's

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<sup>50</sup> Mark Newman, *Getting Right With God: Southern Baptists and Desegregation, 1945-1995*. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2001), 32.

The middle of the 20th century offers an unprecedented period to study student discourse supporting and challenging the racial status quo within the institution of higher education. The college campus offered one of the most prominent and visible places to witness the battle over the desegregation of higher education, in part because there were simply, a lot of students. The American birthrate after World War II from 1946-1964 was dramatic, creating the largest generation in American history. The population of emerging adults (18-24 year-olds) rose significantly.<sup>51</sup> In 1960, there were approximately sixteen million emerging adults, but by 1970, that population had grown by over fifty-six percent to over twenty-five million.<sup>52</sup> With such a young population, college enrollments also soared. In 1960, there were three million youth enrolled in college; in 1964, there were five million; and by 1973, enrollments doubled to ten million.<sup>53</sup> This critical mass of college students supported the development of the college campus as a central location for civil rights and political activism.

Along with the dramatic increase in college enrollments, college-aged students were affected by a number of events and governmental policies that made many of them question the social structure of American society. The *Brown* decision, the Vietnam War and conscription, the Civil Rights Movement and the antagonistic violence against activists, remnants of the Second Red Scare,

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<sup>51</sup> Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 89.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 95



McCarthyism, and the Second Wave of Feminism all affected a sizable population of young adults. Historian Barbara L. Tischler notes, that this period was unique in the 20th century because, “not since the Great Depression had the nation experienced such dramatic tension and conflict over the legitimacy of institutions and individuals in positions of power to make policy.”<sup>54</sup> Although colleges as cultural institutions played a role in reproducing the racial inequality prevalent in other institutions, they also served as a place for students to challenge existing social hierarchies. Historian Terry Anderson argues that during the post-Depression Era, students in primary and secondary civics education who would attend college during the Civil Rights Era college had been “trained to be patriotic and resist dissent.”<sup>55</sup> They were, “drilled in school that ‘all men are created equal,’ only to realize upon graduation that their country was a class society in which some were equal and others were unequal, some had ‘unalienable rights’ and others had few or no rights.”<sup>56</sup> The American college in the middle of the 20th century offered a place where students could confront the American value system espoused in the classroom, the realities outside of the brick and mortar walls of the college, and their own beliefs around a plethora of social issues.

Higher education institutions offered significant opportunities for student-led social and civil rights movements during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Yet the

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<sup>54</sup> Barbara L. Tischler, *Sights on the Sixties* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>55</sup> Anderson, *The Movement*, 81, 82.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

period from 1954 through 1970 was certainly not monolithic, as there were waves of student activism around civil rights. There was much to protest about in the 1950's—government censorship, McCarthyism and the McCarran Internal Security Act, Korean War casualties, and the further entrenchment of Jim Crow—could have given rise to a number of collective student activities. Yet, much of the student activism, particularly around desegregation, did not become highly organized until the 1960's. Anderson argues that the delay in student activism in the early part of the Civil Rights Era was in part, because the Silent Generation dominated the Era.<sup>57</sup> The Silent Generation was a cohort born in the mid 1920's through the 1940's, who faced economic, political, and social insecurity from the Great Depression and McCarthyism. Anderson argues that as children of the Depression, the Silent Generation embraced conformity, the rise of the suburbs, and American military power, frowning upon dissent as they utilized post World War II social programs to develop economic security.<sup>58</sup> Although there were certainly some black activists in the early 1950's, black youth were also part of the Silent Generation. Iwan Morgan explains, “Cold War orthodoxy had broadly encouraged conformity and caution on the part of black college youth in the 1950s.”<sup>59</sup> Concerns with economic mobility, career prospects, family expectations

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<sup>57</sup> Anderson, *The Movement*.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Iwan Morgan, “The New Movement, The Student Sit-Ins in 1960,” in *From Sit-Ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*. eds. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 3.

for personal success, and other “middle-class values,” encouraged political apathy and resistance to organized protests.<sup>60</sup> During the early 1950’s it would remain quite difficult for a collective mass of black students to move “beyond the narrow bounds of permissible dissent of the Cold War Era.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, social activism did exist prior to and during the 1950’s, but it was not as highly visible or organized as it was in the 1960’s.

Although the 1960’s offered an unprecedented movement around Civil Rights, throughout early American history there have been mass protests organized by Black and interracial groups objecting to racial discrimination and violence against Black Americans. These early movements were not always able to get the traction of the later Civil Rights Movement, due to repression and the precarious position of Blacks in those particular time periods. For example, in the late 1800’s Blacks across the country protested against the rise of Jim Crow disenfranchisement and violence against Blacks, often carried out in the form of lynching. In 1898, a group of over “six thousand colored people” and a “big sprinkling of white sympathizers” met at Cooper Union in New York City to protest racial violence after the Wilmington Race Riot.<sup>62</sup> The Wilmington Race

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960’s*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>62</sup> “To Suppress Race Wars, Meeting of Colored and White People at Cooper Union: An Appeal for Federal Aid, T. Thomas Fortune, Lawson N. Fuller, Elizabeth B. Grannis, and Others Address the Meeting,” *The New York Times*, November 1898, p. 1, 2.

riot began on November 10, 1898 and involved an orchestrated white mob of thousands who expelled black leaders and legislators from the city, destroyed black businesses and property, and killed an unrecorded number of Blacks. During the protest at Cooper Union, T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the *New York Age* (1887 – 1953), a prominent black newspaper, explained the purpose of the rally, declaring, “We are here to start the fight for right and justice. We come with no vindictiveness in our hearts, no dynamite up our sleeves, and no Winchesters in our closets, but as American citizens who, when their country was in peril, were not shot in the back.”<sup>63</sup> The *New York Times* reported that although there were about fifty policemen present their “presence seemed to be unnecessary” and described the protest as “one of the most orderly and best conducted ever held in the city.”<sup>64</sup> In 1937, black women from Bennett College, the “Bennett Belles,” boycotted the movie theaters in Greensboro, North Carolina. They also led protests because the theaters refused to show films in which “Negro and white actors appear on an equal social basis.”<sup>65</sup> One of the most active student civil rights organizations in the middle of the twentieth century was the Congress of Racial Equality (“CORE”), and it was founded in 1942 at the University of Chicago. CORE is well-known for its organization of the 1964 Freedom Summer and the 1963 March on Washington. However, prior to these events, CORE

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> “The Voice of Youth,” *Carolina Times*, January 15, 1938, p. 4.

organized the Journey of Reconciliation through the South in 1947 and sit-ins to integrate public facilities in Chicago and the North in the early 1940's. One year after *Brown*, one of the most well-known civil rights protests took place—the Montgomery Bus Boycott. On December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks, a secretary for the NAACP, refused to give up her seat to a white bus patron. Parks was arrested, and a bus boycott was built around her arrest. Black residents refused to ride the city bus, and instead, walked, carpooled, used black-owned taxis, and rode bicycles. The Montgomery Bus Boycott lasted for over a year, and ended shortly after the Supreme Court ruled that Alabama's bus segregation laws were unconstitutional. The boycott officially ended on December 20, 1956. It encouraged black bus riders in other cities, like Birmingham and Tallahassee to boycott segregated buses, and served as a “catalyst that would bring in its wake passage of significant civil rights legislation.”<sup>66</sup>

Although the Montgomery Bus Boycott proved that mass demonstrations could effect change, most of the campus-led demonstrations and the national student organizations for civil rights were founded later, in the 1960's. Terry Anderson notes that this sixties generation, in particular, had been “awakened by Kennedy's idealism, aroused by the struggle in the South, and confronted by campus regulations, and during the next years they would be educated by racial

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<sup>66</sup> Herb Boyd, “Rosa Parks,” *The Black Scholar* 35, no. 4 (2006), 43.

strife in America and by the war in Vietnam.”<sup>67</sup> One of the earliest and perhaps, most influential student movements of the 1960’s started in 1960. The first major student-led sit-in in the United States began on February 1, 1960 at the Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Four black male students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University (NC A&T), Ezell Blair Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond were refused service at Woolworth’s segregated lunch counter. They were asked to leave, but stayed until the store closed, undertaking a nonviolent sit-in protest. Although four black men led the sit-ins, black women students from Bennett College joined them on the second day and collectively their actions sparked student sit-ins across the South.<sup>68</sup> By the end of the week, over three hundred students had joined the sit-in, which “generated a new wave of student protest by African Americans and their white sympathizers that would be of critical importance for the achievement of the civil rights revolution of the 1960s.”<sup>69</sup> Within five months of the Greensboro sit-ins, a civil rights movement centered on student sit-ins spread to seventy-eight American states, with more than 50,000

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<sup>67</sup> Anderson, *The Movement*, 132.

<sup>68</sup> William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 83, 84.

<sup>69</sup> Morgan, “The New Movement,” 1.

student participating, by some estimates.<sup>70</sup> By the end of 1960, over 3,000 students had been jailed for participating in sit-ins.<sup>71</sup>

Shortly after the Greensboro sit-ins, on April 16-18, 1960, Ella Baker, a black college graduate and Executive Director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (“SCLC”) organized an interracial conference for students interested in civil rights. Over 120 students attended from fifty colleges all over the country.<sup>72</sup> From this conference, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (“SNCC”) was founded. In addition to CORE, it was one of the most organized, college-led civil rights efforts of the 1960’s. Until 1966, SNCC was an interracial student group with both white and black members, although black students comprised over eighty percent of its membership.<sup>73</sup> As Historian Carson Clayborne explains, “SNCC’s founding was an important step in the transformation of a limited student movement to desegregate lunch counters into a broad and sustained movement to achieve major social reforms.”<sup>74</sup> Other student organizations that were active during the 1960’s included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth Council, founded in 1936, which organized a number of lunch counter sit-ins in the South and

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>72</sup> Anderson, *The Movement*, 49.

<sup>73</sup> Patrick Miller, et.al, *The Civil Rights Movement Revisited: Critical Perspectives on the Struggle for Racial Equality in the United States* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 2001), 105.

<sup>74</sup> Clayborne, *In Struggle: SNCC*, 19.

Midwest. A student organization led by white leaders, The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), formed in 1960 from the Student League for Industrial Democracy which was organized in 1946. The SDS was concerned with a multitude of issues, related to the political, social, and economic policies of the United States, which it saw as particularly damaging to the poor and black Americans. In fact, one of the reasons SDS was organized was to combat racial discrimination, one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century issues that for the organization, was “too troubling to dismiss.”<sup>75</sup> The SDS explained in its official 1962 Port Huron Statement, that the “permeating and victimizing fact of human degradation, symbolized by the Southern struggle against racial bigotry, compelled most of us from silence to activism.”<sup>76</sup> Although these organizations and movements did not eradicate, “all vestiges of racial inequality” they played “a major role in destroying the public segregation and black disenfranchisement that were the hallmarks of the South’s Jim Crow system.”<sup>77</sup>

With the rise of student movements seeking to eradicate Jim Crow, came the renewal of segregationist organizations from the Reconstruction Era, such as the Ku Klux Klan and the rise of new white Supremacist associations. The sit-ins, in particular, were a site for renewed violence against demonstrators, integrationists supporting protestors, and black Southerners in general. One of the

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<sup>75</sup> Students For A Democratic Society, *The Port Huron Statement* (New York: Students For A Democratic Society, 1964), 3

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Morgan and Davies, *From Sit-Ins to SNCC*, p. vii.



most harrowing events in opposition to the NAACP Youth Council's activities occurred in Jacksonville on "Ax Handle Saturday." In 1960, the Jacksonville branch of the Youth Council led lunch counter demonstrations and sit-ins throughout Jacksonville, focusing on Woolworth's and W.J. Grant Department Store. On August 27, 1960, a white mob of several hundred people wielded baseball bats and ax handles, chasing and beating protestors and other black Southerners who happened to be in the vicinity of downtown Jacksonville. Other white supremacist organizations threatened white business owners who intended to end the Jim Crow racial divisions in their stores. For example, after a sit-in in Rock Hill South Carolina in 1960, 350 local whites founded a Citizens' Council that threatened to boycott any store that served black demonstrators.<sup>78</sup> In addition, conservative groups started to form on college campuses to oppose integration and serve as a counter to what was viewed as the liberalization of the Southern college campus. Nevertheless, in the 1960's colleges historically reserved for white students would be confronted with the equity demands of civil rights in a way that had never occurred in the history of the U.S. This confrontation covered the pages of the campus newspaper as students debated the merits of overturning the Southern racial hierarchy in education.

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<sup>78</sup> Webb, "Breaching the Wall."

## Chapter 2: The Student Press, The Media, & Myth-Making

The campus newspaper has served as a medium for student thought and a source of information for college students for over 175 years. On November 1, 1839, Dartmouth College undergraduates who believed a student periodical “would be a desideratum of great importance to supply,” founded the first college newspaper in the United States, “The Dartmouth.”<sup>79</sup> Published on a weekly basis, *The Dartmouth* began as a one-year experimental project, but ultimately become a permanent institution on campus.<sup>80</sup> In 1873, Yale University founded the *Yale News*, the first daily student newspaper in the United States.<sup>81</sup> Throughout the next several decades, student newspapers began to emerge across the country. These campus newspapers tried to establish themselves as legitimate, serious, and important sources of news for the student body. For example, in 1882, editors from Columbia University’s *Acta Columbiana* and Williams College’s *The Athenaeum* formed an intercollegiate press association to “improve college journalism.”<sup>82</sup> On October 26, 1886, another Intercollegiate Press Association was formed to build a foundation of student journalism and included the *Yale News*,

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<sup>79</sup>The Dartmouth, “The Prospectus,” November 1, 1839, p. 34; Julius Dusche and Thomas Fischer, *The Campus Press: Freedom and Responsibility* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Washington 1973), 9.

<sup>80</sup> The Dartmouth, “The Prospectus,” November 1, 1839, p. 34

<sup>81</sup> Dusche and Thomas, *The Campus Press*, 9.

<sup>82</sup> Students’ Committee on the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Opening of Vassar College, *Vassar 1865-1915, from the Undergraduate Point of View: Fiftieth Anniversary Number* (Poughkeepsie: Vassar College, 1915), 122.

the *Daily Princetonian*, and the *Harvard Crimson*.<sup>83</sup> The challenge of establishing the college newspaper as a credible and legitimate media source continued in the early 1900's. In 1940, Dolores Freitas, the former editor of the *Spartan Daily*, articulated the importance of the student newspaper to the campus community, but noted its struggle with legitimacy. She declared:

On the one hand, it represents freedom of expression, opportunity for creative development, a medium for dispensing news to student groups of four hundred and four thousand and fourteen thousand, a training ground for future journalists, and a desirable extra-curricular activity. On the other hand, it represents a perennial nuisance, a hotbed of undergraduate radicalism and bad taste, a playground that attracts freaks and publicity hounds, an uncertain chronicle of the ability of college students to misspell, misconstrue, and misjudge.<sup>84</sup>

Even with this uncertainty about the status of the college press and the integrity of editorial staffs, the growth of student newspapers continued throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1970, over 130 years after *The Dartmouth* was founded, an estimated 1,800 college newspapers were being published in the United States.<sup>85</sup> These student newspapers existed all over the country, with an approximate circulation of six million copies.<sup>86</sup>

In the mid twentieth century, the structure and characteristic of college newspapers varied substantially. The circulations ranged from a few hundred to

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<sup>83</sup> The Editors of the Harvard Crimson, *The Harvard Crimson, 1873-1906* (Cambridge, MA: The Harvard Crimson, 1906), 20.

<sup>84</sup> Dolores Freitas, "Cross-Examining the College Press," *The Journal of Higher Education*, 11, no. 8 (1940), 431.

<sup>85</sup> Ernest C. Hynds, *American newspapers in the 1970's* (New York: Hastings House, 1979), 108.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

over fifty thousand.<sup>87</sup> The editorial staffs ranged from a few students to more than one hundred, and the revenue varied from a few hundred dollars to over five hundred thousand dollars.<sup>88</sup> Many factors influenced the content of student newspapers, including the mass media sources the editorial staff utilized, the editorial staff's relationship with the student body and administration, the newspaper's funding level and funding sources, and, the college's heritage, culture, and customs. The first volume of *The Dartmouth* in 1839 included literary essays, reviews, poetry, and "obituary notices of distinguished literary men and graduates."<sup>89</sup> One hundred years later, college newspapers still contained some of these literary components, but focused more heavily on campus news. News on campus organizations and activities, sports, Greek life, curricular developments, and administrative affairs dominated the student newspaper. In the 1960's, student newspapers started to challenge the administrative status quo. The operation of *in loco parentis* on campus, the traditional pedagogy offered in the curriculum, and the slow pace in which administrators responded to civil rights, such as freedom of speech and racial equality were all the subject of campus articles.

Maxwell H. Goldberg, a professor of English and Humanities and advisor to student literary groups at University of Massachusetts, explained the importance

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> *The Dartmouth*, 1839.

of the student newspaper on the college campus and to students' development. He argued that the newspaper over the centuries has offered "added dimensions to the life of the campus" by making students "aware of themselves as something more than individuals, namely, as members of a larger whole, the college" and by providing opportunities "to criticize themselves, and to improve."<sup>90</sup> Through editorials, letters to the editors, and articles on campus and national news, students were able to express opinions and debate with each other about campus, national, and global events. Along with campus concerns, national and global issues were frequently discussed in the student newspaper when they concerned college-aged students. In the mid-twentieth century, the Vietnam War, challenges to free speech, racial and gender inequality, and the desegregation of American higher education institutions, were all issues that affected an unprecedented population of young adults. As students encountered these national issues, mass media newspapers, along with college newspapers placed students and the campus at the center of their media content. During the middle of the twentieth century, student newspaper headlines, such as: "Professors Welcome Court's Ruling on Race Segregation,"<sup>91</sup> "Harvard Club in Capital To Debate Segregation: Younger Members Try For Negro Admission,"<sup>92</sup> "New SDS Forms, Will Demonstrate,"<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Maxwell H. Goldberg "Student Journalists and Democratic," *The Journal of Higher Education*. 16, no. 5 (1945), 257.

<sup>91</sup> *The Harvard Crimson*, June 7, 1950.

<sup>92</sup> William W. Bartley III, *The Harvard Crimson*, June, 2, 1954.

<sup>93</sup> George B. Reid Jr., *Yale Daily News*, no. 18, October 4 1967, p. 1

“University Senate Rejects War Resolution,”<sup>94</sup> and “A Week of Dialogue: Vietnam in Perspective,”<sup>95</sup> represented some of the headlines across college campuses that focused on the intersectionality of student and national concerns. In addition to the main campus newspapers, some college students developed an alternative press and aligned themselves with social activism and freedom of the press campaigns. The *New University Thought* at the University of Chicago, the *New Freedom* at Cornell University, *The Activist* at Oberlin, and the *Garfield Thomas Water Tunnel* at Penn State, were just a few of the campus publications focused on social activism in the 1960’s.

Although the college press has been around for over 175 years, and became a prolific source of media content in the 20th century, little scholarly literature has utilized the college press as a primary source in historical and social science research. There was much discourse on desegregation in American mainstream and college newspapers during the 1950’s and 1960’s, particularly after *Brown*. Some scholars have examined the variation in the ways the mainstream and niche newspapers framed desegregation issues during the Civil Rights Era.<sup>96</sup> However, most scholarship on the college press during the Civil Rights Era has focused on

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<sup>94</sup> Tina Hondras and Jim Wiggins, *Daily Collegian*, May 13, 1970.

<sup>95</sup> Mike Henson, *The Xavier News*, no. 22, April 26, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> For example, Carolyn Martindale, “Coverage of Black Americans in Five Newspapers Since 1950,” *Journalism Quarterly*, 62, no. 2 (1985): 321-436; Donald R. Shanor, “Southern Editors and Selma,” *Journalism Quarterly*, 44 (1967)133-135; Margaret Spratt, et. al., “News, race, and the status quo: The case of Emmett Louis Till. *Howard Journal of Communication*,” 18, no. 2 (2007): 172.

the freedom of speech movements and anti-war sentiments, rather than desegregation. Yet the college newspaper was a prolific media source on college campuses. In fact, in the 1960's and 1970's more than 1,800 college daily newspapers were published, and their readership on average, was ninety-five percent.<sup>97</sup> In comparison, for mainstream newspapers, the general circulation readership was only eighty percent, on average.<sup>98</sup> Although mainstream newspapers included some articles on students and desegregation, students were generally not the writers, contributors, and main subject of most of the articles, as they were in the college press. Since students were at the center of desegregation, it is important to consider their views and attitudes, and these views were reflected in the college press. Given the importance of student activism for the progression of the Civil Rights movement and the student newspaper's central role in campus life, student newspapers represent an ideal—but often overlooked—source of information about the rapidly changing campus culture in the 1950's and 1960s.

#### The Importance of the Press & Racial Attitudes

Maxwell H. Goldberg described the potential power and influence that the editorial staff and the student newspaper could have on the campus climate and student attitudes. Goldberg explained:

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<sup>97</sup> Clifford Wilcox, "Antiwar Dissent in the College Press: The Universities of Illinois and Michigan" in *Sights on the Sixties*, ed. Barbara Tischler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

But the way in which the paper chronicles happenings and comments upon them may, for better or worse, seriously influence the course of future happenings. The way in which it emphasizes certain news and restricts its accounts of other news, and the way in which it comments on happenings have a marked effect upon the reader. It is the responsibility of the editorial staff to make this influence tell in the right direction. By what they are and do, by what they say and write and often by what they do not write they can exert a strong influence upon the group life of the college community.<sup>99</sup>

Student newspapers offer a unique opportunity to explore student perspectives through editorials, a variety of opinion pieces, surveys, comics, regular news articles on student activities, and student responses to articles. What Goldberg emphasized, however, is that through the nature of its frames the editorial staff can privilege certain viewpoints, while deemphasizing others in the student news. Ultimately, this molded content is generated to students—students who relied heavily on campus news for information, particularly in the era of student activism. Thus, Goldberg suggests that the editorial staff of a college newspaper has tremendous power in shaping student discourse and opinions around news and events. This idea of the importance of the student newspaper in shaping student opinions aligns with larger sociological theories about the effects of the media on the receivers of content. The student newspaper can be viewed as part of a larger social structure, in which the newspaper, as a type of media, and its audience are fundamental participants.

Cultural and media scholar Stuart Hall argues that media news outlets produce “representations and images of the social world, provide and selectively

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<sup>99</sup> Goldberg, “Student Journalists,” 255.



construct social knowledge, and order a complex world by making it seem natural or by distilling complex meanings into a ‘common sense.’”<sup>100</sup> Thus, the media plays an important role not only in generating and organizing information, but in constructing knowledge. This selective knowledge, through repetition of representations and images of the social world, is normalized, as natural and authentic representations of reality. When this knowledge is reproduced by the news audience, the media can ultimately shape attitudes, beliefs, and larger discourses on social issues. Thus, the media functions at the “intersection of social, political, legal, and economic environments,” and “serves not only an agenda-setting role in public discourse but is crucial to establishing the range of criteria for constructing, debating, and resolving social issues.”<sup>101</sup>

When the media selectively constructs and organizes knowledge, through the use of frames, it often emphasizes certain ideologies. Stuart Hall defines ideologies as the “mental frameworks—the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation—which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works.”<sup>102</sup> These ideologies often reflect dominant power perspectives. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Antonio Gramsci developed a

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<sup>100</sup> David Domke, “Journalists, Framing, and Discourse about Race Relations,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Monographs* 164 (1997), 3.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>102</sup> Stuart Hall, “The problem of ideology Marxism without guarantees,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* ed. David Morley and Chen Kuan-Hsing (New York: Routledge, 1996) 25, 26.

theory of ideological hegemony, explaining that the “mass media are tools that ruling elites use to ‘perpetuate their power, wealth, and status [by popularizing] their own philosophy, culture, and morality.’”<sup>103</sup> Consciously and unconsciously, journalists and editors, perpetuate the role of the media, which, “through inclusion and emphasis upon certain ideologies in discourse they contain, likely help to challenge or reinforce certain social relations.”<sup>104</sup> Thus the “selection and framing of language, news, opinion, and perceptions conveys and abets a social reality that legitimates the practices and ideas of the dominant social class,” ...which in the case of the United States is “the white majority.”<sup>105</sup> Thus the media, through how it constructs and conveys knowledge about social issues can be a major agent in the reproduction of power, cultural norms, attitudes, and social dynamics.

One of the areas in which the media has been involved in constructing and reproducing norms is in its representation of various social groups. Scholars have found that many Americans rely on the media to construct their understanding of social issues and attitudes about other racial, ethnic, gender and religious groups.<sup>106</sup> For Stuart Hall, the media is a central agent in how individuals come to

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<sup>103</sup> James Lull, “Hegemony,” in *Gender, race, and class in media: A critical reader* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) ed. Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 62.

<sup>104</sup> Hall, “The Problem of Ideology,” 26.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>106</sup> Norman K. Denzin, *Reading Race: Hollywood and the Cinema of Racial Violence* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002); Robert M. Entman and Andrew Rojecki, *The Black Image in the White Mind. Media and Race in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press); Charles A. Gallagher, “Miscounting race: Explaining whites’ misperceptions of racial group size,” *Sociological Perspectives*, 46, no. 3 (2003): 381-

define, construct, and understand race. Race is a socially constructed organizing mechanism with fluid boundaries that shifts over time, context, and location, and ultimately separates and groups individuals into different identity categories. One of the ways in which people make meaning of race in society is through the use of “race frames,” which are the “lenses through which individuals understand the role of race in society.”<sup>107</sup> For Hall, the media can influence our understanding of race and race frames, by providing “what meaning the imagery of race carries, and what the ‘problem of race’ is understood to be,” as well as “classify out the world in terms of the categories of race.”<sup>108</sup> Thus, media-generated discourse not only can shape and constrain our ideology about race, but also help us to understand the very meaning of race. The media becomes a central location in which the ideas of race are “articulated, worked on, transformed and elaborated.”<sup>109</sup> Concerning the media’s relationship to the formation of racial attitudes, Communications scholar, David Domke, explains:

Discourse in the press about racial groups helps to construct individual values and attitudes through the selection and framing of language, news, opinion, and perceptions. Further, such discourse first likely influences

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396; Stanley J. Baran and Dennis K. Davis, *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Ferment, and Future* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2012).

<sup>107</sup> Natasha Warikoo and Janine De Novais, “Colour-blindness and diversity: race frames and their consequences for white undergraduates at elite US universities,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38, no. 6 (2014), 860.

<sup>108</sup> Stuart Hall, “The whites of their eyes: Racist ideologies and the media,” in *Gender, race, and class in media: A critical reader* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) ed. Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), p. 20.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

which racial attitudes become rooted and, secondly, then helps to reinforce them once established.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, how racial knowledge is constructed and how racial groups are represented in the media, can mediate, shape, and constrain our ideologies about members of a particular racial group.

The media's commentary on social groups is "likely to be especially powerful in cultivating images of groups and phenomena about which there is little first-hand opportunity for learning."<sup>111</sup> The media like education institutions during the 1950's and 1960's was racially segregated, with mainstream, mass media content being generated mostly by white editors and contributors. Even on the issue of desegregation, which would fundamentally alter the social and economic opportunities available to black Americans, white journalists and sources were the main content contributors. For example, one scholar found that among North Carolina newspapers in 1955, African-Americans were only principal sources for desegregation articles nine percent of the time.<sup>112</sup> Melvin DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach's dependency model of media influence suggests that in times of social conflict and challenges to entrenched social orders,

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<sup>110</sup> Domke, "Journalists, framing, and discourse," 4.

<sup>111</sup> Larry Gross, "What is Wrong With This Picture? Lesbian Women and Gay Men on Television," in *Queer Words, Queer Images: Communication and the Construction of Homosexuality*, ed. Jeffrey Ringer (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 143-146.

<sup>112</sup> Roy E. Carter, "Segregation and the News, A Regional Content Study," *Journalism Quarterly*, 34 (1957), 5.

media reliance intensifies.<sup>113</sup> Thus, we can imagine that during the Jim Crow Era of segregated institutions, coupled with the Civil Rights Movement's challenge to the American segregationist landscape, newspaper commentary on racial desegregation had the potential to be a particularly influential source for understanding desegregation and perceiving other racial groups. Segregation combined with the legacy of exclusion of Black contributors to mass media, often led to the negative portrayal of Blacks in the media. Clint C. Wilson and Felix Guterrez argue that throughout American media history, the "characterizations of minorities were largely based on the perceptions and preconceptions of those outside of the groups, rather than the realities of the groups themselves. They were pictures as seen through Anglo eyes, rather than a reflection of the realities of the people in these groups."<sup>114</sup> It is important to note that although most scholars agree that the media can influence perceptions of social and cultural groups, the degree to which this influence happens depends on several factors. Whether the person is a member of the group for which the media provides information, and the influence of other agents of socialization, such as family, education institutions, and peers affects the degree to which media content is absorbed or rejected. In addition, the "conditions" of the cultural media object and the environment in

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<sup>113</sup> Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur, "A Dependency Model of Mass-Media Effects," *Communication Research*, 3, no. 1 (1976), 3.

<sup>114</sup> "Clint C. Wilson II and Felix Gutierrez, *Race. Multiculturalism. and the Media: From Mass to Class Communication*. 2d ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995), 42.

which it is delivered will impact the degree to which the object has influence.<sup>115</sup> According to Michael Schudson, these conditions include, the object's ability to be retrieved by the audience, its rhetorical force or effectiveness, its resonance with the audience, the level of its institutionalization, and its resolution—whether it operates as a directive for action and mobilization.<sup>116</sup>

### *Media & Myth-Making*

One of the most prominent ways that the media can privilege dominant ideologies and generate ideas about race is through the use of cultural myths. A cultural myth is the “presentation of ideology through the active retailing of dominant cultural stories.”<sup>117</sup> Cultural myths give meaning to human existence and solidify the relative position of people in the world. They also serve to advance the norms, customs, and beliefs that are adopted and challenged in society. Throughout the world, people consciously and unconsciously adopt “these mediated messages about the nature of their culture and society as significant elements of their world view, thereby exerting considerable influence upon their subsequent behavior.”<sup>118</sup> Douglas Kellner explains, “Media stories provide the

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<sup>115</sup> Michael Schudson, “How culture works,” *Theory & Society*, 18 no. 2 (1989), 153-180.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Brian L. Ott and Robert L. Mack, *Critical Media Studies: An Introduction* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 210), 132.

<sup>118</sup> Stephen A. Smith, *Myth, Media, and the Southern Mind* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1985), 136.

symbols, myths, and resources through which we constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves into this culture.”<sup>119</sup> Mediated messages, such as myths encourage members of societies to adopt certain worldviews through easily accessible tropes. These myths become embedded in the media and are “presented as common sense...they are unchallenged, appearing as natural or ‘grounded in everyday reality.’”<sup>120</sup> This process of knowledge presented as an object of common sense is representative of Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of doxa, which encourages members of societies to follow social rules and norms, without question. According to Bourdieu, doxa is knowledge “which is beyond question and which is presented and which each agent tacitly accords by the mere fact of acting in accord with social convention.”<sup>121</sup> In any society cultural myths can be divergent, and sometimes contradictory, but often go unchallenged, as they become naturalized facts of life. When cultural myths are represented as doxa, the presenter does not question the social rules or processes associated with the myth, but articulates the idea of “this is just what we do.”

Cultural myths often support the legal, social, economic, and power hierarchies in society by giving authoritative meaning to customs and rituals that

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<sup>119</sup> Douglas Kellner, “Cultural studies, multiculturalism and media culture,” in *Gender, Race and Class in Media*, ed. Gail Dines & Jean M. Humez (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2011), 7.

<sup>120</sup> Domke, “Journalists, framing, and discourse,” 3.

<sup>121</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R Nice. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977), 169.

oftentimes reinforce dominant positions. Cultural myths can contain social and political constructions of racial categories, which emerge, persist, and are contested in different forms of media and discourse. These cultural myths, produced in various media contexts, such as films, television, speeches, and public discourse, can influence social dynamics, norms, and attitudes about racial groups. They can become “enshrined as the official mythology of the society,” reinforced in school textbooks and “praised by political and educational leaders” as true and legitimate histories.<sup>122</sup>

Racialized cultural myths embedded in the media, can support and sustain racism. Racism is “a system of dominance, power, and privilege based on racial-group designation; rooted in the historical oppression of a group defined or perceived by dominant-group members as inferior, deviant or undesirable.”<sup>123</sup> Cultural myths can engender and perpetuate racial stereotypes, which designate certain racial groups as subordinate or unworthy of full inclusion in a country’s body politic. Stephen A Smith explains, that when myths are utilized, “social participation and a feeling of group membership are strengthened as members of a society ‘imprint and recall socially constructed cultural beliefs about the factual

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<sup>122</sup> Charles Reagan Wilson, *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 4: Myth, Manners, and Memory* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 5, 6.

<sup>123</sup> Shelly P. Harrell, “A Multidimensional Conceptualization of Racism Related Stress: Implications for the Well-Being of People of Color,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 70, no. 1, (2000), 43.



nature of reality and the evaluation of that reality.’”<sup>124</sup> Thus, cultural myths can encourage dominant cultural cohesion, and create racialized boundaries around group membership. Additionally, the media can be used to challenge dominant perceptions of racial groups, which often support bias, prejudice, and structural racism. For example, Condit found that to meet the economic and labor demands of World War II, the public discourse on the character of Blacks shifted, moving from inferior and subhuman to “fully human.”<sup>125</sup> Black soldiers were “heroic” and “brave;” black laborers were “pleasant,” “not inferior,” and “accustomed to hard work.”<sup>126</sup> Thus, the media can use counter narratives to combat entrenched, racialized cultural myths. This process can ultimately provide more opportunity for the inclusion of marginalized racial groups by changing racial attitudes and beliefs.

In this dissertation, by reflecting on the history of Southern racial hierarchies, as described in Chapter 1, and analyzing the influence of cultural myths, as described in this chapter, we can explore how the intersection of racial, class, gender, and regional identities impact the construction and perpetuation of inequality in the social organization of Southern life. Specifically, this dissertation highlights how through the college press, Southern white, elite women framed the

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<sup>124</sup> Smith, *Myth, Media*, 137.

<sup>125</sup> Celeste Michelle Condit, "Democracy and Civil Rights: The Universalizing Influence of Public Argumentation," *Communication Monographs* 54 (March 1987): 1-18, 4.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

cultural myth of Southern distinctiveness in terms of their social identities to support their attitudes on desegregation and the Women's Liberation movement.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

Elite, white women's commentary on desegregation has frequently been overlooked in scholarly literature, but these women were often instrumental in shaping opinion in opposition or support of civil rights. Southern, elite white women, in particular, were often positioned as the moral and social leaders of Southern society. Through their leadership roles in civic organizations, church, and local associations, elite white women often set community standards and norms as well as cultural attitudes. There has been some scholarly literature on white college women's attitudes and beliefs during the 1950's and 1960's.<sup>127</sup> These works provide excellent historical references to understand white Southern women's immutable and shifting attitudes, beliefs, and values about their gender and racial identities during a time of fluctuating norms around domesticity, labor, and civil rights during the middle of the twentieth century. Yet, the role of the college press in shaping these beliefs and norms is not the central focus of this literature. In addition, none of these works provide an in-depth analysis of white women's views on desegregation during the mid-twentieth century. The most relevant work to this dissertation is the book, *The Past in the Present: Women's*

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<sup>127</sup> Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

*Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South*, authored by Amy McCandless.<sup>128</sup> McCandless, a scholar in Southern women's history, wrote her book to provide a more comprehensive history of Southern women's higher education, because prior works have simply characterized Southern women's colleges as, "as mere 'finishing schools' for the wealthy, and Southern black colleges as outmoded 'trade schools' for the poor."<sup>129</sup> In this book, McCandless, looks at the unique experience of both black and white students in the South throughout the Twentieth Century. Chapter 6 describes both black and white women's involvement and resistance to social protests taking place throughout the South from the 1950's through the 1970's. The liberalization of social restrictions, civil rights, free speech, and anti-war sentiments all inspired women's participation in social movements. McCandless also explores the constraints on this activism, such as social pressure and administrative rules. In Sara Evans' *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* Evans explores the involvement of women and some men in the New Left and Civil Rights movement in the early 1960's.<sup>130</sup> Although Evans book isn't limited to college women, the majority of the book covers the activities of both black and white college students and the student organizations that supported the Civil Rights Movement, such as SNCC. In Reneé Lansley's 2004 dissertation,

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<sup>128</sup> McCandless, *The Past*, 14.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 29.

“College women or college girls? Gender, sexuality, and in loco parentis on campus,” she explores how both white and black undergraduate women in the 1960’s and 1970’s protested against *in loco parentis* policies, with the goal of self-governance and more independence.<sup>131</sup> She argues that this movement on four campuses, Howard University, Ohio State University, Simmons College and Spelman College “emerged out of widespread civil rights activism” happening on campus.<sup>132</sup>

In Babette Faehmel’s *College Women In The Nuclear Age: Cultural Literacy and Female Identity, 1940-1960s*, Faehmel analyzes undergraduate women’s diaries, scrapbooks, and letters from the 1940’s and 1950’s to explore the relationship between college women, the construction of their female identity and Betty Friedan’s concept of the feminine mystique.<sup>133</sup> Faehmel found that women entered college with ambitions of a professional career outside of their homes. Yet, during their college years, “they embraced the notion that by virtue of their potential for motherhood, they had interests, views, and talents that differed significantly from those of men, and began to look at marriage and motherhood as essential prerequisites for happiness.”<sup>134</sup> In addition to these works

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<sup>131</sup> Renee N. Lansley, “College Women Or College Girls? Gender, Sexuality, and in Loco Parentis on Campus.” PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2004, Proquest 3160761.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 2.

<sup>133</sup> Babette Faehmel, *College Women In The Nuclear Age: Cultural Literacy and Female Identity, 1940-1960s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011)

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 2.

on white college women in the mid twentieth century, Gail S. Murray's work, *Throwing Off The Cloak of Privilege*, features essays from different authors on how white Southern women, as individuals and members of groups, advocated for the expansion of Civil Rights in the South.

A few works focus on the period following World War II, but include a chapter or reference to college women in the Civil Rights Era. In Linda Eisenmann's *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America, 1945–1965*, Eisenmann explores how college women received messages to pursue lives of domesticity and remain in the labor force in the era following World War II, arguing that many women stayed in the labor force.<sup>135</sup> Also, in Catherine Forslund, Christine Bruun, and Mary Weeks-Baxter's, *We Are a College at War: Women Working for Victory in World War II*, the authors examine the experience and attitudes of women during World War II at Rockford College, a women's college in Illinois, which became coeducational in 1955.<sup>136</sup> Although most of the book is about college women during World War II, Chapter 7, explores white women's attitudes about their future during the postwar period and the Civil Rights Era. As men returned from World War II, many of the jobs women held were terminated, and they returned to the domestic sphere. However,

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<sup>135</sup> Linda Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America, 1945–1965* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

<sup>136</sup> Catherine Forslund, Christine Bruun, and Mary Weeks-Baxter's, *We Are a College at War: Women Working for Victory in World War II* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010).

Forslund, Bruun, and Baxter note that in the 1960's these "women increasingly recognized the ways organizations such as unions could help reconstruct the lives of American workers and reshape the lives of American women," "joined efforts to work on a common cause" and "discovered the importance of working together as a group to speak out for what was important to them."<sup>137</sup>

Although much of this earlier work helps us to understand how college women's attitudes and beliefs around their identity shifted during time periods of fluctuating norms around gender, and in some instances race, none of this research focuses exclusively on the Civil Rights Era. As previously described, white college women, particularly in the South, were moral and social leaders in the Southern social hierarchy, setting cultural norms and boundaries. Thus, in a pivotal era of changing norms around gender and race, it is important to understand these elite, white women's attitudes on desegregation and the role, if any, they intended to play in supporting or rejecting desegregation efforts.

In this dissertation project, I bridge this gap in literature by exclusively focusing on college women's attitudes analyzing desegregation discourse in student newspapers from 1954 through 1970 at four women's colleges, which historically excluded black women from enrollment until the 1960's, Agnes Scott College, Columbia College, Meredith College, and Sweet Briar College. I also analyze how these students thought about their own identity and status within the

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 188-190.

changing racial paradigm of higher education. The period of analysis begins with the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown* in 1954 and continues through the end of 1970. This period covers crucial moments in higher education and civil rights history, such as the Greensboro sit-ins and founding of SNCC in 1960, the creation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, which denied federal funds to schools practicing racial discrimination in admissions, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968. To contextualize the discourse in the student newspapers in relationship to their historical time periods, this project is supplemented with secondary literature on higher education history, Southern history, and women's history. These sources help support the understanding of relevant national and cultural events taking place in the time period of the newspaper articles.

My data include a collection of the student newspapers from 1954 through 1970 at the Women's Colleges, as well as bulletins and handouts about the colleges. These student newspapers and college documents are available in university archival records—either digitally or in the physical college archives, which required a visit to the colleges. In the two cases where the newspapers were digitized and searchable, at Agnes Scott College and Meredith College, I utilized keyword searches to collect articles on desegregation and integration. A list of these keywords is attached as Appendix A. In the other two cases, Columbia College and Sweet Briar College, I read all of the newspapers from 1954 through 1970, and identified the articles on desegregation and the integration of black

women, which reflected the same keywords as used in the digital search. The keyword and manual search resulted in a collection of five hundred and fifty-six newspaper articles, which I read, catalogued, and analyzed.

My methodological process began with a qualitative applied thematic analysis of the texts of the student newspapers. Qualitative applied thematic analysis is a process for analyzing qualitative data employing themes—“pattern[s] found in the information.”<sup>138</sup> Themes, or in the case of media, “frames” are identified from explicit codes, which the researcher develops inductively or deductively from the data. Qualitative content analysis has been utilized by social scientists to “make inferences about the values, sentiments, intentions, or ideologies of the sources of authors of the communications.”<sup>139</sup> My thematic analysis utilized Boyatzis’ four-step approach, which includes sensing themes, encoding the themes reliably, developing codes and interpreting the data and themes in the context of a theory.<sup>140</sup> Through this process I discovered one major frame in students’ desegregation discourse—the myth of “Southern distinctiveness,” along with the sub-frames of Southern Heritage, Evangelical Christianity, and the Southern Belle ideal. These concepts became the basis of the analytical chapters, Chapters 4, 5, and 6, respectively. In each of the chapters, I

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<sup>138</sup> Richard Boyatzis, *Transforming qualitative information*. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998), 4.

<sup>139</sup> Rebecca Morris, “Computerized content analysis in management research: a demonstration of advantages and limitations,” *Journal of Management*, 20, no. 4: (1994): 903-931, 904. 1

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*



highlight the few dissenting voices against the majority discourse of students. The concept of “majority discourse” means that at least 75% of the student newspaper articles supported the frames analyzed in each chapter.

Once these frames were identified and catalogued, I utilized critical discourse principles to expand my findings. This critical analysis shows how the frames supported and challenged social and cultural power hierarchies. In analyzing the student newspapers, I utilized the principles of Stuart Hall’s cultural and critical media practice, considering questions, such as “Through which representational practices are racial and ethnic difference and ‘otherness’ signified?” “What are the ‘discursive formations,’ the repertoires or regimes of representation, on which the media are drawing when they represent difference?” and “How is the representation of ‘difference’ linked with questions of power?”<sup>141</sup> This paper expands on the literature in critical media studies by exploring the construction of gender, racial and class attitudes within the unique media environment of women’s colleges. By critically examining student newspapers during the changing racial paradigm of higher education, we can learn a lot about how cultural norms and boundaries around social identities are generated, reproduced and contested in the media.

### The Women’s Colleges

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<sup>141</sup> Stuart Hall, “The Spectacle of the Other,” in *Discourse Theory and Practice*, ed. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates (London, Sage Publications, 2001), 328.

The colleges in this project include Agnes Scott College (Decatur, Georgia), Columbia College (Columbia, South Carolina), Meredith College (Raleigh, North Carolina), and Sweet Briar College (Sweet Briar, Virginia), collectively, the “Women’s Colleges.” During the height of the women’s college explosion in the late 19th and early 20th century, there were over fifty-two public and private women’s colleges in operation in the United States. Today, only thirteen four-year, residential women’s colleges operate in the South.<sup>142</sup> All of these existing women’s colleges are private institutions. Many of the public colleges for women in the South were founded as normal and industrial schools and all of these have closed or merged with historically men’s colleges. Most of these institutions were closed by the end of the Great Depression or merged with men’s colleges in the middle of the twentieth century. Of the thirteen women’s colleges in operation, twelve of them are non-religious liberal arts colleges while one, Judson College in Alabama, is a Christian college. Of the thirteen Women’s Colleges, eleven historically excluded black women from their undergraduate colleges until the late 1960’s, while two of them, Bennett College and Spelman College are HBCUs.

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<sup>142</sup> (1) Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Georgia; (2) Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina, (3) Brenau University, Gainesville, Georgia; (4) Columbia College, Columbia, South Carolina; (5) Converse College, Spartanburg, College; (6) Hollins University, Roanoke, Virginia; (7) Judson College, Marion, Alabama; (8) Mary Baldwin University, Staunton, Virginia; (9) Meredith College, Raleigh, North Carolina; (10) Salem College, Winston-Salem, North Carolina; (11) Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia; (12) Sweet Briar College, Winston-Salem, North Carolina; and (13) Wesleyan College, Macon, Georgia.

For similarity across cases, I selected four of the ten southern women's colleges with the following characteristics: non-religious, private, residential campus, and liberal arts curriculum. Since this project concerns elite, gendered dominant narratives from white women, I excluded Bennett College and Spelman College, the two HBCUs, from the cases.<sup>143</sup> These narratives were particularly important to consider as these women often had the ability to carry their views into other power structures. Also, I wanted the sample of colleges to be representative of all of the Southern states that still have women's colleges in operation. These

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<sup>143</sup> Although much work on college women has focused on white women, none of these works holistically analyzed their attitudes and behaviors in opposition to and support of desegregation. On the other hand, there has been some scholarly literature on black women and desegregation. For works on black college women, their experiences with desegregation, and Civil Rights and feminists movements, see for example Betty Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin, eds. *Sisters in the struggle: African American women in the civil rights and Black Power movements*. (New York: New York University Press, 2001), Alicia C. Collins, "Black women in the academy: An historical overview," In *Sisters of the academy: Emergent black women scholars in higher education*, Reitemetse Obakeng Mabokela and Anna L. Green, eds. (Sterling: Stylus, 2001): 28.41, Patricia Collins, *Fighting words: Black women and the search for justice. Women in the civil rights movement: Trailblazers and torchbearers, 1941–1965* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), Stephanie Evans, *Black women in the ivory tower, 1850–1954*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007). V. P. Franklin, "Hidden in plain view: African American women, radical feminism, and the origins of women's studies programs, 1967–1974," *The Journal of African American History* 87, (2002): 433–45, Paula Giddings, *When and where I enter: The impact of black women on race and sex in America* (New York: Quill William Morrow, 1984). Elizabeth Higginbotham, *Too much to ask: Black women in the era of integration* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

states include, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. Since Alabama's only women's college is a religious college, I excluded it from the sample. Thus, the four college cases provide an excellent cross-section of the elite private women's colleges operating in the mid-twentieth century in the south, and that still exist today as women's colleges. A comparative chart of the women's colleges' is attached as Appendix B. I chose these cases to get a better representation of Southern women's colleges, than would be generated from one case.

#### The Women's Colleges— Agnes Scott College

On July 17, 1889, ten men, members of the Decatur Presbyterian Church, met at the manse and resolved to establish a grammar school for young girls, with the "fixed purpose of becoming eventually a standard college."<sup>144</sup> Agnes Scott College ("Agnes Scott"), originally established as Decatur Female Seminary, was opened in 1889 in Decatur, Georgia. George Washington Scott, a businessman, Frank Henry Gaines, a reverend, and a group of Presbyterian leaders founded the college. Frank Henry Gaines, the first president of Agnes Scott, George W. Scott, the school's first major benefactor, and Milton A. Candler and Robert C. Word Ramspeck, state and national congressmen, were among the church members present to establish Agnes Scott College, originally established as Decatur Female

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<sup>144</sup> Agnes Scott, "Agnes Scott, 1889-1914." *Agnes Scott Bulletin*, May 1914, 1. Box Agnes Scott Bulletins, A.S. Archives.

Seminary. These men observing the lack of quality education in the Decatur area and generally in the South for girls, resolved to open a school although, “there was no very great interest at that time in education, less in Christian education, and still less in a school for girls.” On September 17, 1889, the school opened as Decatur Female Seminary, with the backing of \$5,000. The Pastor of the church went to Virginia to recruit the first administrators and staff, including a principal, assistant principal, two literary teachers, a piano teacher and a teacher of “Art and Physical Culture.”<sup>145</sup> Agnes Scott’s first president, Frank Gaines, a white Presbyterian minister, led the college for 34 years, up until his death in 1923.<sup>146</sup> Agnes Scott’s first board of trustees consisted of all white men and the school was led by white male presidents from its founding in 1889 until 1982. Agnes Scott was the first women’s college in Georgia to receive its accreditation as a college, which occurred in 1907.

In its first official year as a college in 1906, Agnes Scott had 130 residential students and 31 non-residential students.<sup>147</sup> By 1954 its enrollment had reached 455 residential students and 83 day students, with students coming from twenty-six states and the District of Columbia.<sup>148</sup> Students were overwhelmingly from the

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<sup>145</sup> Agnes Scott College, *Agnes Scott College: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 1; Agnes Scott College, *The Story of Agnes Scott College*, 1.

<sup>146</sup> Agnes Scott, *Memorial for Frank Gaines, D.D., LL.D., 1923*. Presidential Papers Collection, Frank Henry Gaines, Box 3: Gaines, F.H. Publications, A.S. Archives.

<sup>147</sup> Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 171.

<sup>148</sup> *Annual Report of the President of Agnes Scott College, 1954-1955*, p. 19.

South—forty-four percent of students came from Georgia alone.<sup>149</sup> Only two percent of students came from Northern states.<sup>150</sup> Most students who enrolled in 1954 were Presbyterian, followed by Methodist, 43% and 23%, respectively. The total cost of attendance in 1954, was \$1275, which included tuition, room and board, and extra benefits, such as healthcare, laundry, and physical education.<sup>151</sup> Most students were capable of paying the full tuition, with only twenty-six percent of students receiving a discounted rate or a scholarship.<sup>152</sup> A \$100 discount was offered to students whose fathers were ministers. By 1970, the total cost of attendance increased to \$3,050, which included tuition, room and board, and student fees.

There were some significant changes in the College Bulletin, which it utilized for recruitment, between 1954 and 1970. In 1954, the College expressed, “Agnes Scott was founded by Presbyterians and has always had a close relationship to that church. The College is not controlled or supported by the church, however, and special care is taken not to interfere in any way with the religious views or church preference of students.”<sup>153</sup> Although the school acknowledged its religious origins, it wanted to distance itself from one particular religion, and hold itself out as a nondenominational, liberal arts college. This had

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> *Agnes Scott College Bulletin*, Catalogue Number, 1953 -1954.

<sup>152</sup> *Annual Report of the President of Agnes Scott College*, 1954-1955, p.5

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 14

been the case since its early years as a College, when early leaders formed a prayer covenant to pray for “unconverted students,” but students were generally given great latitude in determining their own level of Christian sentiment.<sup>154</sup> In the Catalogue for the 1900-1901 school year, the College expressed that, “Special care, however, is taken not to interfere in any way with the religious views or preferences of students from families belonging to other denominations, or to no denomination, all of whom are welcome.”<sup>155</sup>

By 1970, the College Bulletin, still emphasized its nondenominational status, but also became explicit about its acceptance of students without consideration of race. In the 1969-1970 College Bulletin, the College expressed. “Agnes Scott was founded by Presbyterians. It has always maintained a close relationship to the Presbyterian Church, but it is not controlled or supported by it. Students and faculty are selected without regard to ethnic origin or religious preference.”<sup>156</sup> In a Board of Trustees Meeting on February 22, 1962, the Board issued its non-discrimination admissions policy, explaining, “Applicants for admission to Agnes Scott College are considered on evidence of the applicant's character, academic ability and interests, and readiness for effective participation in the life of our relatively small Christian college community that is largely residential. Applicants deemed best qualified on a consideration of a combination

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<sup>154</sup> Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education*, 170.

<sup>155</sup> *Agnes Scott College Bulletin*, Catalogue Number 1900-1901.

<sup>156</sup> *Agnes Scott College Bulletin*, Catalogue Number 1969-1970.

of these factors will be admitted without regard to their race, color, or creed.” This statement was issued in response to an application for admissions by a black candidate in December of 1961. Even though the Board issued this statement, the college administration explained that it would not consider black applicants for the 1962 academic year “in view of the policy of the College to give notice well in advance of any major changes in practice or procedure.”<sup>157</sup> Three years later, in 1965, Agnes Scott enrolled its first black student, Gay Johnson McDougall.<sup>158</sup> McDougall transferred from Agnes Scott after two years. McDougall said, “They weren’t ready for me and I wasn’t ready for them.”<sup>159</sup> The first black graduate of Agnes Scott, Edna Lowe Swift, received her degree in 1971.<sup>160</sup> When asked about her experience on campus for a campus article, Lowe said that most upperclassmen were kind to her, and that “to the majority of freshman she was just another freshman.”<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Agnes Scott College, *Report of the President for the Year Ended in June 30, 1962*, p. 9

<sup>158</sup> “Agnes Scott’s First Black Student to Receive Honorary Degree,” May 5, 2010, accessed February 2, 2016, <https://AgnesScottscott.edu/news/archive/2010/05/AgnesScott-scotts-first-black-student-to-receive-honorary-degree.html>.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. and “Alumnae Relations: Leadership,” accessed October 5, 2013, <http://www.AgnesScottscott.edu/alumnae/leadership.html>.

<sup>161</sup> “Lowe Comments, Negro’s Plight on White Campus,” *The Profile*, May 24, 1968, p. 6



Agnes Scott's student newspaper has been in operation since 1916. It was the *Agonistic* from 1916-1939, the *Agnes Scott News* from 1939-1964, and the *Profile* since 1964.

#### The Women's Colleges—Columbia College

In 1854, the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church established Columbia Female College. It is the oldest women's college in South Carolina that is still operational as a women's college. Although it was founded in 1854, the first term of the College began in 1859, with one hundred and twenty-one students enrolling. In 1860, thirteen students made up the graduation class of Columbia Female College. The institution closed its doors in February of 1865 at the beginning of the Reconstruction Era because of the toil of the Civil War. It operated as a hotel for eight years and reopened on January 1, 1873 as a college. Columbia College has been in operation ever since 1873, despite three fires in 1895, 1909, and 1964. In 1904, Columbia Female College, simplified its name to Columbia College. Columbia College became fully accredited in 1938 by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

By 1954, enrollment at Columbia College had reached its highest level since it opened 100 years prior, with four hundred and seventy full-time students, almost one hundred more than the previous year.<sup>162</sup> In its first 100 years of

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<sup>162</sup> "Enrollment Reaches All Time Height," *The Post Script*, September 29, 1954, p. 1., C.C. Archives.

operation, Columbia College had graduated over six thousand students.<sup>163</sup> The women attending Columbia College were not necessarily from the local area of Columbia or broadly, Richland County, but were overwhelming South Carolinians and Southerners. For example, out of the two hundred freshmen enrolling in 1958, ninety-four percent were from South Carolina, five percent from the South and one percent from the Northeast, which included Betty Ann Stackhouse from New York City and Pattie Jane Chaffin from Boston.<sup>164</sup> Just like at Agnes Scott, Columbia College students were overwhelmingly Southerners.

Columbia College had strong ties to the Methodist Church, as it was its founding organization. In addition, the majority of students attending Columbia College were associated with the Methodist Church. For example, of the incoming freshman of 1954, Methodists made up sixty-one percent of the class.<sup>165</sup> Daughters of ministers qualified for a huge deduction off the costs of attending Columbia College, generally half off the tuition costs and often qualified for scholarships directly from the Methodist Church. In 1955, the rate for full-time attendance per year was about \$400 less than Agnes Scott's cost of attendance at

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<sup>163</sup> "Vital Statistics Show Present Status of C.C.," *The Post Script*, January 19, 1955, p. 1, 4. C.C. Archives.

<sup>164</sup> "200 Freshman Enter For Fall Semester," *The Post Script*, October 19, 1958, p. 2, C.C. Archives.

<sup>165</sup> "Enrollment Reaches All Time Height," *The Post Script*, September 29, 1954, p. 1. C.C. Archives.

\$848.50—\$340 in tuition and fees, \$500 for room and board, and \$8.50 for “accident and hospital insurance.”<sup>166</sup>

Columbia’s student newspaper, *The Post Script* was first published on September 24, 1945. It was started as an experiment and fellow students were asked to put their “honest opinions, criticisms, and just anything” they’d like to contribute to the newspaper in the box “attached to the Post Office door.”<sup>167</sup> From 1954 through 1970, the *Post Script* was not published as a daily newspaper, as was the case at the other Women’s Colleges, but generally issued twice a month. The paper was widely circulated on campus because a circulation staff delivered the paper to every residential student and staff of the college. During the Civil Rights Era, the length of the *Post Script* ranged from four to eight pages, with most issues being four or six pages. Although *The Post Script* focused mainly on campus life between 1954 and 1970, it did feature some articles and editorials on national and international events. In the 1960’s when many student editors openly confronted their school’s administration about acting in loco parentis and suppressing speech because of Cold War concerns, *The Post Script* editors maintained that they singularly had editorial control of their student newspaper, without administration intrusion. In one article published in 1963, the editors noted that, “During the time we have been here, the administration has given us a free hand to print what and

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<sup>166</sup> “Expenses, Scholarships and Awards,” *Columbia College Bulletin*, 1955 and 1956, September 1955. C.C. Archives.

<sup>167</sup> “Contributions, Criticism, ‘N Stuff,” *The Post Script*, September 24, 1945, C.C. Archives.

how we please. Our relations with each other haven been pleasant and friendly. They have always told us they didn't want to tell us or to dictate to us what and how we publish."<sup>168</sup> With this freedom, the editors often explicitly pleaded with students to send in comments or letters to the editors that openly debated controversial topics or responses that offered differing opinions to the printed articles.

*The Post Script* was published less frequently than the other College papers and also contained fewer articles about desegregation. Like the other college newspapers, the 1960's saw an increase in desegregation news articles at Columbia College, but they still numbered less than the other schools. Although the admission of the first black full-time student in 1966, Lillian Irene ("Bunny") Woods (now, Bunny Woods Jones) did make the college press, the integration was mentioned as part of an article about Columbia College's advances in race relations, and the need to shed prejudices. In a 1966 article, one editor explains:

It seems that due to the events of the past years, we have begun to gradually move toward acceptance of the Negro and the realization that violence is futile...Columbia College has already seen its day for the beginning of the process of integration. A number of Negroes have participated in the workshop programs for the past two summers with no repercussion. We are now on the threshold of another transition—the day when we will have a Negro girl who will attend CC as a dorm student. This student has been accepted and she will begin her career at CC in the fall. Because CC is a Christian college we feel that her students will accept this girl in accordance with the Christian principles of love. It has already been proven that we are willing because of the fine spirit evidenced in the events of the

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<sup>168</sup> "Responsibility Is Ours," *The Post Script*, October 25, 1963, p. 2, C.C. Archives.

past two summers and through the comments of those students who are aware that we are to have a Negro student in the fall. However, prejudice can still remain masked behind an interior wall of indifference. We must tear this wall down if we are going to offer this girl the life that she deserves as a college student and a human being.<sup>169</sup>

The lack of numerous articles in the student paper on the integration of Woods could be in part because of the influence of President and Reverend Robert Wright Spears. Spears served as the President of the college from 1951 through 1977 and denounced, hate groups such as the KKK in his ministry. Concerning the integration of Woods, Spears noted that integration occurred without, “fanfare.”<sup>170</sup> When asked by a reporter to cover the event, Spears declined to have Woods’ arrival photographed. He explained that the school wanted to “treat the first applicant exactly as we would any other. We wanted to integrate smoothly: no embarrassment for the student, only genuine acceptance by the College community.”<sup>171</sup> Spears didn’t want the event considered “big news.”<sup>172</sup>

When describing her first experience meeting Spears on college move-in day, Woods recounted that Spears left a conversation he was engaged in, ran over to her family’s car and exclaimed, “I just want to introduce myself and tell you how happy we are to have you here. We are proud to have you as part of our

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<sup>169</sup> “Georgia Riot: Students See True Self,” *The Post Script* July 26, 1966, p. 2.

<sup>170</sup> Robert Wright Spears, *One In The Spirit, Ministry for Change in South Carolina* (Columbia: R.L. Bryan Company, 1997), 102.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

family. My door is always open.”<sup>173</sup> On campus, Woods found herself extremely lonely on campus. She was placed in a suite by herself, which usually houses four students, and only interacted with a few students through her participation in the campus choir. She married the next year and left the college. The impetus to integrate was furthered by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and for the first time, in 1964, the school added a non-discrimination clause in its college bulletin in compliance with Federal Law. Gloria Jean Grainger, a transfer student from the University of South Carolina, became the first black graduate of Columbia College’s undergraduate program and graduated in 1969. Out of all of the Women’s Colleges in the sample, Columbia College was the second college to admit a black student into their undergraduate program.

#### The Women’s Colleges—Meredith College

Meredith College was chartered in 1891 and opened in Raleigh, North Carolina in September 1899 as the Baptist Female University. In 1905 it became the Baptist University for Women, and finally, in 1909 to Meredith College. The college was accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1921. The college was founded by the North Carolina Baptist Convention under a resolution presented by Thomas Meredith, to build “a female seminary of high order that should be modeled and conducted on strictly religious principles, but

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<sup>173</sup> Rachel Haynie, “First African-American student to attend Columbia College recalls her experience,” *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate*, August 2000.

that should be, so far as possible, free from sectarian influences.”<sup>174</sup> In 1954, the articulated purpose of Meredith College was to

develop in its students the Christian attitude toward the whole of life, and to prepare them for intelligent citizenship, home-making, graduate study, and for professional and other fields of service. Its intention is to provide not only through instruction, but also culture made perfect through the religion of Jesus Christ. These ideals of academic integrity and religious influence have always been cherished at Meredith.<sup>175</sup>

This same purpose was reiterated, sixteen years later in the 1970 Course Catalogue. The school was more involved in students’ religious development, than at Agnes Scott. For example, in 1954, students were required to attend chapel services 5 times a week, and all students, except seniors had to attend Sunday school and church. The fees for tuition and room and board were \$795 in 1954, considerably less than all of the other Women’s Colleges. In 1970, the fees were \$2,400 for tuition and room and board.

In its first official year as a college, Meredith had 180 students register on the first day.<sup>176</sup> By 1954 its enrollment had reached 602 students with the overwhelming majority of students coming from North Carolina—ninety-one percent of students.<sup>177</sup> In that same year, only six students were from Northern states. By 1970, 946 students were enrolled and most of this student body was from North Carolina just as it was the case in 1954. Seventy-three percent of

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<sup>174</sup> *Meredith College Bulletin*, 1954, p. 15.

<sup>175</sup> *Meredith College Bulletin*, 1954, p. 14

<sup>176</sup> Mary Lynch Johnson, *A History of Meredith College*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1972), 57

<sup>177</sup> *Meredith College Bulletin*, 1954, p. 90.

students were from North Carolina, with just 1.5% of the student body hailing from the North.

In September 1962, the Board of Trustees had voted to accept “qualified women students, upon recommendation by the office of admissions, without regard to race or national origin.”<sup>178</sup> In a faculty meeting one month later, the faculty made the announcement, adopting the following resolution: “That we express to the trustees our appreciation of their action regarding the admission of Negro students and assure them of our desire to cooperate in the implementation of the decision.” The first black students came to Meredith in 1968, transfers from St. Augustine, an HBCU in Raleigh. Two years later, there were eleven black students, one of which was Gwendolyn Matthews Hilliard who graduated in 1971. In Meredith’s institutional histories, there is very little written about the desegregation of Meredith’s campus. In fact, in the 497-page institutional history by Mary Lynch Johnson there is only a page and a half dedicated to the subject.

Meredith’s student newspaper, the *Herald*, formally the *Twig*, has been in operation since 1921. The first article in *The Twig* was published on April 22, 1921, with the aim to:

inform, to create interest, and to mold public sentiment...It is to record the happenings of interest to them on the campus and off the campus. It serves to announce social, political, religious and athletic items. As a result of knowledge, interest and enthusiasm are created. College spirit may be raised to the nth degree, fostered by a concrete expression of its ideas and ideals. Probably the greatest work of a paper is the molding of public

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<sup>178</sup> Johnson, *A History of Meredith*, 286.



sentiment... The ideals which a college stands for are the products of the sentiment which prevails among the student body. The character of a college and the reputation it has in a community are dependent upon the sentiment. It shall, therefore, be the aim of this newspaper to rightly inform its readers, to create abundant and wholesome enthusiasm and to mold a helpful and progressive public sentiment.

### The Women's Colleges—Sweet Briar College

Sweet Briar was chartered in 1901, and opened in 1906 on the site of the former Sweet Briar Plantation in Lynchburg, Virginia on 3,000 acres in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Sweet Briar was founded from the bequeath of Indiana Fletcher Williams, a widower, and owner of the Sweet Briar Plantation who died in April 1899. In her will, Williams established that her estate would be used to create a “school or seminary to be known as the ‘Sweet Briar Institute’ for the education of white girls and young women.” By 1970, this provision of the Will was excluded from the Catalogue’s description of the school’s purpose. The first Board of Trustees consisted of four men—the former manager of the Sweet Briar Plantation and three Episcopalian ministers. At the first Board of Directors meeting, it was established that the school should “be free from denominational control but distinctly religious in character, and that it should maintain the highest college standards, uniting classical and modern ideals of education.”<sup>179</sup> There were fifty-one students in the first class of Sweet Briar, fifteen of which were day students. Sweet Briar was an original member of the Seven Sisters of the South, an elite group of Southern women’s colleges that

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<sup>179</sup> *Bulletin of Sweet Briar College Catalogue*, 1954, p. 20

compared themselves to the prestigious original Seven Sisters Colleges in the Northeast. Sweet Briar was accredited in 1920 by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

In 1954, the largest freshman class in Sweet Briar's campus enrolled, with a total of one hundred and ninety-nine students hailing from thirty-four states.<sup>180</sup> Most of the students were from Virginia, New York and Texas—thirty-three from Virginia, twenty-four from New York, and fifteen from Texas.<sup>181</sup> Unlike Agnes Scott College, Columbia College, and Meredith College where students mainly came from the South, the students at Sweet Briar were geographically diverse. By, 1956, students from the Northeast represented the largest percentage of enrolled students, making up 42% of the total student body. When Sweet Briar's Director of Admissions suggested that at least fifty percent of its class come from the South, students disagreed. They argued, "One of the attractive things about Sweet Briar now is that it is not regional. Conservative, yes, but the conservatism is not conservatism of the South."<sup>182</sup> In 1954, the cost for tuition, room, board, and student fees was \$2,000. In 1970, the comprehensive fee for admission, including tuition, room, board and student fees was \$3,650.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> "Class of '58 is largest In History," *The Sweet Briar News*, October 6, 1954, p. 3.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> "Should Geography Be Significant," *The Sweet Briar News*, December 7, 1955, p. 2

<sup>183</sup> *The Bulletin of Sweet Briar College*, 53 no. 7 (1970), 16.

In November 1963, the Sweet Briar Board of Directors voted to seek the court's counsel on whether they could admit students without regards to their race. In August 1964, the circuit judge ruled that the Will was not ambiguous, and therefore it should be enforced as written. In a meeting on June 11, 1965, the Board of Directors and Board of Overseers voted to appeal the decision and unanimously authorized signing the "Assurance of Compliance" under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which ensured compliance with its prohibition against "discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." In 1965, editors of the Sweet Briar News announced that it "supports the Board's action and stands behind the college in its effort to settle the question of the will."<sup>184</sup> On April 25, 1966, the college received a federal temporary restraining order against Virginia's Attorney General and the Commonwealth Attorney of Amherst County restraining them from enforcing the racial restriction of Williams' will that the school would educate white women only. Finally, on July 17, 1967, a three-judge U.S. District Court in Charlottesville entered an order enjoining Attorney General and the Commonwealth Attorney from enforcing the racially restrictive covenant in the will.

In 1966, Marshalyn Yeargin-Allsop ("Penny") became the first black student at Sweet Briar College; she graduated in 1968. She was a transfer student

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<sup>184</sup> "On Integration," *The Sweet Briar News*, October 6, 1965, p. 2

from Bennett College, a black women's HBCU. In explaining why she decided to come to Sweet Briar as the first black student, she explained:

When I applied to SBC, I wanted to go to a better college. Bennett had one academic building and two labs for biology and chemistry. I was not even aware of the issue about breaking the clause in the endowment in order to admit Negroes; I didn't come just to be the first Negro here; I wasn't sent by the NAACP to stir up trouble; I simply wanted a better education and Sweet Briar offered it.<sup>185</sup>

When describing the atmosphere of the Sweet Briar campus, Penny described the campus as pleasant. She explained, "I have never felt any open hostility at Sweet Briar, perhaps a subtle indifference...Of course there have been occasions when I have been reminded that I am different from the rest of the girls, such as Fall weekend my junior year. And I was disappointed that the Junior class this year would hold their Banquet at a segregated club. I don't want to be the exception; people should consider the issues involved and make a definite policy." She also explained,

When I first arrived everyone was extremely nice to me, which I really appreciated because I didn't know if people would be throwing eggs at me or burning crosses or what...As I adjusted to life here, however, some people were overly nice and it made me feel awkward; I wanted them to feel natural with me, because I'm a person as well as a Negro. Sometimes it's just as bad to be included in activities because you're black as to be excluded.<sup>186</sup>

Yeargin-Allsop also articulated that she wanted to be treated like a regular student, and not as a token or representative of the black race. As the only black student on

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<sup>185</sup> "Penny Yeargin Evaluates S.B.C.," *The Sweet Briar News*, May 17, 1968, p. 5

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

campus, she often encountered this treatment as a representative of the black community. Yeargin-Allsop argued, “I don’t want to be a symbol of the Negro race on campus. When Dr. King was assassinated, people felt sorry for me. This isn’t right. He should be mourned because he was a great man, not a great Negro.” When discussing the future of higher education for black students, Yeargin-Allsop argued, “I will let my daughter make her own choice in regard to colleges. When one considers the better education at the predominately white schools, one must consider the psychological effects of being left out socially. It can very depressing and lonely.”<sup>187</sup>

One of the most active groups for racial equality on Sweet Briar’s campus, was the Committee for the Understanding of Racial Attitudes (CURA) founded in 1967, and active until 1970. In its first year, it raised the issue of discriminatory housing policies at hostess housing, for which the administration responded by making hostess housing non-mandatory, and providing a list of hostesses who accepted all Sweet Briar students without consideration of their race. CURA also sponsored a number of educational initiatives, including black film screenings, lectures, and book reviews. They worked with Admissions to help recruit black students from their hometowns and hosted visiting students who were considering Sweet Briar. They organized an exchange with a black college. They also organized an interdepartmental course on Black Studies. Nevertheless, after three

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

years CURA chose to disorganize, “leaving the scene in a very frustrated mood, realizing that it cannot alter peoples attitudes and that, despite its efforts, Sweet Briarites have not yet been confronted with their prejudices.”<sup>188</sup>

The Sweet Briar newspaper, *The Sweet Briar News*, was founded in 1927. The first issue was published on October 5, 1927. The paper was “conceived out of the need of Sweet Briar College for some publication to record campus news, to be a college publication, not merely the work of the comparatively few girls on the Staff.”<sup>189</sup> In 1957, the editors of *The Sweet Briar News* explained the role of a student newspaper,

We believe a newspaper should inform and educate. We want to be present all news, whether large or small, and to awaken an enthusiasm in each student for the events of her community and for the ideals for which her college stands. We will try to give each student a medium of communication in which she will find her interests and in which she will discover new interests.”<sup>190</sup> The editors applauded the school for changing its admission policy to allow the admittance of black students, and with the admittance of the first black student in 1966 “the college is at last breaking down a barrier which has heretofore isolated the community at large from any real and vital contact with members of that race.”<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> “CURA Leaving: Now It’s Up To You,” *The Sweet Briar News*, May 1, 1970, p. 2.

<sup>189</sup> “First Appearance,” *The Sweet Briar News*, October 5, 1927, p. 2

<sup>190</sup> “Enthusiasm and Trepidation,” *The Sweet Briar News*, April 10, 1957, p. 2

<sup>191</sup> “In the Way of a Compliment,” *The Sweet Briar News*, September 30, 1966, p. 2.

Subjects of student newspapers included, an upsurge in books missing from the library, Communism, and local activities in Lynchburg, and anything “from the situation in East Germany...to the newest trend in fashions.”<sup>192</sup>

#### Chapter 4: The Myth of Southern Distinctiveness—Southern Heritage & The Old South

In 1964, historian George B. Tindal, articulated:

The idea of the South—or more appropriately, the ideas of the South—belong in large part to the order of social myth. There are few areas of the modern world that have bred a regional mythology so potent, so profuse and diverse, even so paradoxical, as the American South.<sup>193</sup>

The myth of Southern distinctiveness is the idea that there is a distinct southern culture, identity, or way of being which manifests itself in the fabric of everyday Southern life and Southern institutions. There were three prominent aspects of Southern history that were utilized to support the controlling myth of Southern distinctiveness: the South’s agrarian economy maintained by slavery and the plantation system, the idea that the South had unique, regional interests which differed from national interests (ultimately supporting a States’ Rights agenda, secession, the Civil War, and resistance to federal intervention during the Civil Rights Era), and the South’s moral order, including manners and evangelical

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<sup>192</sup> “If No One Else Complains, We Will,” *The Sweet Briar News*, May 11, 1955, pg. 2, 4,

<sup>193</sup> George B. Tindall, “Mythology: A New Frontier in Southern History, in *The Idea of the South: Pursuit of A Central Theme*, ed. Frank E. Vandiver (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 3.

religion. The myth of Southern distinctiveness is not fixed, although certain dimensions of the myth reemerge or experience a rather strong continuity over time, such as the issue of States' Rights. Others lose considerable influence with economic, social, and political changes within and outside the region, such as evangelical religious support for the institution of slavery.

Tindall became one of the first scholars to explore the regional, historical, and sometimes paradoxical myths that produce the idea of Southern culture and Southern distinctiveness. The 1960's offered a very significant and unique time period to examine Southern culture as the racial paradigm was shifting in the South. Civil Rights activism and federal initiatives attempted to disrupt the stronghold of white supremacy, but its defenders fought back with unrestrained fervor. In various ways, during the Civil Rights Era, the myth of Southern distinctiveness was utilized to both disrupt the racial inequality of segregation and maintain the racial hierarchy of Southern institutions. After Tindall's article in 1964, many scholars in the 1960's and 1970's took up the Southern distinctiveness myth as a worthy subject of academic inquiry. They explored the roots of Southern distinctiveness, offering structural, social, psychological and political explanations for the rise and continuity of Southern distinctiveness mythology.<sup>194</sup> These

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<sup>194</sup> See for Example, Clement Eaton, *The Mind of the Old South* (1964), Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (1970), F. Garvin Davenport Jr., *The Myth of Southern History: Historical Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Southern Literature* (1970), Carl Neumann Degler, "The Foundations of Southern Distinctiveness," *The Southern Review*, 13 no. 2 (1977): 225-239, Jack Temple Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie: The South in the American Imagination* (1978), George B.



scholars also explored how the myth of Southern distinctiveness became embodied in literature, film, theater, and cultural artifacts, serving to reinforce political, economic, and social agendas. Some scholars analyzed how the use of visual and material culture served to further entrench the Southern distinctiveness myth in the minds of white Southerners. For example, Tara McPherson, Critical Studies Scholar, explained that, “the South is figured via a stock set of recurring icons, characters inhabiting stage sets of an imagined gentility and charm that makes other mobilizations and other emotional scripts difficult to imagine.”<sup>195</sup> Thus, even when counter-narratives seek to disrupt the myth of Southern distinctiveness, its longevity and entrenchment in Southern monuments, rituals, landscapes, and storytelling often impede alternative Southern discourses.

Most scholars argue that the myth of southern distinctiveness originates from allegories around southern heritage, which became crystalized during the Reconstruction Era. Southern historian, Charles Reagan Wilson, argues that the construction of southern heritage was based on real and imagined memories of the American Civil War experience, which became increasingly mythologized through the development of ritual celebrations, memorials, storytelling, parades,

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Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*, (1967), and Stephen A. Smith, *Myth, Media, and the Southern Mind* (1985).

<sup>195</sup> Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 76.

and monuments around the Civil War.<sup>196</sup> These rituals and artifacts served to legitimize and construct a sense of shared southern heritage for white southerners creating real and imagined boundaries around southern identity. After the Civil War, many white southerners supporting an agrarian economy, both the planter class and small farmers, felt at odds with a national collective. These Southerners embraced southern heritage as a way of life and a way to resist a national government, to develop a renewed sense of States' rights, and to mount a Jim Crow crusade, which fundamentally delineated Southern power along racial lines.

Wilson explains:

Defenders of a self-consciously 'southern' civilization after the Civil War came to use the term 'way of life' to indicate an ideological defense of a peculiar pattern of institutions and attitudes associated with the South. Whites saw their system of paternalistic white supremacy as the essence of a southern civilization, but the way of life included countless specific attitudes and customs rooted in cultural beliefs and practices and reified as a constructed social identity.<sup>197</sup>

Southern distinctiveness as a unique way of life became an integral part of the Southern imagination during the Reconstruction Era. It provided the ideological foundation for the cultural, social, and political beliefs and practices embedded in the American South and molded by white Southerners. Southern mythology became the "center of regional consciousness... nurturing a sense of difference

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<sup>196</sup> Charles Reagan Wilson, "Religion and the US South," *Southern Spaces*, March, 2004.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

between the South and other American places.”<sup>198</sup> This consciousness had enduring permanence. Over time, the myth and symbols of Southern heritage were strengthened by a resurgence of interest in literature and writings from the Old South. These were also “nurtured by the dominant oral traditions of storytelling and public oratory which translated the symbols and transmitted the drama for mass audience.”<sup>199</sup> Public speeches by prominent figures and popular songs, along with “exposure to and repetition of other value-laden symbols and rituals” also perpetuated the myth across time and distance.<sup>200</sup> Tindall describes the continuity of the Southern distinctiveness myth throughout American history, arguing that, “despite the consciousness of change, perhaps even more because of it, Southerners still feel a persistent pull toward identification with their native region as a ground for belief and loyalty.”<sup>201</sup> Indeed, as the legitimacy of the Southern racial hierarchy faced intense scrutiny during the Civil Rights Era, the myth of Southern distinctiveness experienced a powerful reemergence. Southern heritage was thought to be under siege.

#### The Women’s Colleges & The Myth of Southern Distinctiveness & Segregation

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<sup>198</sup> Charles Reagan Wilson, *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 4: Myth, Manners, and Memory* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 1.

<sup>199</sup> Smith, *Myth, Media*, 144, 145.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 137

<sup>201</sup> Tindal, *Mythology: A New Frontier*, 13.

From 1954 through the middle of the 1960's, one of the most prominent ways in which students discussed desegregation was by evoking a sentiment of Southern distinctiveness. Southern heritage was a central dimension of the myth of Southern distinctiveness that students utilized to support their opinions on desegregation. Southern heritage was the idea that Southerners had inherited an honorable and unique legacy, the Old Plantation South was a distinctly beautiful place and the Lost Cause of the Civil War was a noble element of Southern heritage. Segregation was considered an integral part of Southern heritage. As the Women's Colleges began considering integrating their campuses, students often explained that their resistance to desegregation was based on their Southern heritage. One Meredith student reflected this ideal, explaining "...because of my southern heritage I would not wish to room with a Negro student."<sup>202</sup> Segregation was often viewed as an ordained, necessary, and an organizing principle of Southern life, that was comfortable for all Southerners, including black Southerners.

As the desegregation of education become an area of national concern, Southern students at the Women's Colleges often sought to further entrench their position within a Southern geopolitical structure. During the early Civil Rights Era, students' discourse suggested that restoring what was regarded as a fractured South back to the Old South, where class and racial hierarchies were firmly

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<sup>202</sup> "Students View Integration," *Twig*, October 12, 1962, p. 3.

ordered in society, was a laudable goal. For these students, segregation was an integral part of Southern heritage. Bea Totten, a Sweet Briar Senior, articulated this feeling, as she discussed Sweet Briar's founding document, in which the founder, Indiana Fletcher Williams had articulated that the college serve the purpose of educating "white girls and women." At the time of Totten's article, Sweet Briar had initiated a court challenge to this racially restrictive covenant in its charter, seeking to render it unenforceable. Totten responded to these events with acceptance and reverence for the South's legacy of separate, but equal, explaining:

Sweet Briar was intended to be a private college and the will intended it to be segregated. There are plenty of colleges and universities on the same academic level as Sweet Briar where Negroes, could find entrance without difficulty. Furthermore, in this particular area of the South and in this state, in spite of the federal proclamation on segregation and civil rights, heritage of segregation is too deeply imbedded in people's minds and upbringings for them to be able to readily adapt to the socially integrated situation which would inevitably result from a socially integrated academic situation. The result of such a socially integrated situation could be equally uncomfortable for both whites and Negroes involved.<sup>203</sup>

For Totten, segregation *is* Southern heritage. By arguing that there were comparable black colleges to Sweet Briar in which black students could attend, Totten continued to validate the "separate but equal" ideal even in 1965. Segregation had presumably become so customary, that it was firmly entrenched as the proper social structure of the South. For her, all Southerners, are

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<sup>203</sup> "Students Give Opinion on Hearing, On Integration at Sweet Briar," *The Sweet Briar News*, March 17, 1965, p. 4

comfortable with segregation, including Blacks under the foot of Jim Crow. Just as “happy” slaves ostensibly accepted their position in the Old South, as pieces of chattel, black Southerners had apparently come to adapt to their inferior position in the Southern racial hierarchy.

Students articulated an admiration for the unwavering and enduring quality of the segregated, Old South, which guided their rejection of any changes to the racial hierarchy of the South. The element of tradition embodied a sense of continuity in maintaining the racial status quo. Students emphasized that “this is how we have always done things,” or we are “comfortable.” In one article, the *Agnes Scott News* reprinted an article from the University of Georgia’s *Red and Black* which retold the story of a Southerner who strongly supported the infrastructure of Jim Crow. The editor criticized this sentiment, but in doing so, validated segregation as a legitimate “custom” or “heritage” that Southerners would have to dispose of because it was wrong. The editor, Billy Mann declared:

What is there sacred about custom if that custom is wrong? “It’s just Southern custom,” I was told this weekend, “and they can’t change it just like that.” This bit of fallacious logic was presented as justification for the fine old Selma, Ala., tradition of making prospective Negro voters use a back door of the county courthouse to register. More logic was forthcoming. “If a nigra came to my house, do you think I would let him come to the front door? Heck, no, I wouldn’t.” “In fact one time one came to the front door, begging for something. I told him, I’ll see you around back. Then, at the back door, I told him, I couldn’t help him. “This is just the way it is in the South. They owe us that much respect.”<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> “Comment: Nation and World, Standing On Custom,” *Agnes Scott Profile*, February 24, 1965, p. 2.

This story emphasized the continuity of the Old South order of white supremacy, which was viewed as an entrenched custom. In the Civil Rights Era, black Southerners were supposed to remain in the same position as they were in in the Old South. They had to take the back door, and then be denied equal status when they showed up. Southern distinctiveness, based on Southern heritage, supported students' early opposition to desegregation and their positions as the guardians of Southern culture and order. Students often positioned themselves as the true insiders to the organization of the South, and positioned the federal government and Northern liberals as disingenuous outsiders seeking to disrupt the social order of the South.

In addition to the persistent association of segregation with Southern heritage, students also employed three mythic elements of the Southern Heritage ideal when defining Southern distinctiveness: the Lost Cause, the myth of the benevolent Old South, and the myth of the serene plantation. Through the college press, these elements of Southern distinctiveness were presented as unchallenged representations of normality in the South, as genuine elements of Southern culture. The choices of particular terms and rhetorical metaphors utilized in students' discourse reveal strong meanings about the importance of Southern distinctiveness to their conceptualization of themselves and that of others.

## The Lost Cause & The Defiant Rebels

Although it has been difficult to extrapolate a reliable count of Civil War deaths, recent estimates place the total around 752,000.<sup>205</sup> Of the total loss of life, it is estimated that the Confederacy lost a larger percentage of their soldiers than the Union—at least one-fourth of its military-age white men.<sup>206</sup> After the Civil War, the South had lost two-thirds of its wealth, two-fifths of its livestock, and half of its farming equipment.<sup>207</sup> Bridges, roads, and railways were severely damaged and many were rendered useless by Union soldiers. More than one third of the buildings in the South’s largest cities, including Atlanta and Richmond, were destroyed in the Civil War.<sup>208</sup> David Herbert Donald notes that throughout the South “there were shortages—shortages of capital, shortages of cash, shortages of seed, shortages of clothing and medicine.”<sup>209</sup> The Southern economic and physical infrastructure was decimated into “dead heaps of ruin—brick and dust.”<sup>210</sup> The Confederacy not only lost the physical battle of war, but also lost the opportunity for a separate Southern nation. As Southern white leaders, especially

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<sup>205</sup> J. David Hacker, “A Census-Based Count of the Civil War Dead,” *Civil War History*, 57, no. 4 (2011): 307 -348.

<sup>206</sup> James M. McPherson, *The War That Forged a Nation: Why the Civil War Still Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) 46, 47.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012) 10, 11.

<sup>209</sup> David Herbert Donald “A Generation of Defeat” in *From the Old South to the new: essays on the transitional South* ed. by Walter J. Fraser, Jr. and Winfred B. Moore, Jr. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 11

<sup>210</sup> Nelson, *Ruin Nation*, 10.



the elite planter class, considered the war's devastation they took on the task of rebuilding the South's physical landscape as well as its Southern identity. Charles Reagan Wilson explains how elites sought to rebuild this fractured society by developing a myth of the Lost Cause. Wilson explains, "Southern whites were divided by the war, but afterward politicians, ministers, writers, and other cultural leaders used the memory of the Lost Cause to construct an elaborate cult of the dead, dedicated to romantic nationalism, or in this case the regional remnants of a failed nationalism."<sup>211</sup> Through Civil War stories of loss, the ritualistic memorialization of the dead, and the use of "honor," "glory" and "just" phraseology alongside the cause of "States Rights," white Southern leaders utilized the myth of the Lost Cause to unify the masses of white Southerners around a cohesive Southern identity.

The myth of the Lost Cause embodied the story that "southern men had fought in defense of basic political principles, especially rights of property and self-determination, and that the Confederate defeat could only be attributed to overwhelming northern advantages in manpower and material."<sup>212</sup> The myth of the Lost Cause became a way to memorialize the Civil War and define the Confederate effort to secede from the nation as heroic. It became a way to maintain a sense of honor in the face of defeat. The cause of maintaining States'

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<sup>211</sup> Wilson, *The New Encyclopedia*, 1.

<sup>212</sup> H.E. Gully, *Women and the Lost Cause: preserving a Confederate identity in the American Deep South*, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 19 no. 2 (1993), 128, 129.

rights and sovereignty became commemorated as a just and worthy cause led by heroic Southern soldiers. Creating a myth around a collective ideal of loss, helped prevent a loss of cultural identity, which was perceived as being destroyed by Northern intrusion. Fearing the erosion of Southern sovereignty, stability, and cohesion, Southern leaders and elites centralized power for themselves by uniting the masses of white Southerners around a collective ideal of memory and pride.

The myth of the Lost Cause was reiterated and reborn in the wake of the Civil Rights era as white supremacy seemed to be eroding in the wake of *Brown*. The federal government through court decisions, law, mandates, and armed troops, was presumably encroaching on States' Rights, just as it had done before the Civil War. Confederate symbols served to unite white Southerners in defiance of desegregation mandates, and arouse fear in those seeking integration. On the segregated women's college campus, the myth of the Lost Cause romanticized a former land of the brave, where white men were valiant soldiers of the Civil War and stood up for the Southern way of life. One Columbia College student nostalgically expressed this sentiment, explaining, "We hold our heads high at the mention of words such as: Rebel, Southerner or History of the South; for we know that in years past great men, loyal and brave, have done something to prove the worthiness of our great land."<sup>213</sup> Historic defiance was presumed to be a Southern tradition that could be recalled in the face of a new threat of an overbearing federal

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<sup>213</sup> "History of the South Becomes A Reality in "Gone With the Wind," *The Post Script*, April 26, 1961, p. 4

government and Northern liberal outsiders. “Rebels” were honorable; they were true patriots who sought to preserve the pride of the South. The antebellum States’ Rights concept supported sectional separation as an inherent right reinforced by the 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment’s reservation of non-enumerated power to the States, such as the presumed right to secure ownership of slave property. The Lost Cause gained a second wave of momentum during the early Civil Right Era as students framed segregation as a Southern, States’ Rights issue and the federal government as overbearing.

#### Women’s College Students & The Lost Cause

Students at the Women’s Colleges, utilized the myth of the Lost Cause by invoking State sovereignty arguments about desegregation, mainly through opposing federal intervention and northern opinions on desegregation matters. First, for many students, the federal government was deemed an intrusive, outsider, eroding States’ Rights, just as it had seemingly done over a century prior. In desegregation discourse, the federal government was often viewed with extreme suspicion and contempt, invoking romanticisms of the Lost Cause. Students articulated that desegregation was a Southern problem, and thus, Southerners were the most equipped to take the lead, in their own way, and in their own time. In 1954, one Columbia College student, Betsy Shealy, explained that desegregation

was a “gradual process that is outside the bounds of federal jurisdiction.”<sup>214</sup> Shealy further argued, “It is a moral and a social issue that can and will be settled by us and by our children.”<sup>215</sup> Just as the potential loss of a southern dominated agrarian economy, slavery, and independent state government were seen as justifiable issues to initiate Southern secession; segregation was likewise seen as a Southern issue, worthy of fighting off federal intervention. Segregation, just like slavery before the Civil War, was not a facet of Southern organization, that white Southerners were ready to let be upended. The gradual pace in which desegregation should occur is exemplified by reference to future “children” who will have responsibility in handling desegregation.

In response to an integration survey in 1965, one Sweet Briar sophomore, Ann Mercer, explained:

Personally, I am opposed to integration at Sweet Briar College, the intention of the founder was that Sweet Briar exist for the education of white girls and young women... a private institute should not feel compelled by external forces and actions of public institutes of a similar nature. We live in a democracy not a socialistic state. Man’s life and education are not as yet controlled by the state. The students here made the decision to attend a private college rather than a public college.<sup>216</sup>

Channeling the Lost Cause battle against governmental intrusion, Mercer argues that private colleges should be excluded from authoritarian governmental control,

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<sup>214</sup> “Racial Issue Causes Unrest In Colleges,” *The Post Script*, January 22, 1954, p. 2.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> “Students Give Opinion on Hearing,” *The Sweet Briar News*, March 17, 1965, p. 4.

and have the ability to remain white, elite enclaves. The white, private college is positioned as a victim through the framing of the federal government as one of the “external forces” seeking to penetrate its rightful wall of privilege. As a victim, resistance to federal desegregation mandates became justified. What is particularly interesting is that Mercer used the concept of American democracy, to privilege independence and individualism, over the more egalitarian principles of democracy, namely freedom and equality for black Southerners. Mercer reflected on the school’s founding documents, without considering the fact that the documents were crafted on the former slave-owning Sweet Briar Plantation, which relegated black slaves to separate, subordinate spheres. Establishing the school as a white’s only women’s college continued the legacy of exclusion, where black women could only participate in campus life as the help. Even when students supported desegregation they often talked about it in Lost Cause terms. Regarding integration, one Sweet Briar student explained, “There are but two choices for the South; to acquiesce or to secede. Not many would advocate the latter solution. If not, shouldn’t we proceed apace with the former? The floodgates have been opening; there’s no damming up the waters of integration now.”<sup>217</sup> By referencing Southern secession, the student sets up the South as a metaphorical battlefield of integration versus segregation. From her perspective integration is winning, overtaking the landscape of the South, like floodwaters. Again, by using terms

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<sup>217</sup> “Commentary And Catharsis: Integration,” *The Sweet Briar News*, November 15, 1961, 2.

related to victimization, such as “acquiesce,” even in supporting desegregation, students reinforced the position of the Federal government as a tyrannical villain.

Students at the Women’s Colleges often sought to bolster and glorify regional separateness, privileging Southern identity over any conceptualizations of national identity, as the Confederates had done over a century before them. They saw the Federal government as seeking to deprive them of their individual rights to govern their own States in the best interest of their States. When seeking to criticize the federal government’s intrusion into Southern affairs, students often referenced the involvement of federal troops in securing the integration of black students into Southern colleges and universities. The integration of Ole Miss and UGA, were two of the most frequently discussed national events around desegregation that appeared in the student newspapers. On September 30, 1962, when James Meredith attempted to integrate the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) he was backed by U.S. Marshalls and U.S. Border Patrol agents, to insure his safety and preserve order. Two days prior, Meredith attempted to register for classes, but Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett and other state officials had blocked the entrance. In response to Meredith’s arrival and the presence of federal agents, a violent mob of white students waved Confederate flags, shouted racial epithets, and aggressively damaged property. By the end of the night, hundreds of people were injured and two people were murdered, including a French journalist covering the story. Even in the midst of the chaos, destruction, and death, several students utilized these events in their discourse to champion States’ Rights, as they

loathed the federal intervention. One Sweet Briar student, Babette Fraser declared:

I abhor the use of force by the federal government to change, in a few short years, a social pattern accepted for centuries, regardless of its moral justice or injustice... I decry the neglect of the federal government to recognize Mississippi's particular problem: she, along with Alabama, is the center of Negro population in the United States with Negroes constituting 40-45 percent of her total population. To insist on the immediate dissolution of so deep-rooted a tradition as segregation in a state with such a racial composition, is to invite chaos. As we have seen, chaos was only too glad to accept. If the federal government wishes to act in the behalf of the people, as the Constitution states it should it must desist from exploiting so delicate and tragic a situation as exists in Mississippi. It must, instead, allow the people of that sovereign state to resolve the issue at a speed indicated by their own particular problem.<sup>218</sup>

Using words such as “particular,” “sovereign,” and “tradition,” Fraser invoked the Lost Cause ideal, arguing that the South, was a distinct land, with unique concerns and traditions. The “deep-rooted” Southern racial hierarchy, in which blacks are relegated to the bottom rung, is equated with Southern tradition. By equating segregation with tradition, the student minimized its repressive and inherently unequal character, operating as the nadir of black Southern life. Segregation becomes equal to drinking sweet iced tea on the porch after the sweltering sun has set. The federal government as an outsider to this tradition, was not equipped to handle desegregation, as desegregation was viewed as a Southern concern. In fact, the federal government is again positioned as a victimizer, using “force” and “exploiting” the “delicate” South. The federal government thus, is to blame for

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<sup>218</sup> “Individuals Stress Points Of Interest In Racial Situation,” *The Sweet Briar News*, October 10, 1962, p. 2, 3.

disrupting the peace in the South—not the white supremacists who led the violent mob. Fraser also continued the idea that desegregation shouldn't be rushed, even though she was speaking seven years after the *Brown* decision.

One student who supported eventual desegregation even challenged whether the federal government had authority to intervene in the Ole Miss desegregation situation through the use of federal troops. She explained, “Our government was by its actions supporting a Supreme Court ruling, which was based on the fourteenth amendment. In actual fact, the Southern states were not members of the United States when this amendment was passed and were forced to ratify it after the Civil War.”<sup>219</sup> The myth of the Lost Cause gained continuity from Reconstruction through the modern day, as the student asserted that Southerners were not bound by the Reconstruction amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The discourses of victimization and force were again utilized to construct the federal government as a powerful dictator, over the defenseless South. As victims of federal force, Southerners were presumably compelled to ratify a provision that was at odds with the status quo of racial inequality in the South. Another Sweet Briar student berated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, under which private institutions risked losing federal funding if they practiced segregation, binding these institutions to the Equal Protection clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment. She explained:

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<sup>219</sup> “Opinion Brings Out State Sovereignty In Ole Miss Issue,” *The Sweet Briar News*, October 10, 1962, p 2, 3.



In another step to extend its control over education, Washington has threatened to withdraw its small financial support from the school unless it changes its policy of racial segregation. Our country's elementary and secondary school schools, because of their financial dependence, have been forced to yield under the whip of the Federal Government and integrate classrooms, either tokenly or fully, causing them to become critical problems in many areas of our country which were minor or non-existent before. The issue at hand is not integration but independence. And now the Federal Government, through its usual threats of economic coercion, is trying to force our nation's privately endowed colleges into its never ending, tax-supported bread lines. I am hoping that a school as well endowed and with as illustrious alumnae as Sweet Briar will not become an indentured servant to the Federal Government for the meager sum of \$14,000."<sup>220</sup>

By positioning themselves as victims, possible "indentured servants," these students did not acknowledge their class or racial privilege. Invoking language from the Old South, the federal government, is ironically positioned as a controlling, whip-carrying, slave master seeking to place educational institutions in involuntary servitude by requiring desegregation. To emphasize the position of the South as a victim, the student articulated that because of the oppressive federal government, white colleges would have to stand in "bread lines," harkening back to the Great Depression. Nevertheless, the battle to resist the federal government, even with the threat of economic loss, was considered a worthwhile fight, just as States' Rights had been under the Lost Cause of state secession. The right of black Southerners to equal education and opportunity is viewed as subordinate ("not the issue at hand") to the States' Rights issue, just as blacks are considered subordinate under a white supremacist regime. Furthermore, the student explained

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<sup>220</sup> "U. Va. Grad Student Criticizes," *The Sweet Briar News*, April 27, 1966, p. 2

that federal intrusion, was causing problems in education which “were minor or non-existent before.” This sentiment that the federal government’s intrusion into Southern affairs, started the problems in Southern education, renders black children and their unequal treatment in education for centuries invisible in the student’s Southern history narrative.

Secondly, in another prominent ode to the Lost Cause, students framed Northern liberals as one of the worst enemies to the preservation of Southern heritage and independence. Northern liberals were analogous to the Union army, invaders of sovereign Southern territory, seeking to upset the Southern way of life. They were meddling outsiders without the proper Southern wisdom to provide legitimate insight on the segregation issue. Northern liberals were framed as disingenuous in their efforts to help blacks gain equality and Black students were framed as gullible and susceptible. A 1962 *Twig* article captured this idea:

The Negro is being ruthlessly used. He has become a political tool in the hands of a faction which has no real desire to help him but is merely employing him as a means to their end... The Negro has been duped. He has been led to believe that his only hope for betterment lies in the complete integration of the races.”<sup>221</sup>

This article suggested that the only reason black students wanted integration was because they were easily susceptible to the Northern liberal’s tactics of engendering strife. On February 13, 1969, black students of the Afro-American society occupied the Allen Building, the main administrative building at Duke

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<sup>221</sup> “Letters to the Editor, *The Twig*, February 16, 1962, p. 2

University, after attempting to negotiate with the administration for two years to improve the campus climate for black students. With the occupation, students made a list of eleven demands, including, among other things, increased financial aid for black students, an Afro-American Studies department, and an end to police harassment of black students. When describing the takeover of the Allen Building by black students, one article declared that they had done so because, “the most recent nationwide sweep of disturbances stirred up the Negro students at Duke to press for quicker fulfillment of their demands.”<sup>222</sup> Instead of acknowledging the concerns of black students as potentially valid or legitimate, the article suggests that black students were just susceptible to outside influence. They had been “stirred up” by outside influences. Black activists, especially, were deemed mere puppets of Northern liberals.

Embracing and continuing the Lost Cause idea of justified and honorable battles, students often celebrated victories in defeating the agenda of organizations associated with the North. Reporting on the events at one of the National Student Association (NSA) meetings, a Sweet Briar student explained, “It was rather sobering last Wednesday night to hear cheers at the announcement that the majority of students had voted against supporting the NSA stand on desegregation. It seems that this proposal should not be more difficult to support than our

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<sup>222</sup> ASC Senior says press inflated recent Duke riot, *The Profile*, February 28, 1969, p. 3

Declaration of Independence...”<sup>223</sup> The National Student Association (NSA) was an association of colleges and universities that operated from 1948 – 1978 and often served as a national platform in favor of desegregation beginning in the 1950’s. In much of the student news, there was a continuing question raised about whether the NSA, which supported desegregation, also supported the interests of Southern students. After much consideration, a few schools “seceded” from the NSA, and joined local, Southern student associations. Northern liberals were cast as naïve, and simply, expecting too much from the South. Southern students were encouraged to think “realistically” about the future of the United States, and not be dreamers like the whimsical Northerners. One article noted, “A realistic view of man would hardly cause one to prophecy a sunny future with everyone living together in perfect harmony.”<sup>224</sup> Students were also warned not to have “naïve faith” and a “romantic notion” of desegregation.<sup>225</sup> Students positioned themselves as realists and pragmatists, and Northerners as idealists without a true understanding of the nature of the South.

Northern liberals were especially ridiculed because they presumably wanted an immediate end to segregation, which was regarded as foolish. Even students that supported desegregation, often used rhetoric around insider and

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<sup>223</sup> Does NSA Vote Show Negativism, *The Sweet Briar News*, May 14, 1958, p. 2

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid. 2, 6.

outsider status, with Northerners situated firmly on the outside of Southern understanding. One college editor explained:

A trend of thought developed in the South over a period of 200 years that cemented social classes. It cannot be expected that this point of view may be erased from our minds over night (as some very liberal politicians are inclined to think). Neither can it be expected that these conceptions will remain static...<sup>226</sup>

The entrenchment of “social classes,” in the South is accepted as a matter of Southern culture, legacy, and tradition, without question. It is the understanding of this alleged fact, and living within the Southern social system, that makes one a true Southerner. When a Meredith student attended a Black Power speech on campus, she suggested that the speaker was “hoping for too much from the younger generation, because ‘we are still rather conservative.’”<sup>227</sup> The ideals of “conservatism” and “tradition” encouraged students to remain apathetic to the plight of black Southerners and denounce any disruption to the established Southern order. Desegregation was not supposed to be undertaken as a quick process, because it was going against tradition, a tradition for which Northerners just didn’t understand. The myth of Lost Cause discouraged any challenge to the Southern social hierarchy, especially from those perceived to be outsiders. Having a distinct Southern identity was viewed as a privilege and represented a long tradition of opposition to disruption by Northern agitators. The *Sweet Briar News*

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<sup>226</sup> “Racial Issue Causes Unrest In Colleges,” *The Post Script*, January 22, 1954, p. 2

<sup>227</sup> “Howard Fuller’s Speech on ‘Black Power’ Provokes Many Reactions, Much Thought,” *The Twig*, November 17, 1966, page 3.

covered a story where in 1955, after an Associated Collegiate Press conference in Washington, DC, Hunter College in New York City urged Southern editors to take an explicit stance against segregation. In response, Emory editors of the *Emory Wheel* issued a response articulating that its editors along with those at the University of Texas (*The Daily Texan*) and the UNC *Daily Tar Heel* had taken a stance on integration. In addition, the editors criticized Northern liberal papers for their intrusion into Southern affairs, declaring:

Naturally, it is easier for students in New York or Chicago to lift a cry for Southern integration. There have been moves toward racial equality in other regions, and it is considered quite the thing to do among the liberal students to raise the banner of equality. But we of the South hope and believe that Northern students who lift such a cry realize the imperfections of the racial situation in their own backyard...We see virtue in social change, but...do not seek to model our society after that of the North. *The Wheel* hopes that the South can do a better job than the North has done.<sup>228</sup>

In the 1950's and early 1960's invoking Lost Cause sentiments, these students saw an ongoing battle to maintain autonomy as distinct Southerners without the intrusion of Northerners who presumably had no real interest in the "race issue."

The division in perceptions of Northerners and Southerners regarding how they dealt with desegregation often played out in the student newspaper. Southern students framed themselves as better suited to handle desegregation than Northerners. Northerners were framed as rowdy, causing chaos with their non-violent protests that were disrupting Southern infrastructure. The Northerners way

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<sup>228</sup> "Northern Southern Schools Discuss Integration Problem," *The Sweet Briar News*, January 19, 1955, p. 2

of handling desegregation was often criticized and seen as inferior, nonsensical, and alien. For example, the Barnard exchange program started in 1960 and consisted of students visiting select southern colleges for a week, and in turn, students from those schools would visit Barnard for a week. The program centered around race relations, which included visiting segregated schools in the South and low-income housing developments in Harlem, as well as workshops on how students could be involved in improving racial equality. One bit of controversy at Sweet Briar involved two visiting students from Barnard who wanted to get “a first-hand view of the racial situation in the South.”<sup>229</sup> A *New York Times* article, dated February 16, 1964 described this exchange program that sent students to the South and declared, “Barnard girls were at first surprised to learn that Sweet Briar students in their spare time tutored Negro youngsters.”<sup>230</sup> Apparently, the Barnard students “concluded that this was more ‘noblesse oblige’ than civil rights zeal.” The response from the Sweet Briar press was that these students left their respectfulness in the “frozen North when they came down to look at the plantation on the James River.”<sup>231</sup> Sweet Briar students felt the article was “grossly biased and distorted,” especially since half of its student body was from the North.<sup>232</sup> The Northerners were positioned as mere spectators without a real understanding of the

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<sup>229</sup> “Faithless Faith,” *The Sweet Briar News*, February 26, 1965, p. 2.

<sup>230</sup> “Negro Students Evaluate North,” *The New York Times*, February 16, 1964, p. 60.

<sup>231</sup> “Faithless Faith,” *The Sweet Briar News*, February 26, 1965, p. 2.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*

South. Another student argued that the Northerners from Barnard just didn't understand the right way to confront the desegregation issue. She explained:

They would say, then, that sitting in the mud of a city street, disrupting a lunch counter, or kicking a snarling dog is better than consistently educating young Negroes. Sweet Briar students have sat-in at Lynchburg lunch counters and picketed in behalf of racial equality, but the majority of the present student body seems to prefer to work towards a goal rather than fight against a group.<sup>233</sup>

The Northerners were not only outsiders but engaged in undignified, lowly activities to support desegregation. They were agitators and grovelers “sitting in mud” and “kicking” dogs. In a subsequent article, the editors clarified that the Barnard students enjoyed their visit and their comments were taken out of context by the *NY Times* and the writer of the editorial.<sup>234</sup> Students also often viewed Northerners as dishonest, hypocrites, who weren't really interested in integration, and in fact, had failed to provide equality for Northern blacks. They were Northerners who make a “career of denouncing the South for its racial sins,” but “fail to clear up their own backyards before they stick their noses” into Southern problems, “ignoring obvious injustices in their own areas.”<sup>235</sup> Students throughout the mid-1960's fervently took up the Lost Cause ideal of regional separatism. The

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<sup>233</sup> “Letter to the Editor: More Comment on Civil Rights,” *The Sweet Briar News*, March 4, 1964, p. 2

<sup>234</sup> “Editorial Criticized: Student Who Visited Barnard Correct Misconceptions,” *The Sweet Briar News*, March 4, 1964

<sup>235</sup> “Political Perspective: Open Occupancy Bill to Hit North,” *The Sweet Briar News*, May 11, 1966, p. 2.



North was a clear enemy, disrupting the Southern way of life, which was supposed to be sovereign.

### Memorialization of the Lost Cause

One of the main ways in which the Lost Cause became entrenched in Southern society is through the ritualistic commemoration of the Civil War. During Reconstruction, numerous memorial and volunteer groups were formed to commemorate the Lost Cause. The confederate monument became the quintessential emblem of the Lost Cause, sprouting up all over the South from Reconstruction through the early 20th century. Historian Thomas Brown declares, that, “Confederate monuments are among the most ubiquitous and characteristic features of the civic landscape of the South.”<sup>236</sup> Confederate monuments operated as sites for public memory, both real and imagined. These monuments served as sites where white southerners could experience a sense of nostalgia about a past of glory and bravery, even if they only heard of this past through stories from former generations. The monuments memorializing the Civil War served to evoke a sense of collective memory, reminding Southern visitors that they had a shared valiant history. Slavery supported a distinct regional identity for the South before the Civil War, but the “ugliness” of slavery and Jim Crow was buried beneath

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<sup>236</sup> Thomas Brown, “Confederate Monuments,” in *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 4: Myth, Manners, and Memory* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 43.

glimmering and majestic statutes. These statutes often hovered over visitors, so that it was necessary to look up, as if looking to God.

After the Civil War, white Southern women assumed leadership over the propagation of the Lost Cause. These women raised money for and founded many of the Lost Cause era memorial associations. They also established some of the first and largest monuments dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Confederacy. In 1867, white Southern women erected one of the first Confederate monuments in the United States in Hampshire County, West Virginia. The Confederate Memorial contains the engraving, “The daughters of Old Hampshire erect this tribute of affection to her heroic sons who fell in defense of Southern Rights.” The engraving not only serves to pay tribute to dead soldiers of the Confederacy, but also to validate the Lost Cause, namely, that the Confederate secession was a worthy cause. In 1869, the Ladies Hollywood Memorial Association of Richmond, Virginia led the effort to establish one of the grandest Lost Cause Memorials—a 90-foot tall granite pyramid with the memorialization:

Here lie Confederate soldiers, 18,000 of them, not in companies only, but in battalions, in regiments and in brigades. Here are the bloody fruits of Williamsburg, Seven Pines, Mechanicsville, Gaines’ Mill, Cold Harbor, Savage’s Station, Frazier’s Farm, Malvern Hill, Sharpsburg, Gettysburg, Fort Harrison, Yellow Tavern, Drewy’s Bluff and many other fields, where Confederate valor illumined the pages of history.

By naming popular battle sites throughout Virginia, the memorial sought to accentuate the extent of loss and build a collective identity around the Lost Cause. In addition, by using Confederate valor as a central theme in monument building,

the Confederacy's brutal loss in the Civil War becomes obfuscated. The idea of protectionism was a reoccurring theme utilized by white women for Confederacy memorialization as exemplified in the Hampshire County monument of 1867. Protectionism was the idea that Confederate soldiers were protecting their wives, mothers, and daughters from Northern agitators and the presumed, savage slave that would purportedly run rampant once free. This protectionism ideal also embodied the preservation of white supremacy, which was often cloaked in the terms "Southern rights" or "Southern way of life."

Many of the early women's memorial associations became formalized under the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), which was established on September 10, 1894. The UDC is one of the most prominent and enduring women's groups organized around the Lost Cause, with numerous chapters across the United States. One of the main objectives of the UDC was to "collect and preserve the material for a truthful history of the war between the Confederate States and the United States of America; to honor the memory of those who served and those who fell in the service of the Confederate States, and to record the part taken by Southern women, as well, in the untiring effort after the war in the reconstruction of the South, as in patient endurance of hardship and patriotic devotion during the struggle..."<sup>237</sup> Early founders of the UDC thought of themselves as the preservers of the true legacy and way of life of the South. They

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<sup>237</sup> Constitution of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Article II, Objects, p. 2 (1895).

felt compelled to honor the Confederate soldiers that died preserving the Southern way of life, through memorialization. For the UDC, the “beloved” “Lost Cause” left “a precious legacy of heroism.”<sup>238</sup> In the face of presumed federal domination and persecution, honor also involved taking up the duty to advance Southern sovereignty left behind by their male counterparts. Not only did white Southern women plant the legacy of the Confederacy in marble and stone throughout the South, they cemented the myth of the Lost Cause through rituals involving decorating, mourning, and remembering the real and imagined dead.

Like the UDC, students embraced the Lost Cause through rituals, celebrations, and admiration for Civil War artifacts and monuments. An editorial at Sweet Briar emphasized how the ideal of the Lost Cause still had permanence on campus in 1960. She explains:

It is useless trying to explain that the Civil War was over many years ago. Our belle will refight the whole war vigorously keeping vicious track of each dead Yankee, of each lost Northern battle and of each Yankee diplomatic mistake. Naturally the South will win this time mainly because the Northerner does not know that much about the war. When she was a child, “The Three Bears” was her bedtime story—not “Sherman Marching Through Georgia.”<sup>239</sup>

Although the editor mocks the characterization of Sweet Briar students, she rekindles Lost Cause imagery, by framing Southern belle identity in terms of the Civil War. The reference to “Sherman marching through Georgia” referred to one

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<sup>238</sup> United Daughters of the Confederacy, Minutes of the Fourth Annual Meeting, Baltimore, November 10, 1897, p. 4.

<sup>239</sup> “Stunned S.B. Stereotypes Stand Corrected,” *The Sweet Briar News*, March 9, 1960, p. 3.

of the most-well known campaigns of the Civil War, in which the Union army leader, Major General William T. Sherman led a destructive military campaign through Georgia, capturing major cities, such as Atlanta and Savannah, freeing thousands of slaves, and destroying much of the Southern infrastructure, such as railroads, bridges, and cotton-producing equipment. The event was commemorated in an 1865 song, “Marching Through Georgia.” The commentary by the Sweet Briar student was not only a homage to the tradition of story-telling in the South, but also a reflection of the continuity of the Lost Cause myth and the South’s obsession with the Civil War; even children learned about it from an early age in their bedtime stories.

Monuments in which the Southern gentleman were portrayed as the saviors of the South, often aided in the continued reliance on the myth of the Lost Cause and protectionism well into the late 1960’s. For example, A Columbia College campus statute of Andrew Jackson on a horse was described as a “hunk of man and beast” and “symbolic of heritage.”<sup>240</sup> As a Columbia College student looked at the statute, it made her nostalgic about the days when boys came over to Columbia College on horseback to date students. In her mind, the boys likely “braved it all, and rode gallantly up to Old Main, parked their horses, and dated our ancestors—I mean, our predecessors. Lucky girls!”<sup>241</sup> The student’s retelling of her encounter

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<sup>240</sup> “Andy Is Symbolic of “Heritage” At CC,” *The Post Script*, November 15, 1967, p. 3.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

with a Lost Cause artifact and her fictional memory of the romanticized campus served to direct attention to the imagined past of the Old South. The veneration of Andrew Jackson as heroic, served to further entrench the idea that the protectionism of Southern women was a noble cause. When reporting on the Civil War centennial featured in Harper's magazine in 1965, the *Sweet Briar News* explained that much of the press had been negative with arguments against commemorating the war. However, the editors explained the permanence of the Lost Cause in American culture articulating:

The Civil War is not so easily dismissed. To most of the country, and perhaps the world, the South today is more important and more obsessive than it has been at any time in the last century."<sup>242</sup> Students' reflection on antebellum and Confederate myths and monuments on campus seemed to connect students with an imagined past that they admired. In this way, the monument becomes a "medium of continuity and interaction between generations, not only in space, but across time, for to be monumental is permanent."<sup>243</sup>

The permanence of the Lost Cause was embodied in the student press, as students conjured up Civil War imagery to discuss desegregation and their ideas of the meaning of Southern distinctiveness. The Southern belle, in particular, is emboldened to preserve the pride of the South by recalling the righteousness of the South's role in the Civil War. Through their participation in campus activities, retelling of these moments, and celebrating Southern heritage through the campus

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<sup>242</sup> "Civil War Centennial," *The Sweet Briar News*, April 14, 1965, p. 5.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

newspapers, students, in essence, took on the commemorative roles of the Reconstructive Era women's memorial associations.

### The Lost Cause & Women's Liberation

Students at the Women's Colleges took up the Lost Cause, beyond mere memorialization, as they utilized the concept of "protectionism" to define their own identity as Southern women. On campuses across the country, The Second Wave of Feminism, started to gain momentum alongside the Civil Rights and Black Power movements in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Historian William Chafe offers that black women "played a crucial role in sparking feminist consciousness among white women" in SNCC who "were continually inspired by examples of black women, who shattered cultural images of appropriate female behavior."<sup>244</sup> Yet, student discourse at the Women's Colleges reflected resistance to women's movements and articulated traditional sentiments about women's roles in relationship to men well into the late 1960's. As feminist movements became prominent topics for conversation on the Southern women's college campus, white women students vocalized their interest in maintaining separate spheres for men and women. In 1970, *The Post Script* editors at Columbia College surveyed college women about their opinions on "the Women's Liberation Movement."

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<sup>244</sup> William Chafe, *Women and Equality: Changing Patterns in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 109.

The editors described why this survey was particularly important on a Southern women's campus, explaining:

Certain trends are evident in the Movement. It is strongest in big cities. Most of the women are in their 20's and 30's, chiefly white, middle class, and college-educated. Since we at Columbia College so closely fit these characteristics, the *Post Script* has gathered several student opinions considering Women's Lib and also those of a few faculty.<sup>245</sup>

What is evident from the survey is that even in the 1970's the Lost Cause ideal of preservation of the Southern order had permanence for most of the students interviewed; not one student fully supported the movement, and many outright rejected it. For example, Kathie Bozard, the President of the sophomore class, plainly stated, "I do not agree with Women's Lib. If the women of today want to be treated as ladies of tomorrow, then they should accept the fact that they are inferior to the male sex. I am perfectly satisfied with the position the woman holds in society."<sup>246</sup> A "lady" was a quintessential figure in the Southern heritage ideal; a delicate woman that was placed on a pedestal and protected from all of the scary objects in the world that may indelibly destroy her prized womanhood. One Columbia College instructor, Ayne Venzanie, said, I "doubt that the radical viewpoint will be popular at CC because most women enjoy the protection of their sex."<sup>247</sup> She also noted, "I refuse to give up my femininity just to prove I am equal

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<sup>245</sup> *CC Looks at Women's Lib, The Post Script*, November 13, 1970, p. 2.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*



to man.”<sup>248</sup> “Gender equality” was equated with radicalism, comparable to how racial equality in the form of desegregation was deemed radical; both concepts were too disruptive to established Southern hierarchies. When faced with what they considered to be a choice between equality and the protection of their dignity, fragility, and respectability by men, many students chose protectionism.

Students’ discourse embodied elements of the Lost Cause as their language harkened back to the days of the Confederate soldiers who bravely fought to protect the Southern home and way of life. The Women’s College student’s identity was intertwined with romanticized images of the ole Southern gentleman who valued the Southern Belle and her feminine characteristics. The Southern lady or belle with “her grace and hospitality” was the “flower of a uniquely southern civilization, the embodiment of all that the South prized most deeply.”<sup>249</sup> The Southern, white gentleman was positioned as the protector of her values and her character, which protectionism would be eroded if the women’s movement was successful. One Columbia College freshman, Diane Smith explained,

I think that Women’s Lib may turn out to be one of the biggest mistakes that women have ever made. In striving to be equal, women may one day find that they have lost their identity. Women have always been treated by men as something fragile, something to cherish, something to protect. Is equality so important that we give up the precious image that we now have?<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid

<sup>249</sup> Charles Reagan Wilson, *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 4: Myth, Manners, and Memory* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 43.

<sup>250</sup> “CC Looks at Women’s Lib,” *The Post Script*, November 13, 1970, p. 2.

The myth of Southern heritage was invoked as the student suggests that women have “always” been treated as ladies, worthy of protectionism. By positioning the women’s movement as antagonistic to valued traditions and heritage, the maintenance of the status quo becomes preferred over equality. Equality was not seen as valuable because under the Southern heritage ideal, women derived their power through embracing femininity, not rejecting it. The white patriarchal system of the South was still beneficial to elite white women, and they were not ready to challenge their place within this privileged structure. Although this system could be somewhat constraining in reality, students articulated a feeling of lofty elevation.

With the shifting racial and gender paradigm in education and labor, holding on to the conservative, Lost Cause idea of protectionism became a way that these women could protect the presumed superiority of their class and racial status. Gender equality would simply erode their privileged position. Articulating a similar sentiment, two Columbia College students described that the women’s movement would force equality to mean the “elimination of differences,” and raised the question, “Could any woman sacrifice the ‘feminine mystique’ merely for a mock equality?”<sup>251</sup> What’s interesting about this quotation is that for these students the feminine mystique is prized. Betty Friedan’s widely popular book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), offered a scathing denunciation of the suburban

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<sup>251</sup> “CC Looks at Women’s Lib,” *The Post Script*, November 13, 1970, p. 2.

ideal and domesticity, which Friedan believed stifled white college-educated women's happiness and development. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan argued that suburban housewives were depressed and isolated because they were pressured to give up opportunities for personal achievement found mainly in careers outside of the home. According to Friedan, these women were extremely dissatisfied with homemaking, but were constantly pressured to embody the feminine mystique, which suggested that women could only find fulfillment in "sexual passivity, male domination and nurturing maternal love."<sup>252</sup> Friedan's image of bored, college-educated, middle-class white homemakers did not seem to align with the ideas of the white students at the Women's Colleges, even in the late 1960's. Being considered a "lady" was still really important to these women. However, these students had not yet graduated from college. Thus, their concept of the feminine mystique was based on an imagined future as a lady, in domestic service to her husband, which was seen as utterly romantic.

Among students at the Women's Colleges, there was a real fear that the women's movement would erode what white college women saw as their lofty place in society. Embracing the myth of Southern heritage, they believed they had held a prominent position of power for centuries, as Victorian maidens, as plantation princesses, and during Reconstruction, as dignified damsels of Southern society, who while mourning, had to muster the strength to rebuild the South.

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<sup>252</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963).

Although Columbia College freshman, Ann Rollins, believed in some areas of equality for women, such as in equal pay and politics, she articulated traditional southern belle notions about a woman's primary duties. She explained, "But there is a limit to women's liberation. I believe women were made to be mothers and homemakers to take care of their male counterparts and be active in their communities. I don't think women were meant to be in a man's army or fight in wars, which is what they would have to do to be completely equal with men."<sup>253</sup> For Rollins, "equality" meant a loss of status, because both men and women had preordained roles in society, and white women were supposed to be ladies.

The student involved in the Woman's Liberation movement was considered the antithesis of a lady. At Sweet Briar, a few articles encouraged students to join the Women's Liberation movement, and rejected that the support of the women's movement made students less womanly. Yet, they articulated that most students viewed women that supported the women's movement as unladylike. After a lecture in March of 1970, a group of women at Sweet Briar started to organize a Women's Liberation Movement group on campus. Apparently, the reactions ranged from "Women's Lib? They're a bunch of lesbians, aren't They" to "Who me? I don't need to be liberated. I like being put on a pedestal by men?"<sup>254</sup> Other students argued that the "liberated woman" was the opposite of a lady—that she was a woman who was "supposed to never bathe, despise men, and be suffering

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<sup>253</sup> "CC Looks at Women's Lib," *The Post Script*, November 13, 1970, p. 2.

<sup>254</sup> "S.B.C. In Need of Women's Lib.," *The Sweet Briar News*, May 1, 1970, p. 2

from an all-encompassing penis envy.”<sup>255</sup> There were a handful of articles that referenced moving beyond the Old South protectionist logic, but these were rare. One Columbia College student’s editorial stands out as she exclaimed, “We owe it to ourselves and to our civilization to explore new channels to put our energies into channels which may presently be dominated by men ... If that choice involves competition with men—then for heaven’s sake compete. We’ve nothing to lose and everything to gain. Now get out there and move!”<sup>256</sup>

Many college women articulated that women could never compete with men in their spheres, and would be most successful and powerful in their designated roles. When students did support the movement, their support was mainly for equal pay. They often too articulated an interest in being recognized for playing important roles in society, mainly in the domestic sphere, but also in the workplace. Another Columbia College student, Jean Byrd, President of the Student Senate argued, “Men and women can never be equal, simply because they are different. Both can be treated equally, but do women really want to be treated as men? I think not, because if men and women are ever regarded as equals, it will be women who step softly from their lofty reign of prominence to join men who thought they held that position all along!”<sup>257</sup> The Southern heritage ideal that white women were lofty, above all others, was a powerful belief system that many

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<sup>255</sup> “Equality Encouraged For Women,” *The Sweet Briar News*, October 30, 1970, p 2.

<sup>256</sup> “Issues of Today,” *The Post Script*, November 13, 1970, p. 2.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

students embraced to construct their gender identity. This delicate, feminine identity was considered “precious.” By adopting the protectionism frame of the Lost Cause, students failed to consider that reverence for this myth reinforced the patriarchal infrastructure of southern society where refined, white women received the fruits of reverence and admiration of men, but were nevertheless confined by them. The idea that women were to remain “ladies” by not becoming involved in the women’s liberation movement, also encouraged apathy and non-involvement in the Civil Rights movement, which is discussed in Chapter 6.

#### Southern Heritage: The Old South & Serene Plantation

After the Civil War, Southern leaders also romanticized the plantation life of the Old South. A romantic sentimentality of the “good ole days” of Southern plantation life operated alongside the Lost Cause ideal to shape the Southern heritage narrative. Stephen A Smith explains, “Perhaps the most potent and prominent architectural symbol of the old mythology was the antebellum Greek-revival mansion of the plantation. Though much less prevalent than the public has been led to believe, that symbol colored the perceptions of later generations and gave material support to the mythic vision of a “Golden Age” of white supremacy and agrarian splendor.”<sup>258</sup> This myth of the “Old South” filled with pleasant plantations arose in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and forms one of the foundational elements of the Southern Heritage myth. The Old South was an eternal place

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<sup>258</sup> Smith, *Myth, Media*, 101.

where the pristine plantation serves as the central landscape of the Old South. It was mythologized with white-columned, porch-laden plantations, unwavering, loyal, and comedic black servants, aristocratic and strong-handed Masters accompanied by gracious white Southern Belles pouring lemonade, with the countrified, Po' White living degenerately in the woods far away from the pearly gates of the noble plantation. At the Women's Colleges, the myth of the Old South as a place of respectability, loyalty, and loving generosity was often reinforced through modern day examples of these characteristics. Purported acts of civility in desegregation situations were highlighted as examples of a continuing tradition of generosity towards blacks. For example, in describing the arrival to Clemson College's campus, of Harvey Gantt, the first black student, one student noted, "It appears that the traditional South Carolina love of law and order prevailed once more when Harvey Gantt became a student at Clemson College last week. Congratulations to a mature Clemson student body."<sup>259</sup> What is missing from the student's discourse, but later captured in another article, is the extreme resistance to Gantt's admission, even though his first day on campus was relatively peaceful.<sup>260</sup> Some of the resistance included Clemson originally denying admission of Gantt and a two-year court battle to gain admissions, as well as an

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<sup>259</sup> "The State of the World," *The Post Script*, February 6, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>260</sup> See, "South Carolina Watches History In the Making," *The Post Script*, February 6, 1963, p. 4

attempt to introduce House bills to close Clemson's School of Architecture if Gantt was admitted.

The memory of the glorious days of ole was built on an elite, constructed memory of the plantation, as slaves and most Southern farmers did not live in the ivory tower of planter life. The elites reframed their identities as members of a noble and genteel Southern planter class and elevated religious evangelicals. Charles Reagan Wilson affirms this idea, noting, "Elites used the mythology of Cavaliers and moonlight and-magnolias plantations to construct a romantic region that obscured differences across the South's regions and among its social groupings."<sup>261</sup> Through the early 1960's, students kept alive the myth of the Old South even as it collapsed under the weight of federal intervention, Civil Rights activism, and economic pressure of modernization. The "good ole days" of the Old South was a central component of the myth of Southern Heritage, which guided students' opinions on desegregation. Relying on film, fiction, the media, and storytelling to construct Southern culture, even white Northerners visiting the South expected to find, "a pleasant land of white columned mansions, green pastures, expansive cotton and tobacco fields where Negroes sang spirituals all the day through."<sup>262</sup> The true nature of the plantation rife with the violent domination

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<sup>261</sup> Wilson, *The New Encyclopedia*, 1.

<sup>262</sup> Frank L. Owsley, "The Old South and the New," *American Review*, VI (February, 1936), 475.



of slaves, a human chattel economic model, and a stringent class hierarchy becomes obscured and invisible in the Old South narrative.

At the Women's Colleges, Old South rituals and celebrations often aided the dominance of the myth of the genteel plantation. The student newspaper often captured these rituals, which were embedded in campus celebrations and student activities. On campus, the nostalgia of the Old South was often preserved through the myth of the happy plantation. For example, in April of 1955, sophomores at Sweet Briar College officially announced that the annual May Day festival would bring "plantation time" to Sweet Briar College. With glee, editors of *The Sweet Briar News* exclaimed, "A week-end on the ole plantation—May 6<sup>th</sup> can't come soon enough!"<sup>263</sup> The party which "returned Sweet Briar to its plantation days," was said to be "filled with "Southern hospitality," providing an atmosphere that "was truly of the 'Old South.'" The event featured all of the presumed wonders of the ole plantation—a "Confederate flag flying," the quintessential music of Southern vernacular, *Dixie*, "Southern belles" in "charming dresses and pantaloons," at the "plantation house," a "delightful group of little pickaninnies" entertaining the crowd, "minstrels doing a soft shoe number," a garden party, and dancing – but only after the "Southern fried chicken has settled."<sup>264</sup> The myth of Southern Heritage as regal, minimizes and suppresses the realities of Southern

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<sup>263</sup> "Sophomores Call May Sixth Plantation Time at S.B.C.," *The Sweet Briar News*, April 27, 1955, 1.

<sup>264</sup> "Whifs, Weather, Talent Aid In Plantation Party Success," *The Sweet Briar News*, May 11, 1955, p. 2, 5.

history including, slavery, Jim Crow, their legacies, and their continued effect on the everyday lives of black Americans. In 1954, students at Columbia College were deemed Southern Belles as they dressed up in “antebellum costumes” and served as hostesses for an event on campus reminiscent of the “Era of 1854.”<sup>265</sup> These campus activities were seen as natural cultural expressions of Southern identity. Through their reproductions of the Old Plantation, students reproduced and recalled their racial and class privilege within the Southern organization.

In 1965, the Sweet Briar News announced a national contest, “the 1965 Maid of Cotton” contest supported by the National Cotton Council, which would choose from “girls in cotton-growing states.”<sup>266</sup> All contestants were required to be between 19 and 25, never married, at least five feet five and one half inches tall, and “born in a cotton-producing state.”<sup>267</sup> As Historian James McBride Dabbs explains, “the Southern plantation became the chief source of power and prestige in the South.”<sup>268</sup>

On campus, theatre, and songs also memorialized and romanticized the plantation of the Old South. In 1966, the student paper at Columbia College announced the play “Member of the Wedding,” a three act play by Carson

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<sup>265</sup> “Southern Belles Will Commemorate Ante-Bellum Days,” *The Post Script*, November 4, 1954, p. 4

<sup>266</sup> “From Girls in Cotton-Growing States,” *The Sweet Briar News*, September 23, 1964, p. 6

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> James McBride Dabbs, *Haunted by God: The Cultural and Religious Experience of the South* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1972.)

McCullers,” which is set in the South in 1945.<sup>269</sup> This novel and film features a young “boyish” Southern girl who transitions into womanhood with the help of her ever-loyal, maid, Berenice Sadie Brown. In one of the scenes featured in the newspaper, a white student, Susan Gray, with her mouth agape, plays Berenice through slathered blackface, as her white hands hold a hand of cards. Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone With The Wind* was one of the most quintessential representations of the myth of the Old South. The novel, published in 1936, sold over seven million copies and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.<sup>270</sup> The film was released in 1939, and rereleased twice during the time frame of analysis—in widescreen in 1954, and again in 1961 to commemorate the beginning of the Civil War. In the college press, this movie was referenced as the embodiment of Southern culture and traditions. One student described the importance of *Gone With the Wind* to Southern history, and especially “for native Southerners,” explaining, “Even a history which stands as proud as that of the South, must be retold in order for it to be felt, honored and cherished by her subjects.... With the help of *Gone With the Wind* we appreciate the foundations on which we stand...loyalty, honor, bravery, devotion, pride and love.”<sup>271</sup> Yet, decades after books publication, activists and scholars started to call out the book as an “ode to

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<sup>269</sup> “CC Production To Be Directed By Mrs. Eaker,” *The Post Script*, May 6, 1966, p. 1.

<sup>270</sup> Jennifer W. Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History: Gone with the Wind and the Politics of Memory* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2014).

<sup>271</sup> “History of the South Becomes A Reality in ‘Gone With the Wind,’” *The Post Script*, April 26, 1961, p. 4.

the majesty of the Old South and slavery.”<sup>272</sup> The book featured a simplistic narrative on slavery, with Old South mythical portrayal of Blacks as loyal, happy slaves, willing to readily serve their masters. Drew Gilpin Faust, argued that:

in all her efforts to deny agency to black characters and to marginalize the place of slavery in antebellum southern life, Mitchell finds herself caught up in slavery's language and influences, employing metaphors of ownership in a manner that extends the power of slavery into every interaction within southern society.<sup>273</sup>

When Mitchell was confronted with the notion that her book used cultural myths to pay homage to slavery, the Old South, and the marginalization of black people, she “refuted she was a racist,” argued that she was unfairly persecuted by “Radical and Communist publications” and argued that her prolific use of racial slurs, such as “darkey” and “Nigger” were inspired by historical custom.<sup>274</sup>

The 1859 song, *Dixie's Land* (“Dixie”) written by Daniel Decatur Emmett was as emblematic of the Lost Cause and the Old South as any one song could be. It was produced before the Civil War and first appeared as part of a blackface minstrel show. It became a rallying cry during the Civil War and a memorial to the great plantation economy— “the land of cotton.” Just as *Gone With The Wind* was a reoccurring reference in the student newspaper, references to *Dixie* often appeared, paying homage to a reoccurring cultural artefact. At an NSA Congress

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<sup>272</sup> Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch*, 6.

<sup>273</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust. "Clutching the Chains That Bind: Margaret Mitchell and *Gone with the Wind*." *Southern Cultures* 5, no. 1 (1999): 14.

<sup>274</sup> Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch*, 17.

meeting, students showcased their regional identity, through songs and skits. One editorial explained,

Two Yankee delegates representing Sweet Briar found themselves in an embarrassing position. It was one thing to stand up and sing ‘Dixie’ but it was quite another to sing convincingly ‘Ten Thousand Yankees died for every one of us. During the singing one region even went so far as to stage a raid on another’s carefully guarded regional standard. It was accomplished very skillfully by the group to accompaniment of ‘The Saints Go Marching In.’<sup>275</sup>

In Agnes Scott’s *Profile*, editors referred to an editorial by the North Carolina State Technician editor, Bob Holmes who condemned the song Dixie and was swiftly met by swift protest on campus. Apparently, Holmes declared that, “all a group has to do is strike up a few notes of that tune and... people automatically shout frantically, and stand up and sing. ‘Dixie’ represents all of those things the South would should be attempting to lay aside. ‘Dixie’ gives unreconstructed Southerners something of the past to cheer and there certainly is little in the past of the South about which anyone should wish to cheer.”<sup>276</sup> In response to the article, students hung a huge banner with the phrase “Dixie Forever” on the campus smokestack, sung “Dixie” at breakfast, and sung “Dixie” as hundreds of students marched through the night, one waving a Confederate flag exclaiming that the Editor had disgraced the entire state of North Carolina.<sup>277</sup> The use of Dixie as a

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<sup>275</sup> “Enthusiastic Skits at NSA Congress Demonstrate Spirit,” *The Sweet Briar News*, October 23, 1957, p. 2.

<sup>276</sup> “Writer Attacks ‘Dixie,’ Draws Strong Protest,” *The Profile*, March 3, 1966, p. 4.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

battle hymn for the Confederacy during the Civil War became reimagined, offering white Southerners a cultural device to support cohesive resistance to federal intrusion during the Civil Rights Era.

### *Leaders of the New South*

During the 1960's the staunch segregationist stance associated with Southern heritage myths faced intense challenge from a new wave of progressive thinking aimed at creating a New Southern landscape. Stephen Smith describes the development of this "New South" ideal, explaining, "Initiated by the United States Supreme Court in 1954, demanded by Southern blacks from Montgomery to Little Rock to Greensboro and back to Montgomery via Selma, and codified by the Congress with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the transformation of Southern society so rearranged the essential "realities" of the past that the power of the old mythology was destroyed."<sup>278</sup> In the middle to the late 1960's, the majority discourse in the women's college newspapers reflected a major shift in student attitudes away from Old South principles to New South ideals. Many students at the Women's Colleges started to delineate themselves from the Southern heritage ideal. Staunch segregationists were called "'diehard' "ante-bellum-minded Southern politicians," "shouting, stamping, and stirring" up chaos between the races, "Southern demagogues of the past seventy-five years" "ranting 'sons of the soil'" and "brother ploughboys" who based their political

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<sup>278</sup> Smith, "Myth, Media," 135.

campaigns upon emotional issues.”<sup>279</sup> On the other hand, progressive leaders like John F. Kennedy who explicitly accepted the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown* were applauded for their “display of courage.”<sup>280</sup> Students articulated a need to shed the Old South traditions of their forefathers, and become progressive leaders.

One way in which they saw themselves as these new leaders was through positioning themselves as the parents of the South, which hadn’t quite moved into an era of civilized maturity and equality. One Columbia College student explained:

The world is in a mess today. Many of us have been taught, as our parents and theirs were taught, to hate, not love. It is up to us to change this. We are responsible for the future because we are the parents of the future generation. We must lay for a good strong, personal foundation for our children and teach them how to be human beings—to love and to care.<sup>281</sup>

Rather than relying on a sectionalist, regional viewpoint embedded in the myth of the Old South, this student moves to a broader view, a view towards a collective humanity. She also associates the Southern heritage tradition with emotion, “hate,” rather than logic and structure. Hate is the cause of chaos, not the radicals, Northern liberals, or federal government seeking desegregation. Just as babies needed cleaning up after and guidance on right and wrong, wayward Southerners needed parents to clean up the “mess” they had made of the South. Students

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<sup>279</sup> “Supreme Court Ruling on Segregation Issue Causes Concern in S.C.,” *The Post Script*, May 21, 1954, p. 2

<sup>280</sup> “Sputnik Inspires Rhymes; Kennedy Wants Nomination,” *The Post Script*, November 5, 1957, p. 2

<sup>281</sup> “Love and Care,” *The Post Script*, October 22, 1969, p. 2

positioned themselves as the “parents” of the New South who would need to take up the role in leading the New South into a progressive future. A Sweet Briar student articulated a similar sentiment, explaining, “Differences are so insignificant in the eyes of God...Prejudice of our parents’ generation is the grease block to our modern life and goals. Student interest is important because we will be the next parents and future leaders, therefore it is necessary that we help to break down barriers and prejudices.”<sup>282</sup> Students saw themselves as future parents of a new modern South, while the prior generation continued to slow them down by letting outdated prejudice obstruct progress. Tradition was regarded as a stumbling block to future progress, not as something worthy of admiration. One Meredith student explained, “We simply do not wish to associate with Negro people, because they are different. This is based on no intelligible reason at all. It is an attitude that we have absorbed from our culture of the last three hundred years.”<sup>283</sup> Those who continued to support segregation were often criticized as old-fashioned, unintelligent, and nonsensical. In contrast to the “death-throes of the older members of society” who embraced the segregationist tradition, the future of the New South would be “up to those of the younger generations, who have maintained their lives flexible enough to admit new ideas with changing times, to transform their society to higher standards as smoothly and quickly as

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<sup>282</sup> YWCA Discusses Integration Problem, *The Sweet Briar News*, November 21, 1956, p. 1

<sup>283</sup> Let’s Re-examine Our Ideas, *The Twig*, May 4, 1956, pg. 2.



possible.”<sup>284</sup> The seemingly positive attributes of the Old South articulated a decade prior by white college women; that it is immutable, sacred, and ordered, are delegitimized and rendered unappealing.

In 1958, an Agnes Scott student described the future responsibilities that elite, well-educated, women such as those enrolled at Agnes Scott would have in the future of the New South. She explained, “We college women, as members of a special social, economic, and educational group to which we are privileged to belong, need to realize the important fact that we will be among the future leaders of our South. We cannot sit complacently by, waiting for the politicians “to work things out” for us. Right now we are pretty well removed from the situation. But in a few short years we will have to face up to our responsibilities as citizens who are highly privileged.”<sup>285</sup> In the middle of the 1960’s students started to articulate similar sentiments as the institution of segregation was being challenged. These students relied on Southern belle ideals about their place as leaders within Southern society. Yet, they were championing for a new, more inclusive South and wanted to direct others to follow their lead. In one article, the editors retold the story of John Thomas Cochran, a white supremacist and vocal leader in the riot against the integration of the University of Georgia on January 11, 1961. According to Cochran, after he was expelled for inciting the riot, he went back

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<sup>284</sup> “Supreme Court Ruling on Segregation Issue Causes Concern in S.C.,” *The Post Script*, May 21, 1954, p. 2

<sup>285</sup> “South Finds Hope,” *The Profile*, December 3, 1958, p. 2.

home and reconsidered his life, “in the rural surroundings that had given him his strong white segregationist philosophy.”<sup>286</sup> In this setting, apparently Cochran looked back at the anti-desegregation riot as a “blessing in disguise” because it changed his whole “attitude toward people” and he is finally “free of hate.”<sup>287</sup> Through storytelling, the article intended to encourage students to shed their old traditions of Southern heritage that encouraged hate. Columbia College students were encouraged with the following message, “We may not be exactly like Tom Cochran as far as taking part in violent riots is concerned, but most of us do share the prejudice that he felt simply because we are also Southerners. We stop and read these statements and take stock of ourselves. We realize the prejudice and the hate we embody and we know it must be eradicated.”<sup>288</sup> There was a central message: if Tom, a violent, white supremacist could change, then any of the, respectable Christian women students could.

Students articulated that as elite, educated Christian women they would be the most capable to lead the South into a new era. They were the “children of a gilded age” and in the fractured society, they were the leaders who would have to hold it together and build the future.<sup>289</sup> They were not backwards like other Southerners, but were progressives and smart. One Agnes Scott student, articulated:

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<sup>286</sup> “Georgia Riot: Students See True Self,” *The Post Script*, July 26, 1966, p. 2

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> “We will Be No More,” *The Twig*, February 13, 1964, p. 2.

Scott is better off than most southern campuses because we are looked to for leadership in the South. But she also points out that Scott doesn't take the responsibility it should in the South. We should be active in the area of exchange programs with other southern schools in order to broaden the perspectives of the southern students. We warrant leadership—and we ought to accept it. Agnes Scott people tend to become complacent. And the South is poverty-stricken in solid, intelligent leadership.<sup>290</sup>

Students started to articulate that association with the myth of the Old South was anti-intellectual and backward. They started to see those protesting and rioting against desegregation, as uneducated, backwards Southerners that needed guidance. On January 11, 1961, a mob of over 1,000 students and locals gathered outside of Charlayne Hunter's dormitory, one of the two black students that integrated two days before, initiated a riot, throwing rocks, smashing windows, and yelling racial insults. Referencing this event, one student warned, “for unless we provide now and in our future lives, the moral leadership and gumption of thinking persons, we too – as individuals and as a college – will be lumped in these same minds with the odds and ends of the rabble.”<sup>291</sup> She also argued that through participation in the riot, “a few students became tools for the Klan and their status-seeking Citizens’ Council-type brothers. Students became dupes of inflammatory forces, and the state took a beating in reputation...”<sup>292</sup> These were

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<sup>290</sup> “Hoefer Stresses Increase in N.S.A Participation,” *The Agnes Scott News*, November 11, 1964, p. 5.

<sup>291</sup> “Rabble Stains Page of Georgia,” *The Agnes Scott News*, January 18, 1961, p. 2.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

the “minority rabble.”<sup>293</sup> Thus, black protestors were not the only group capable of manipulation by external forces, such as by the Northern liberals. White rioters were likewise viewed as unintelligent, capable of being “duped” into behaving badly. The staunch segregationists that were rioting, intimidating black students, and perpetrating violence, were making a public spectacle of the South, and viewed as an embarrassment. It was the elite Women’s Colleges student who would shepherd the South into a new era of orderliness, decorum, and stability.

Students at the Women’s Colleges were supposed to be “well-educated, deep-thinking college students.”<sup>294</sup> One Meredith college student described an incident on a public Raleigh bus where three other white college girls on the bus were harassing a black woman. The black woman refused to give her seat to the white college students, and the students sat in the aisle so they wouldn’t have to sit next to her. These students characterized the woman as “one of those” “who don’t know their place.”<sup>295</sup> The Meredith College student gives her seat to one of the white women and sits by the black woman. She frames herself as different from other white college women who she deems the “super race” female type.<sup>296</sup> She further states, “I certainly hope that Meredith students as thinkers will think a second time before they join the majority of Southerners in such asinine acts of

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> “We Are Cheating Ourselves,” *The Twig*, November 12, 1954, p. 2.

<sup>295</sup> “Letter to the Editor,” *The Twig*, December 15, 1961, 2.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

prejudice.”<sup>297</sup> As leaders of the South, Meredith students had a duty to improve race relations not continue segregation. They started to realize how segregation and those who supported it participated in vile and oftentimes violent discrimination against black Southerners. They started to witness it first-hand, and they were opposed to it, like the Meredith student on the bus. “While a freshman Miss Curry had her first opportunity to come into contact and to work with Negro students in Southeast Region -sponsored conferences and seminars of the National Student Association, of which Agnes Scott’s Student Government Association is a member. A personal aspect of the race situation was revealed to Miss Curry at a meeting her sophomore year. She and a Negro-friend from New Orleans having met at a conference the previous summer, were engaged in conversation after the meeting adjourned for lunch. As they went through the door together both suddenly realized that they could not continue their conversation over a lunch table.”<sup>298</sup> When students described student activism around desegregation, they no longer singularly focused on the participants but persons and institutions that opposed to segregation. These persons and institutions impeded that natural order of progress, such as the ability to eat lunch with a person of a different race in public. They were an embarrassment to the South, and a blight on the image of the South. The represented what Tindall had called, the “benighted South,” a

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> “Agnes Scott ‘55 Graduate Directs S.S. H.R. Project,” *The Agnes Scott News*, October 11, 1961.

place lacking sophistication, full of intolerance, corruption, laziness, and economic impoverishment.<sup>299</sup>

Sometimes when rejecting the Southern tradition of segregation, students often validated the myth of a continuous, collective Southern tradition. One Meredith student praised the Southern way of life as “slow and easy” as “good and beautiful,” but also explained that it “can be demonic.”<sup>300</sup> Although students were in favor of desegregation, they often explained the difficulty of shifting perspectives to integration and equality because of their Southern heritage. One student explained,

And isn't this to be expected? This is the way we have been raised. We have implanted in our beings a stereotype, and, no matter how “open minded” we try to be, we feel that impact of things that move to change the blanket opinion. It is not easy. It's not that easy at all to walk into a room and meet the “enemy”—the experience that we been prevented from knowing. This experience is simply the meeting of another student—a Negro student—on a common, student to student level. ... Yet, we know that it is hard to swallow all the prejudice that has been built layer by layer since childhood. It is hard, but it can be done.<sup>301</sup>

The strength and continuity of the myth of Southern distinctiveness made it a controlling myth, fostering a sociocultural reality that students continuously validated, even as they supported desegregation.

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<sup>299</sup> George Tindall, *The Ethnic Southerners* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976).

<sup>300</sup> Taylor Attends National Conference—Jenny Lou Expresses Feelings, *The Twig*, May 5, 1960, p. 3

<sup>301</sup> Student to Student, *The Post Script*, May 7, 1965, p. 2

## American Democracy

Students were reorienting themselves into a new Southern ideal for which they intended to frame and lead. Earlier in the Civil Rights Era, some students had been opposed to legal racial discrimination and segregation, but were unwilling to unequivocally denounce, nor participate in any initiatives to further the cause of segregation. The middle to late 1960's brought about prominent changes in student discourses on desegregation, with a focus on progressiveness, national cohesion and integration. These changes aligned with what seemed to be happening across the broader spectrum of the South. Historian Stephen A. Smith, explains, "After experiencing and enduring a regional mythic continuity dating back to the 1820s, the South in the late 1960s and early 1970s was compelled to seek a new mythology to interpret and explain the new social and cultural realities of the contemporary South."<sup>302</sup> On campus, the myth of Southern distinctiveness, and it's many elements, such as the beauty of the plantation, the Lost Cause and the Old South, were being disrupted by discourses on national identity and being American. The myths of the American Dream and Democratic Pluralism often replaced regional myths in shaping students' desegregation discourse.

According to media scholar, Brian Ott, "The American Dream is one of the most prevalent hegemonic ideologies in American media text."<sup>303</sup> Under the myth of the American Dream, anyone can be prosperous by aspiring for success and

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<sup>302</sup> Smith, *Myth, Media*, 135.

<sup>303</sup> Ott and Mack, *Critical Media Studies*, 137.

working hard. One's level of success is a direct measure of how much effort the person puts into achieving his or her goals. In traditional views, particularly in the 1950's, success included economic mobility (finding more success than your parents or grandparents), securing a good job, becoming married, owning a home, and becoming part of the body politic, through acquiring citizenship or exercising your rights as citizens, such as voting. In the gendered version of this American Dream, women could acquire the fruits of an American democracy, particularly, a family, a house, and stable support from her husband, by staying dignified, not being too loud or revolutionary, and working hard on the domestic front. What makes the American Dream mythical is that it "boils down all of the complications of modern life into a simple equation of (hard work = success), and it symbolically erases issues of social inequality, class struggle, profit motive, and others that may provide barriers toward success."<sup>304</sup> Thus, under the American Dream myth, if someone fails to achieve a marked level of success, the fault lies securely with the person. Through utilization of the myth of the American Dream, structural explanations for inequality become grossly ignored.

As students started to distance themselves from the Old South ideal, students articulated the importance of embracing an American identity. "Becoming American" was viewed as important for national cohesion and moving forward as a modern democracy. They saw their patriotic duties as being

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid..



connected to national identity rather than regional distinctiveness. For these students, America was an established, pluralistic democracy, which needed to set the democratic standards for the world. The myth of the American Dream was at the center of students' understanding of the future of the South, and became a prolific discourse in the late 1960's. Nevertheless, the indelible adage that slaves were an inferior class of humans was recast and adapted to 20<sup>th</sup> century ideologies around the American Dream and the Protestant work ethic. For Black Southerners to achieve the American Dream, all they needed to do is work hard. The Protestant Work ethic in its racialized form was utilized to frame the worthiness of blacks to receive the equality that whites were given as a birthright. Although many students supported desegregation by the late 1960's, segregation wasn't viewed as the primary cause of black Southerners' continued inequality. One article in the *Sweet Briar News* represented that some white Southerners were "genuinely disgusted and appalled at the Southern Negro's low standard of living" and felt that black Southerners needed to take some responsibility in uplifting themselves.<sup>305</sup> This low standard of living was often offered as an excuse for whites being "vehemently against integration in the South."<sup>306</sup> Reverend Martin Luther King was considered a model of success for black Southerners. He was not only a leader, but he possessed the right and responsible Christian attitude. When

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<sup>305</sup> "Commentary And Catharsis: Integration," *The Sweet Briar News*, November 15, 1961, 2, 5.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

he was referenced in the Women's Colleges' newspapers, his quoted messages were uplifting and often exemplified an idea of self-reliance. One article noted that Reverend Martin Luther King had encouraged blacks to understand "that the literacy rate is much lower and the rate of crime and social disease much higher among Negroes than among whites and they must work to correct this."<sup>307</sup> Martin Luther King's message and his success as a leader became utilized as a discursive source of "mythical hope." According to Jeffrey M. R. Duncan-Andrade, "Mythical hope is a profoundly ahistorical and depoliticized denial of suffering that is rooted in celebrating individual exceptions. These individuals are used to construct a myth of meritocracy that simultaneously fetishizes them as objects of that myth."<sup>308</sup>

Black students were often framed as unfit for full integration because they weren't living up to the Protestant work ethic. Blacks were framed as undeserving of equality, until they had proven themselves worthy of full freedom. In *The Twig*, one article articulated this sentiment that blacks were unworthy of access to integrated spaces, explaining,

When, however, achievement replaces apology; when contribution replaces dissipation, when morality replaces lewdness; when character replaces delinquency, when accomplishment replaces deterioration, when desert replaces demand, when effort replaces wantonness; when ambition replaces complacency; when if ever, the Negro thus proves himself worthy, it is my

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Jeffrey M. R. Duncan-Andrade, Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing

Roses in Concrete, *Harvard Educational Review*, 79, no. 2 (2009) 183.

prediction that he will thereby so generate his own racial pride that he himself will prefer segregation.<sup>309</sup>

The use of dichotomous discourses of deserving versus undeserving serves to frame the black Southerner as the most undeserving of equal rights. The black Southerner is framed as the opposite of a hard-worker, a person with low morals and low self-worth, with no “racial pride” who begs for rewards rather than earns them. By arguing that once black Southerners find “racial pride” they will want segregation, the speaker underhandedly supports the idea of white racial pride as a valid justification and rationale for supporting segregation. It is argued that once the black southerner has reached the same racial pride level as whites they too, will understand that segregation is a respected Southern organizational structure. Another student declared, “The main controversial question that faces us today is whether the Negro *should* be equal with the white man.<sup>310</sup> The idea that if desegregation occurs at any point, whether immediately, or in the distant future, moral deterioration would occur lends itself to the idea that black students are unworthy to participate in integrated spaces.

Another article in the *Profile* urged black people to take responsibility for the numerous social woes presumed to be affecting their community. The author declares, “Even if nothing historic is achieved by the Negro, there are little

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<sup>309</sup> “Letters to the Editor,” *The Twig*, February 16, 1962, p. 2.

<sup>310</sup> “What about equality,” *The Twig*, November 30, 1962, p. 2.

problems that he can help solve.”<sup>311</sup> One of the social problems the author mentions is illiteracy, noting, “Illiteracy among Negroes is very high. There are too many Negroes who can neither read nor write. Surely these people ask for a life of decorum... As I see it, illiterate Negroes have no real position in our complex society...” In 1860, with the continued existence of slavery in the South, more than ninety percent of Southern African-American adults were illiterate.<sup>312</sup> With the students’ framing of the black, illiterate Southerner as an underserving outsider to the “complex society” of the United States, the structural determinants of illiteracy, such as the prohibition on educating slaves and the legacy of inadequate and separate education for black Southerners after the Civil War are masked. This discourse utilizes the frame of rugged individualism, embedded in the myth of the American dream. Under the concept of rugged individualism, an individual, if self-reliant, can unilaterally determine her fate by the strength of her determination and work ethic. In the same article, the author criticizes blacks for the presumed prevalence of juvenile delinquency in their community. The author declares, “Juvenile delinquency is a serious problem. It is not unusual to pick up a paper and read of a lad who has committed a crime...Juvenile delinquency among Negroes, in the past, was probably due to inadequate culture and social facilities. Now that the Negro is able to enjoy a fuller culture and social life, he should take

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<sup>311</sup> “Negroes Can Check Illiteracy, Crime,” *The Profile*, May 5, 1965, p. 4

<sup>312</sup> Roebuck and Murty, *Historically Black Colleges*, 21.

advantage of the opportunity.”<sup>313</sup> Furthermore, the idea that black people were enjoying a “fuller” life in the 1965 failed to capture the continued inequality in education, and the continued segregated, institutions that existed in the South including all of the Women’s Colleges. In these discourses on deserving versus undeserving, equality was a right that had to earned, but, only if you were black. This idea of inferiority could be used to support the continued exclusion of black students from white colleges and universities. By painting black students as unworthy, the students obfuscate their responsibility in continuing the legacy of the white supremacist regime. It’s “their fault” they are not worthy, not “ours” becomes an expression of non-responsibility, a Southern heritage mantra to sustain the segregation of higher education.

The myth of democratic pluralism is another national-oriented myth that replaced the myth of Southern distinctiveness in students’ discourse on desegregation in the 1960’s. Democratic Pluralism suggests that more than one group has power in a society, such that there is not a center of dominant control. Stuart Hall argued that the media often generated democratic pluralism ideology, which was a cultural myth. It was the “pretense that society is held together by common norms, including equal opportunity, respect for diversity, one person-one vote, individual rights, and rule of law.”<sup>314</sup> During the Civil Rights Era, students

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<sup>313</sup> “Negroes Can Check Illiteracy, Crime,” *The Profile*, May 5, 1965, p.

<sup>314</sup> Em Griffin, *A First Look at Communication Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2009), 335

witnessed civil rights activism and the opposing challenges by recalcitrant segregationists, and this struggle “demonstrated that there was trouble in paradise—America was not living up to its Dream.”<sup>315</sup> Students didn’t see the civil rights conflict in terms of individual participants or as a challenge to the order of the Old South, but as a fissure in the promises of the American promises of Democratic Pluralism. The Old South ideology became “Anti-American.” One Agnes Scott article noted, “...The segregated academy, in short, is founded in part upon ideology, and it is anti-American ideology. Most white segregationists would certainly think of ‘American ideals’ in somewhat different terms. Yet, it is obvious that they are not concerned with America, but with a small elite.”<sup>316</sup> The conflict between the Old South white segregationist regime and the New South progressive ideal of an integrated America publicly challenged core democratic pluralism ideals, such as individual rights and the rule of law. The South was rife with the inequality of segregation and the battle for integration often played out on television and the newspaper in front of an international audience. The Ole Miss incident, which resulted in 300 injuries and two deaths, was covered internationally. Students reported that violent instances of resistance to

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<sup>315</sup> Anderson, *The Movement*, 82.

<sup>316</sup> “Private Schools Sprung Up in South—Quality Ed.” *Agnes Scott News*, November 21, 1969. p. 1.

segregation like that of Ole Miss were “damaging to the image of our United States as a free nation.”<sup>317</sup>

“Freedom” was a central element of democratic pluralism articulated by the students. For students, black Americans weren’t wholly free, under the Jim Crow regime. Thus, the United States couldn’t be the model of democracy, at a time when the political ideology of a nation was crucial to its global influence. A Columbia College expressed this perspective, explaining:

We are supposed to live in a nation of freedom and equality, but we are often so filled with distrust, dislike, and contempt for fellow Americans that we are denying ourselves the opportunities to grow. We want to have peace in the world, but before we can hope for that we must have peace in our own country. We look with awe to places such as Selma and Birmingham, and we ask ourselves how can these people hate so much?<sup>318</sup>

Students started to see the hypocrisy in the United States seeking to be a global example of democratic pluralism, while segregationists by visible force tried to keep an entire segment of the population from having equal access to American social and political institutions. The student’s reference to Selma and Birmingham emphasizes the vitriol of segregationists as Civil Rights Activists were beaten and bloodied while the supposed forces of law and order, often participated. In the Political Perspectives column of the *Sweet Briar News*, the editors reported on politics, civil rights, and issues with desegregation in the United States, and

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<sup>317</sup> “Plea for Objectivity,” *Agnes Scott News*, October 3, 1962, p. 2.

<sup>318</sup> “We Cannot Isolate,” *The Post Script*, April 2, 1965, p. 2.

sometimes globally. In 1966, one of the articles in this column described the nature of protests and riots by marginalized people:

A riot is a desperate act of assertion made by people who feel they have been deprived of voice and influence in their communities. A riot follows the failure of all other means of communication. Without strong political leadership, the hostilities of class and rank will deepen in the slums. Racism has been called the cholera of our generation. At one time, public authorities were able to meet outbreaks of cholera by sealing off sections of their cities, but we can no longer seal off the infected areas.”<sup>319</sup>

Racism is metaphorical described as a contagious disease, a blight on society that was limited to certain areas of the country. However, the article warns that the disease of racism affects the entire country, such that the battle for a healthy, cohesive society is everyone’s battle. It can no longer be “sealed off,” and managed by local authorities.

Instead of reflecting on principles from the Old South, students started relying on discourses around American founding principles, and “equality” along with “freedom” were some of the most prominent elements of American values for students. It was the middle of the Cold War and to win the war on Communism, the United States had to set the utmost example of democracy, freedom, and pluralism. It was feared that Communists could revitalize their party principles by highlighting the racial divisions in the United States. In describing American democratic pluralistic values, students articulated that desegregation based on Southern heritage traditions, was at odds with the principles of freedom and

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<sup>319</sup> “Political Perspectives: Buried Racial Problems Erupt in L.A.,” *The Sweet Briar News*, March 23, 1966, p. 2



equality, principles that the United States was supposed to embody in the global landscape. Barbe White, the Student President of the NC International Relations Club at Meredith College, asked, “Can we expect the people of Asia, the Middle East and Africa to choose the American democratic ideal when we have not cleaned up our own backyard?”<sup>320</sup> The South was the figurative backyard of the United States, without the curb appeal of the lush, greenery of equality in America’s front yards of the North. Barbe White further noted, “...and more strongly than ever before was the ugly fact pressed home that racial discrimination cannot exist in a democratic America, that we cannot be satisfied with the current treatment of a minority group and still claim the benefits of which are abundant in our proclaimed democracy.”<sup>321</sup> The *Sweet Briar News* republished an article from Louise Krarr of the *Daily Tar Heel*, the student newspaper for the University of North Carolina (UNC) Tar Heel, in which she describes the sentiment of her Japanese friend about race relations in the South. The Japanese friend declared, “I heard before I came here that there were in the South of your country laws that required black races to sit in the back seats of buses and whites to sit in the front. This didn’t sound like the democracy that your country has given Japan.”<sup>322</sup> Another student asked, “Why do we worry so about liberty and freedom for the

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<sup>320</sup> “Letter to The Editor,” *The Twig*, April 30, 1954, p. 2.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> “Why Student Leaders Voted for Integration,” *The Sweet Briar News*, October 13, 1954, p. 7.

people of the world when we are able so easily to rationalize the position of the Negro in the United States?”<sup>323</sup> Segregation was “anti-American.”

One student explained, “We live together in a country founded on the fundamentals of individual freedom and equality, yet we constantly criticize and abuse the opposite race whether by riots and violence or by “white only” opinions.”<sup>324</sup> A student from Sweet Briar explained, “This country was born in a struggle for political liberty, equality, and freedom for all. These noble goals, in whose name we fought for our independence from Great Britain have evoked admiration and imitation all over the world. We are pledged by our Constitution and our Bill of Rights to grant equal use of our public facilities and the right to vote to every man How can you get around this fact?”<sup>325</sup> Students articulated that black students were not getting equal rights and recognition in the United States, particularly in the news. In a joint statement with Randolph-Macon and Lynchburg College, the *Sweet Briar News* editor criticized the Lynchburg area newspapers, because they said “Negro students at area colleges have not received equal consideration from the papers. Lynchburg area students entering local colleges are

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<sup>323</sup> “Quorum,” *The Agnes Scott News*, September 27, 1961, p. 2.

<sup>324</sup> “Letters to the Editor,” *The Twig*, April 25, 1968, 2.

<sup>325</sup> “Commentary And Catharsis: Integration,” *The Sweet Briar News*, November 15, 1961, 2.

usually given recognition, but if the student is Negro, his name is omitted. Any honors which come to Negro students are seldom, if ever, reported.”<sup>326</sup>

Students started to think of themselves as global citizens, just as they imagined the United States should be. They saw themselves as “student citizen[s].”<sup>327</sup> One student warned, “We cannot isolate ourselves from the situations to hide in small corners, anymore than the United States can isolate itself from all of the world’s pressures.”<sup>328</sup> When students encountered students and educators from abroad, they were often confronted with questions about the rights of black people in the United States. In one exchange in Russia, the American group recalled being asked, “about the rights of Negroes in America and why there were no Negroes in our group.”<sup>329</sup> American Exceptionalism is the idea that the United States emerged under unique conditions of social equality, such as a lack of Feudalism, which helped form strong ideological creed of liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire market system. Students understood that the idea of American Exceptionalism was challenged when a large portion of the population was excluded from the democracy. June Hall, an Agnes Scott College student declared, “The opinions that the world holds of the United States are, on the whole, not very flattering. We are not Great White Gods

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<sup>326</sup> “College Papers Blast Local Editors,” *The Sweet Briar News*, April 14, 1967, p. 2.

<sup>327</sup> “Letter to Editor,” *The Twig*, April 30, 1954, pg. 2.

<sup>328</sup> “We Cannot Isolate,” *The Post Script*, April 2, 1965, p. 2

<sup>329</sup> *The Twig*, March 19, 1954, p. 2, 3.

everywhere.”<sup>330</sup> Segregation was “democracy’s weakness.”<sup>331</sup> Unlike the segregationists who had used democratic rhetoric to mark protestors and activists as un-American and Communists, Southern Belles of the New South used democratic phraseology to push for desegregation, and include these groups. A Meredith student explained:

I feel that we as students, we at Meredith and elsewhere, can do something for our nation and for ourselves. We have grown up in the midst of internal and international strife... Tradition cannot chain us now because everything is changing in our world. We must cooperate with each other and not just justify our race’s views. We must search ourselves for a meaning to life that will bring hope for humanity.<sup>332</sup>

These students started to see their role in leading the New South.

## Conclusion

A few of the early student discourses on desegregation in the 1950’s mocked the Southern heritage tradition as old, unwavering, and immutable. Although students were not advocating for the complete and immediate overthrow of the Southern white supremacy regime, they encouraged other students to be forward-looking or consider other alternatives to traditional Old South views. Overwhelmingly, however, there was a clear nostalgia for Southern heritage and reliance on the myth to guide opinions on desegregation up until the middle of the 1960’s. The tension between Federal authority and States’ rights played out in

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<sup>330</sup> A.S.C. Hotbed of Apathy, *Agnes Scott News*, April 27, 1960, p. 2

<sup>331</sup> “Internationally Speaking,” *Agnes Scott News*, September 28, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>332</sup> “Letters to the Editor,” *The Twig*, April 25, 1968, p. 2.

Civil Rights Era discourse just as it had prior to the Civil War. The Lost Cause and Old South myths served to engender the divisions between the North and South, and called for Southern sovereignty in addressing desegregation. Southern “rebels” were honorable; they were true patriots who sought to preserve the pride of the South. Northern “radicals” on the other hand, were disingenuous, no-direction, attention-seeking, disrupters. Southern “ladies” were delicately feminine, needing protection from white men who were reminiscent of valiant Confederate soldiers preserving the Southern way of life and the dignity of refined white women. Northern women’s liberation “radicals” were unkempt, boisterous women who sought to erode the privileged place of white women in society.

For many students, their Southern heritage and their place within elite, private institutions validated their claims for independence, sovereignty, and the right to maintain the racial status quo. As alleged victims of federal tyranny and intrusion, students bolstered their rights to reject federal initiatives to push desegregation forward in the South. For others, it meant a delayed and unhurried process of desegregation led by Southerners. Lost Cause and Old South commemorative activities, which cast the South as slow, unyielding, and divinely rigid, ultimately, as Gully explains, “encourage maintenance of social order and existing institutions, discourage disorder and radical change, and stress the duties

of citizens rather than their rights.”<sup>333</sup> In thinking of themselves as victims, students were unable or unwilling to understand the plight of black Americans.

Although the influence of the Old South mythology in the Women’s College press decreased in the late 1960’s, the racialized order was often still supported through New South concepts of the American Dream. Under this myth in its racialized form, blacks’ lack of equality and their disenfranchisement were a direct result of their own work ethic. Stereotypes about black people’s lack of work ethic, proneness to criminality, and sought to justify their continued disenfranchisement through segregation. The egalitarian ideals of the myth of Democratic Pluralism in the United States gave rise to students challenging the established segregation order in the South. If America was going to set itself up as a model of democracy students argued that racial hierarchizing in the United States had to be upended. Whether students sought to delineate themselves from the Southern way of life or further entrench their position within it, Southern heritage and distinctiveness operated at the center of their opinions.

#### Chapter 5: The Sacred South

Charles Reagan Wilson notes, “Religion can be a force for social continuity or for social change.”<sup>334</sup> In the antebellum era through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Southern evangelical Christianity often served as a force of social continuity,

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<sup>333</sup> Gully, “Women and the Lost Cause,” 125.

<sup>334</sup> Newman, *Getting Right With God*, 39.

supporting a landscape of Southern separatism. Along with Southern heritage embodied in the Lost Cause and Old South ideals, evangelical Christianity became a central component of the Southern distinctiveness myth. Evangelical Christianity became a central part of the Southern distinctiveness myth, furthering the order of the “Sacred South.” First, Christianity became another way to support the myth of the Lost Cause by equating the Confederacy with a divine group of God’s foot soldiers. Wilson explains:

The spiritual interpretation of Confederate defeat became a sectional civil religion—the religion of the Lost Cause. Its saints were leaders like Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, and its ritual celebrations were Confederate Memorial Day and dedications of monuments. Organizations like the United Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy were the epitome of white cultural sanctity, and they regularly used religious language to sacralize the Confederacy.<sup>335</sup>

The South in particular was viewed as a region of religious purity, inhabiting a position closest to God. After the Civil War, Christianity became a way to impart glory on the Confederate dead, elevating them to angelic status, worthy of respect, admiration, and worship. Religious and political leaders utilized Southern evangelical Christian discourse to constitute the Reconstruction Era as an era of rebirth for Southerners, the chosen people of Christ. They had been entrusted with the duty of spreading an evangelical form of Christianity that supported their divine place in the racial hierarchy, and their right to live a distinctly, glorious Southern life, without Northern intrusion. Southerners like Christ, had been

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<sup>335</sup> Wilson, *Religion and the Us South*.

persecuted and tortured because they stood up for their principles in the face of an evil, Northern enemy. Honoring the sacrifice of Confederate soldiers for a divine cause became an essential element of Southern resurrection. The South was a sacred and holy place, distinguishable by its survival and continuity after the Civil War in the wake of rubble.

Secondly, Christianity was utilized to help construct a collective understanding of Southern whites' relationship to God and their supreme status in the Southern hierarchy. During Reconstruction, evangelical leaders often utilized religious discourse to maintain the segregationist landscape of the Old South. The Bible purportedly supported this racial hierarchy and served as the "linchpin of their defense of segregation."<sup>336</sup> In the antebellum South, the Supreme Being had purportedly given its blessing to the institution of white supremacy, in which slavery and Jim Crow were sanctioned as holy. Religion legitimized and validated a segregationist landscape by instilling the belief that Southerners were God's chosen people. In fact, slavery was often praised under the veil of Christianity for its civilizing effects of black slaves.

Slavery was viewed as a vessel of freedom for Southern blacks by breaking the connection to their ancestral culture and religion, which was thought to be pagan and uncivilized. Traditional practices were seen as ignorant, superstitious, and not divine. The biblical defense of slavery was centered on the idea that white

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<sup>336</sup> Newman, *Getting Right With God*, 48.



southerners could “evangelize heathen Africans.”<sup>337</sup> Through slavery, black Southerners had purportedly learned discipline, a divine work ethic, and the benefits of redemption through ordered, organized religion, which they were supposedly lacking. Freedom to participate fully in American society after enslavement could only be developed through the acquisition of white, dominant cultural mores and through the practice of Christianity. Although they had purportedly gained the civilizing effects of Christianity during slavery, black southerners were still considered part of a lower moral and social order. The positive effects of slavery were disassociated with free blacks after the Civil War. During Reconstruction, they were again criminalized and made out to be barbaric and pagan, which served as a Christian defense to the establishment of a Jim Crow regime. Additionally, after the Civil War, many religious leaders reaffirmed that black and white Americans were separated by divine order from God. During the early 1950’s challenges to segregation, evangelical leaders often reaffirmed that God had ordained the higher social, political, and economic position of whites in Southern society. Thus, to reject segregation was to reject God. Mark Newman explains, that, “for hard-line segregationists it followed that if segregation was biblical, then those who supported integration were guilty of sinful pride by believing that they could improve on the work of God.”<sup>338</sup> By resisting

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<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

desegregation, white southerners could return to the romanticized Old South—their Garden of Eden.

#### The Women's College Students: Guardians of the Sacred South

Students at the Women's Colleges often articulated their special connection to God as divine guardians of the Southern order. Just as the church was used to preserve the Southern order of antebellum slavery and Jim Crow, students at the colleges often used religious discourse to guard the segregationist order through the 1960's. At these schools, religion often provided the dominant moral institution to guide students' understandings of themselves, desegregation and black Southerners. As God's chosen people, students had to act in accordance with God's will, which meant resisting desegregation, particularly in social spaces. In spite of the evil of Northern and federal intrusion, students believed their apparent acts of faith in promoting segregation would serve, in essence, as a theodicy. Questioning segregation, the sanctioned social order of the South, was highly discouraged, because it meant being unfaithful to God. Thus, racial equality through integration was not something students were to champion; they had the blessing of God to support the status quo in Southern racial relations. God had a distinctive plan for the races, and segregation was part of his ordained order. During the Civil Rights Era, students essentially resurrected the Old South ideal of the Sacred South and their divine position in it.

Yet, even as white women articulated that some black women were worthy of admittance to their colleges, most students defined the spaces in which they

could be integrated. As guardians of the college, they understood the New South would require the southern heritage ideal continued well into the late 1960's to set boundaries around membership in public and private spaces. Access to more private spaces, such as in residential life and social spaces reserved for friends were still up for debate. In the wake of eroding segregation in higher education, some students articulated that God had divinely ordered the segregation of races. This was reminiscent of the evangelical denunciation of integration during the Reconstruction Era. As blacks became increasingly visible, especially in politics, some leaders of Southern religious organizations articulated that integration did not represent the divine order. They articulated that, "whites had a duty to maintain their blood untainted, since miscegenation would create an inferior, hybrid race in defiance of God's plan for racial purity."<sup>339</sup> For some students, rooming with black students would defy God's plan, as it could encourage more intimate relationships with black students, their families, and their friends. When explaining the findings of the Supreme Court in *Brown*, another student noted, "The Supreme Court did not rule on social segregation; this still remains a matter of individual taste."<sup>340</sup> When one state park in South Carolina was under federal order to integrate, one student reported, "the great majority of persons appearing before the committee want the parks reopened on a desegregated basis, but are

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<sup>339</sup> Newman, *Getting Right With God*, 5.

<sup>340</sup> "Supreme Court Ruling on Segregation Issue Causes Concern in S.C.," *The Post Script*, May 21, 1954, p. 2.

opposed to integrated swimming and eating facilities.”<sup>341</sup> These students articulated a divine orientation for the separate, but equal doctrine.

Even when encouraging support for integration, student members of the YWCA argue that “Intimate friendships are not necessary but human friendships are in the process of integration.”<sup>342</sup> When talking about the potential integration of Agnes Scott, Betty Jean Harper that “if a Negro wants an education here as a day student, there is nothing wrong with that.”<sup>343</sup> As a day student, a black student could have access to the educational facilities, but not the more intimate spaces such as in the dorm. Lynn Goodman, a Meredith sophomore expressed a similar sentiment, explaining, “I am in favor of allowing negroes as day students but not as dorm students. I do not think the races should be mixed in dormitory life. God would have created one race if he had wanted us mixed.”<sup>344</sup> These students were like the abolitionists who in the antebellum era argued that slaves were entitled to the right to live in dignity, as free beings independent of a “master,” but after the war supported a regime of separate but equal. According to Celeste Michelle Condit, these abolitionists “never fully erased from their minds a sense of

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<sup>341</sup> “CC And the Park Issue,” *The Post Script*, November 8, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>342</sup> “YWCA Discusses Integration Problem,” *The Sweet Briar News*, November 21, 1956, p. 1.

<sup>343</sup> “Roving Reporter,” *The Agnes Scott News*, February 21, 1962, p. 4

<sup>344</sup> “Students View Integration,” *The Twig*, October 12, 1962, p. 3.

‘difference’ that implied inferiority of some sort.”<sup>345</sup> Although they were supporters of equality, they used a discourse of “difference” to support a separate but equal paradigm.

A 1966 Agnes Scott article captured this sentiment of separation of public and private spheres for black and white students. In the article *The Profile*, entitled “Research Reveals Racial Prejudice,” the results of a campus survey on interracial relationships were published. The editors’ rationale for the article’s publication was a critique on the lack of visible integrated social groups around campus, and in the local area. Anne Felkner notes,

Occasionally Agnes Scott students venture out of their sheltered matriarchal society. Not often, but occasionally. When they do, they most frequently come in contact with other colleges who compose a large segment of the college population in the area. Notably absent in their group of contacts are students from the surrounding Negro colleges who compose a large segment of the college population from this area.<sup>346</sup>

Most student discourse seemed in favor of integrated educational spaces by the mid-1960’s, as it was established law, and was seen as necessary for the future progress of the south. In the 1966 survey, seventy-five percent of students were in favor of integrated educational opportunities, such as seminars or conferences.<sup>347</sup> However, the myths of Southern heritage still constrained students’ views on integrating their own social group, in which they seemed to prefer homogeneity.

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<sup>345</sup> Condit, Celeste Michelle. “Crafting Virtue: The Rhetorical Construction of Public Morality.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (February 1987): 91.

<sup>346</sup> “Research Reveals Racial Pride,” *The Profile*, November 17, 1966, p. 8.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

Students were asked what their reaction would be in certain social situations involving black participants, and the majority of white students in every situation, took a stance that would not require interaction with black participants. For example, in one hypothetical situation, students were asked how they would react to showing up at a party, and upon arrival finding a large number of black attendees, and being asked by the hostess to dance with a black man. The survey revealed that 48% would decline politely, 5% would decline with embarrassment, 23% would accept only because they felt obligated, and the remaining 24% would accept without reservation.<sup>348</sup> In another question students were asked about how they would respond to being asked on a date by a black man they had previously met. 66% of students said they would decline offering an excuse, 17% would decline with indignation, and only 15% would accept, mainly because they “liked the boy personally, and 2% were unsure how they would react.”<sup>349</sup> Of the students that would decline to date a black man, 92% would decline solely on the basis of race.<sup>350</sup> In a follow-up question, when asked whether they would refuse to marry a black man solely on the basis of race, 93% would refuse. 52% of students said they believed that black and white races should be separate, 40.7% said they

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

feared social difficulty and backlash from their decision, while only 7% said they would not refuse solely on the basis of race.<sup>351</sup>

What is most interesting about the survey is that black women at Spelman College, which was thought to be of comparable quality to Agnes Scott and approximately 9 miles away, were asked the same questions as the white women at Agnes Scott. When asked if they would dance with a white man at a party at the request of the hostess, 95% of Spelman students said they would—82% said they would without reservation, and 14% would accept out of obligation—compared to only 47% of white women surveyed at Agnes Scott who would say yes to dancing with a black man.<sup>352</sup> While only 15% of Agnes Scott women would date a black man, 75% of Spelman women would date a white man. Additionally, while 93% of white women at Agnes Scott would refuse to marry a black man, solely because of his race, with a majority believing in segregation, only 50% of Spelman students shared this sentiment, and the majority of them, 82% would refuse because they were afraid of the social difficulty. The editor suggests that this difference could stem from the fact that black students “feel much less strongly than the whites that the ‘races should remain separate,’ perhaps because they are more away of the extensive mixing that has already taken place.”<sup>353</sup> It is likely too that the black students never aligned themselves with the Southern

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

heritage myths that promoted segregation, as they were outsiders. This delineation of appropriate spaces for the integration of black people was similar to what George Lewis' refers to as "complicated hospitality." Quoting an editorial in Raleigh's *News & Observer*, Lewis describes the complicated hospitality occurrences in Southern stores "in which the Negro was a guest, who was cordially invited to the house but definitely not to the table," thus provoking the lunch counter sit-in movement.<sup>354</sup>

The *Sweet Briar News* also published the results of a survey about their attitudes towards racial and ethnic groups. The survey was administered as part of a Racial and Ethnic Minority class. The results of the survey revealed that students felt closest to English, Swedish, and Irish groups, and less close to black students, Japanese, Mexican and Israeli student. Sixty-six percent of students would invite a black person over for dinner, sixty-two percent would live next door to a black person, and ninety percent would work side-by-side with a black person.<sup>355</sup> Work is different from dinner and being in the same neighborhood, which requires more personal interaction. Students made use of biblical theology to sustain the segregationist landscape of the South. The use of evangelical doctrines and beliefs guided their discourse on desegregation. These students equated submission to

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<sup>354</sup> George Lewis, "Complicated Hospitality" The Impact of the Sit-Ins on the Ideology of Southern Segregationists, George Lewis, in *From Sit-Ins to SNCC* ed. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 52

<sup>355</sup> "SBC Class Takes Social Distance Survey," *The Sweet Briar News*, October 7, 1966, p. 3.



southern tradition with submission to God, for which they would be divinely blessed. They were convinced that the cause of segregation was a blessed, one. This use of religious ideology served to legitimize the continuation of segregation. God had ordained the continued subordination of black Americans to white Americans. Integrationists were seen as attacking southern principles, which was perceived as an attack on God's established order.

### Christianity—Redeeming the South

During the Civil Rights Era, the Southern Baptist Convention was the largest white religious denomination in the South and included nearly half of the Southern white population.<sup>356</sup> With 9.9 million members in 1961, and 11.8 million members in 1971, Southern Baptists represented the largest Protestant denomination in the United States.<sup>357</sup> After the *Brown* decision, many leaders of the Southern Baptist denomination, through their newspapers, conferences, and fellowship, recommended that as Christians, Southern Baptist should respect the legal decision; many did in principle, but “few desired or actively sought genuine integration.”<sup>358</sup> This inactivity in desegregation activism was evident in student discourse throughout the 1950's and 1960's. For some students God's plan was segregation, for Blacks and Whites to live separately, with Whites firmly stationed

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<sup>356</sup> Newman, *Getting Right With God*, 20.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*

in a supreme position. For others, God's plan was for the eventual integration of black Southerners into the Southern body politic, with equal opportunities for education, freedom, and human dignity. In both cases, reliance on God's wisdom and patience were considered ultimate virtues.

Patience has been classified as a cardinal virtue of Christianity. Several proverbial Bible verses relate the message that waiting in reliance on God's plan in all matters is an essential characteristic of the Christian faith. In fact, in Galatians, 5: 22, 23: Paul listed patience as one of the nine fruits of the Spirit—“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, *peace*, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Students in support of desegregation, often relied on this virtue of patience to relate their opinions on desegregation. As students described the future possibility of desegregation with an element of time, noting that regarding *Brown*, “...this law will become practicable gradually.”<sup>359</sup> As Christians, to rush desegregation would be sinful because students would be taking the future of mankind, collectively out of the providence of God. During Reconstruction, Christianity was used to invoke fear of the chaos that would ensue if the newly freed black slaves were allowed to comingle freely with white folk, thus lending support to a Jim Crow order. This same rhetoric of social chaos was utilized to promote gradual desegregation sometime in the distant future. This logic rests on the myth of the Old South; that it was a place of established order

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<sup>359</sup> “Students State Views on Supreme Court Decision,” *The Twig*, November 12, 1954, p. 4.

that continued through the mid-twentieth century, and that continuity was worth protecting. Betsey Shealy, the editor of Columbia College's *The Post Script* in 1954 reiterated this sentiment on patience when discussing the racial uplift of black Southerners, explaining, "As Christian young people it is our duty to see that they raise their standards. Not by any immediate atomic and violent methods, but by a display of patience on our part."<sup>360</sup> Although Shealy favored gradual integration, for her, immediate integration was comparable to a nuclear event, rife with instability and chaos. To emphasize that desegregation was an important initiative, but that the process required the need for patience, Shealy further utilizes a metaphorical adage, "Rome wasn't built in a day."<sup>361</sup> Time was considered sacred. Immediate desegregation after *Brown* was considered radical. One student explained, "We must make a firm and courageous stand for what we believe to be morally right. We do not need to be radicals, for the lessons of history teach us that long and sure development is more lasting and complete."<sup>362</sup> Students often relied on the Christian principle of "patience" to support their views on desegregation. Students utilized recurring terms and phrases signifying patience in desegregation matters, such as "in time," "it's inevitable," "run its course," "slow process," "reasonable time," "slow," "patience," "not practical yet," "one day," and "in the future." For students, patience in desegregation meant

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<sup>360</sup> "Racial Issue Causes Unrest In College," *The Post Script*, January 22, 1954, 2.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>362</sup> (Letter to Editor, *The Twig*, April 30, 1954, p. 2.

trusting in the providence of God to lead the South into the future, without any human intervention.

In the 1950's and mid-1960's, one of the justifications used to support segregation was that God had blessed the institution since black people possessed a morally inferior character. As students shifted their discourse to one of inclusivity—we are all the children of God—they encouraged desegregation, but not immediate desegregation. One student Shirley Henline explains, “Though we shall all (both races) have to be educated to this way of life, in time it will work, and ours will be a stronger nation when we make it work.”<sup>363</sup> Time is used again to indicate that desegregation is a deviation from the normalized ideal of Southern heritage. What is most interesting in this perspective is the idea that “both races” must become accustomed to a desegregated South. There is an assumption that even though black Southerners are in a subjugated role to white Southerners, they understand and are accustomed to their position in the Southern white supremacist regime.

During the 1950's and early 1960's, this racialized and gendered paternalism controlled students' understanding of their place in society relative to black women. According to George Lewis, this paternalism “spawned a number of interlocking assumptions” including that “southern blacks were thought to be content with the racial situation, as it existed,” because in “segregationist eyes,

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<sup>363</sup> “Students State Views on Supreme Court Decision,” *The Twig*, November 12, 1954, 4.

their innate inferiority made them grateful for whites' social support." By including black and white persons in the discourse, the Meredith student attempts to make the normalization of Southern heritage more valid, i.e., we all understand the Southern way of life. By articulating that black Southerners have to come to know the Southern way of life, the duty of responsibility for desegregation also becomes ambiguous. The speaker is allowed to forgo any full obligations towards the cause of desegregation. White women described themselves as guardians of society they constructed themselves as the mothers of society, and black students were constructed as the children, needing guidance and direction, which would take time. When the Agnes Scott Board of Directors announced that it removed the race restriction from admission for the academic year of 1963-1964 session, it offered that "every effort will be made to administer it conservatively and fairly."<sup>364</sup> This slow pace of desegregation was certainly evident in primary and secondary schools. For example, in 1965, eleven years after *Brown*, only 5.2% of Negro pupils were attending white classes and nearly 95% of the South's Negro pupils are still in segregated schools according to the Southern Regional Council.<sup>365</sup>

*The Sweet Briar News* reported on the YWCA Center Joint Centennial celebration in 1955, in which the black delegation refused to attend because they

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<sup>364</sup> "Board States Admission Policy; School Removes Race Barrier," *Agnes Scott News*, February 28, 1962, p. 1.

<sup>365</sup> "School Desegregation, Old Problems Under A New Law," *The Profile*, November 18, 1965, p. 2.

would be required to sit in a segregated section of the auditorium under Virginia law. The editors supported the refusal of the black delegation to attend, but also explained the white YWCA was “helpless in the matter,” couldn’t “push the question too far” or their largest contributor would have withdrawn support, and the YWCA couldn’t “continue the good work that they are doing in the community.”<sup>366</sup> “We do not believe, as do a number of fiery reformers, that problems such as this one can be solved overnight with the use of legislation and even of force, but we do believe that individual determination to help prevent situations from arising in the future will help to write off such laws as the above mentioned. The making public of such pettiness as is shown in this situation should help believers in segregation to see it in its true light.”<sup>367</sup>

One of the reasons students articulated that patience was especially important in the desegregation process was because black students would need training for moral integration into society. This was because black people were thought to be morally inferior. For example, Pat Loving, a Meredith college student, explained, “I don’t believe desegregation will work now because it is too drastic and sudden a step and would, in the long run, lead to moral deterioration.”<sup>368</sup> Some students promoted desegregation because they believed

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<sup>366</sup> “YWCA Joint Centennial Committees Find Segregation,” *The Sweet Briar News*, February 23, 1955, p. 2.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>368</sup> “Students State Views on Supreme Court Decision,” *The Twig*, November 12, 1954, p. 4.

that Christianity for would help uplift the low-ordered race of black Southerners. There was a belief that every man and woman could have a relationship with God, but that black Southerners had to be trained to develop this connection. Providing a high-quality Christian education to black southerners would be a redemptive gesture, for the South and the black students who would gain the benefits of a holy environment. Students involved in Christian associations, and engaged in missionary work, were the most vocal about their need to help uplift black students into the American body politic. In the mid-to late 1960's they saw an increasing role for themselves as the mothers of society.

Students positioned themselves as the guardians of Southern morals and students often articulated this duty when explaining their opinions on the “race issue.” Students often discussed their duty as southern belles and Christians to prevent the moral and social decline in the South. They were like the Republican Mothers who were the guardians of morality. The notion of women as moral leaders of society, harkens back to the early days of the Republic, when women, were viewed as the moral shepherds of children. As 19th century religion moved away from “original sin” to willful transgression as the basis of sin, special responsibility was placed on mothers to protect the young and provide moral training for their children.<sup>369</sup> Women’s roles as the natural caregivers of children

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<sup>369</sup> Solomon, *In the Company*, 39.

created their “special role as mothers of male citizens,”<sup>370</sup> as shepherds of humanity. In the years after the American Revolutionary War, under the Republican Mother ideal, women would greatly advance the progression of the new Republic by being moral shepherds in their homes and communities, ultimately preventing the degradation of American society. Students at the Women’s Colleges articulated a responsibility as Christians to prevent societal decay, and for many, segregation offered a structural opportunity to honor this calling. Students emphasized that as elite, Christian women they, like the grand Republican mothers, had a duty to prevent society’s moral decay. Armed with a liberal arts education they believed they could help black Southerners construct a more civilized, refined, Christian identity that would motivate them to uplift their own community. This was all based on the assumption, that black southerners were living in moral decay without access to proper, sophisticated, Christian guidance. Thus, black students could never be fully integrated into society until they were “taught the right way to live.” They believed they could, in part, transform the black student into a more civilized woman; a cultured Christian.

These women saw themselves as God’s guardians of civilized society. The promotion of desegregation for racial uplift often utilized evangelical terms, such as “converted” or “redemption.” As God’s chosen people, students at the Women’s Colleges had become divine interpreters of God’s word, and could

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid., xviii.



utilize this position to help black students get closer to God. One Meredith College student articulated this sentiment, "...and we as Southerners and students—and most importantly as Christians—must be responsible for the whole South—the Negro and the white. It is only with intelligent thinking and guidance from God that we can face this challenge courageously."<sup>371</sup> These students saw their roles as modern day saviors of the New South. It was their holy duty to support desegregation and lead the South to its promised land. It was their high purpose. As Christians they had to ensure that every individual had a chance to live up to their godly potential. One student explains, "Any Christian consideration of the problem must view each individual as of great worth, because he is of concern to God. Therefore, Christians must be concerned about what will give every individual the best chance for fullest development."<sup>372</sup>

Some students flatly rejected segregation, explaining that the system of inequality and division was unchristian. These students were emboldened to challenge segregation as ungodly. Segregation, plainly, was incompatible with Christian beliefs. Student members of the YWCA argued, "We do have a right to be loved and accepted as children of God and we must deny this right to any one just because he be of a different color. Gathers all and accept all breaking every

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<sup>371</sup> "Taylor Attends National Conference, Jenny Lou Expresses Feelings, *The Twig*, May 20, 1960, p. 3.

<sup>372</sup> "Let's Re-examine Our Ideas, *The Twig*, May 4, 1956, p. 2.

human barrier and strengthening ever human soul.”<sup>373</sup> Sara Evans a white civil rights activist from South Carolina explained, “Although Southern Protestantism in the 1950’s was in general as segregated and racist as the rest of Southern society, it also nourished elements of egalitarian idealism.”<sup>374</sup> By the 1960’s, campus Christian Associations were some of the most outspoken groups of women against segregation. In 1965, Agnes Scott’s Christian positioned itself as a leader and an authority on desegregation. One student announced that the Christian Association “cannot foster a truly living faith unless it is interested in and strives to find Christian answers to moral and social questions facing us today.”<sup>375</sup> One of these main questions was desegregation. In 1961, the “South Carolina Baptist Students, the National Conference of Methodist Youth Fellowship, and the Council of Lutheran Associations of America all spoke out publicly in favor of integration.”<sup>376</sup> Organizations such as these organized many of the opportunities for interracial exchange that students participated in during the Civil Rights Era. At Agnes Scott the Christian Association firmly stated its position on race relations in a campus article, explaining, “It is our conviction that as Christian students we are compelled to encourage and to work for understanding and acceptance of individuals of all races. Because of our situation

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<sup>373</sup> “YWCA Discusses Integration Problem,” *The Sweet Briar News*, November 21, 1956, p. 5.

<sup>374</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics*, 29.

<sup>375</sup> “Christian Association,” *The Profile*, March 30, 1965, p. 7

<sup>376</sup> McCandless, *The Past*, 232.

in the South, we wish to provide opportunities for contact between white and Negro students and for projects which aid in the solution of the community.”<sup>377</sup>

In addition to these associations, students relied on the fact that their schools were “Christian” colleges, to encourage support for integration. When discussing the possible integration of Agnes Scott, Ina Jones, explained, “If we did reject a qualified Negro applicant, then the school would not be living within the boundaries of its beliefs and policies-namely our support to other schools challenged with integration and our affiliation with the Presbyterian Church which has spoken out against racial discrimination.”<sup>378</sup> When Meredith’s Board of Trustees lifted the racial bars on admission, editors at the *Twig* interviewed students to get their opinions on the decisions. At least eight of nine students supported the decision, although two of these students were against integration of dormitory life. The fact that Meredith was a “Christian” school guided many of the supporters’ opinions. One Meredith student, sophomore Mary Ann Ainsley declared her agreement with Meredith’s decision to integrate, explaining, “I agree with the decision. I think it was a very wise move. Meredith is a Christian school, and if Christians don't take a stand on this issue, who will?”<sup>379</sup> They argued that the school held a belief in “God’s universal love for all mankind.” Another student, freshman Sue Kirby, argued, “I think that a church-sponsored school

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<sup>377</sup> “CA Takes Stand on Race Relations,” *The Profile*, November 3, 1964, p. 4.

<sup>378</sup> “Roving Reporter,” *The Agnes Scott News*, February 21, 1962, p. 4.

<sup>379</sup> “Students View Integration,” *The Twig*, October 12, 1962, p. 3.

should be integrated, since racial segregation is morally wrong.”<sup>380</sup> No longer was the rhetoric built around white supremacy and divine position. Everyone became God’s chosen people. The biblical theology moved to be more inclusive. One student argued that a Christian education is meaningless if students graduated believing in the divine, superiority of the white race. This student argued, “If we walk out of this school with a diploma in one hand and at the same time condemn a man and call him “nigger” then this education of ours means nothing... Honor, world awareness, Christianity, and education are just false words unless we understand that these words are to be found in the Negro dictionary too, for there is only one dictionary and who are we to say that it is white.”<sup>381</sup>

In an article published only two years after the *Brown* decision, one student encouraged students to question whether their beliefs on desegregation were compatible with Christianity. She urges, “Yet it would be worthwhile for all of us to re-examine the bases on which our opinions are made, to see whether they are really Christian or whether we have become so caught up in the times that we form judgments on unchristian foundations.”<sup>382</sup> Christianity became a means for providing hope of religious redemption for past sins committed in promoting Southern Heritage traditions. The redemptive nature of integration was for the benefit of Southern society as a whole, rather than for individuals. These students

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> “Student Cites Irony Embedded in Honor, *Agnes Scott News*, November 15, 1961, p. 2.

<sup>382</sup> “Let’s Re-examine Our Ideas,” *The Twig*, May 4, 1956, pg. 2.

expressed interest in what Charles Reagan Wilson describes as the “liberal dream,”—a dream of “a racially converted South, washed in the blood of the civil rights martyrs, redeeming the nation.”<sup>383</sup> The redemptive nature of Christianity could help students shed their old traditions, and lead the South into the embrace of God’s glory. On Sweet Briar’s campus, the only remaining slave cabin from the Sweet Briar plantation has housed the Sweet Briar News since its founding and served as space for the Alumni Association headquarters. The symbolically redemptive nature of Christianity came into play, when, in 1938, “at the request of students” the cabin was converted into a chapel. The cabin, painted white, with “simple furnishings and a peaceful atmosphere,” serves as a place for “private mediation and prayer.”<sup>384</sup> The maintenance of law and order was another godly principle that inspired compliance with the desegregation mandate. It was believed that God had put human leaders in their relative position for his divine purpose. Thus, true believers would honor the decisions by divine leaders, such as the Supreme Court. Desegregation had become the “law of the land” and “obedience to the law was essential to the maintenance of social order.”<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Charles Reagan Wilson, *Flashes of a Southern Spirit: Meanings of the Spirit in the U. S. South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 98.

<sup>384</sup> “Slave Cabin Chapel Provides For Quiet Meditation And Prayer,” *The Sweet Briar News*, December 10, 1958, p. 5

<sup>385</sup> Newman, *Getting Right With God*, 45.

To be loyal servants, students had to do more than just support desegregation they had to be active foot soldiers in redeeming the South. One Columbia College student, declared:

We were thinking about a statement we have heard several times recently: 'Not to act is to work against.' It's a statement of the sin of omission. It means simply that if there is a 'movement' or an injustice or an undone job, those of us who do nothing are fighting the movement or perpetuating injustice or shirking jobs. It means that we can't do everything, but we can do something.<sup>386</sup>

By equating inactivity to a sin, the students were making an unequivocal denouncement of apathy. These students were highly entangled with the church, so they used a metaphor that would most resonate with a large majority of the student body. To be willingly sinful, was one of the most egregious acts of a Christian, especially if done so on a recurring basis. Thus, omission, by failing to act every time there is an opportunity to act, was compared to a sin.

## Conclusion

Even as students supported desegregation of higher education, they often articulated a divine order of separate but equal social and intimate spheres. Black and white racial amalgamation was to be resisted like resisting the devil's influence. The justification for this ideal often rested on the antebellum stereotype that blacks were morally inferior and incapable of respectably integrating in the same circles as whites. As students embraced the era of a New South in the late

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<sup>386</sup> "We Were Thinking," *The Post Script*, May 28, 1965, p. 2

1960's, they often used ideas of redemption, and sacrifice. They articulated that although it would be hard to change their tradition, as Christians, they needed to sacrifice their comfort, just as Jesus did to save the Israelites. They had a divine duty to save Black people. In addition, students started to frame their position as one race in the brotherhood of humanity. They started to talk about all people as God's children, condemning segregation as immoral and ungodly.

### Chapter 6: Southern Belles—From Apathy to Activism

Along with Southern heritage and evangelical Christianity, the gendered expectations for elite, Southern white women were a large supporting element of the Southern distinctiveness myth. These women made up the aristocratic Southern Belle class of women, who were featured prominently as a distinguishing feature of Southern society. Historian Anne Goodwyn Jones provides a holistic description of the meaning of Southern Belledom:

Southern lore has it that the belle is a privileged white girl who is at the glamorous and exciting period between being a daughter and becoming a wife. She is the fragile, dewy, just-opened bloom of the southern female: flirtatious but sexually innocent, bright but not deep, beautiful as a statue or painting or porcelain but risky to touch. A form of popular art, she entertains but does not challenge her audience. Instead, she attracts them—the more gentlemen callers the better—and finally allows herself to be chosen by one. Then she becomes a lady, and a lady she will remain until she dies—unless, of course, she does something beyond the pale. As a lady she drops the flirtatiousness of the belle and stops chattering; she has won her man. Now she has a different job: satisfying her husband, raising his children, meeting the demands of the family's social position, and sustaining the ideals of the South. Her strength in manners and morals is contingent, however, upon her submission to their sources—God, the patriarchal church, her husband—and upon her staying out of public life,

where she might interfere in their formulation. But in her domestic realm she can achieve great if sometimes grotesque power.<sup>387</sup>

The Southern belle was expected to be, “Beautiful, graceful, accomplished in social charm, bewitching in coquetry, yet strangely steadfast in soul.”<sup>388</sup> Southern belles were white women from upper class backgrounds who appeared to embrace the virtues of the cult of true womanhood and set the standards for which poorer white women could aspire. The cult of true womanhood was a Victorian model of womanhood derived from the culture of upper class, white women who were generally Protestant. The elements of true womanhood, included “four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity.”<sup>389</sup> Under the original cult of true womanhood, women were often reduced to “an image of frailty and mindless femininity.”<sup>390</sup> Southern belles were expected to be genteel, polite and have perfect decorum.

For the Southern Belle serious scholarship in education was highly devalued.<sup>391</sup> A college education for the Southern Belle was simply “emblematic of class, a means to a type of refinement that labeled one a lady worthy of

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<sup>387</sup> Anne Goodwyn Jones, “Belles and Ladies,” in *Gender, The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* ed. Nancy Bercau and Ted Ownby. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 42.

<sup>388</sup> Owsley, “The Old South,” 16

<sup>389</sup> Barbara Welter, “The cult of true womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966), 152.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

<sup>391</sup> Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 43.



protection, admiration, and chivalrous attention.”<sup>392</sup> Education for the Southern belle was not a means to a career outside of the home, but an enhancement for marriage. Neil R. McMillen and Morton Sosna argue that, “In the South conservative religious dogma and a feminine ideal built largely around the experiences of a leisured upper class lent powerful reinforcement to the view that marriage and motherhood were the most appropriate outcome, if not the stated goal, of female college attendance.”<sup>393</sup> For white mothers, in particular, “college was a place to shelter young women until they came of age for marriage, not a place to encourage intellectual development.”<sup>394</sup> One Sweet Briar editorial described this sentiment about the Southern Belle and college, explaining:

Now that she is away from her sheltered home, the incredible Southerner can act the worldly person which she is obviously not. Out comes a brand new pack of cigarettes and she meticulously tries to inhale without giving herself away by coughing. However, the extent of her drinking is one or two rum cakes resulting in shrill giggles.”<sup>395</sup>

A Southern belle in college is pretending to be mature, but essentially, is a silly girl who remains sheltered in college, even though she believes she has escaped the confines of her parents. Being a Southern belle meant that a student would get just enough higher education to obtain the status of an educated woman, which

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<sup>392</sup> Christie Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle* (New York: NYU Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>393</sup> Neil R. McMillen and Morton Sosna, *Remaking Dixie: The Impact of World War II on the American South*, (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 1997).

<sup>394</sup> McCandless, *The Past*, 34.

<sup>395</sup> “Stunned S.B. Stereotypes Stand Corrected,” *The Sweet Briar News*, March 9, 1960, p. 3.

magnified her class status. Historian Jane Cesner explains that for Southern Belles during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “The aim of education broadly defined was to provide, in addition to academic knowledge, the marks of a thoroughly finished young lady. These included a number of skills, such as writing without mistakes or blots in the graceful, spidery handwriting of the day.”<sup>396</sup> Over time with the rise of higher education for women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the southern belle ideology embraced blending intellectualism and femininity.

The Southern belle ideal supported a racialized and classed division of womanhood. Southern belle status was reserved for elite, white women from prominent families, and these women were considered the preeminent ladies of society. Black women and poorer white women could aspire to be ladies, but would never be fully integrated in the social architecture of Southern belledom. Historian Jennifer Rittenhouse explains this ideal in her story of Eloise Blake, a black domestic worker. In 1939, Eloise Blake had called the home of a white woman and asked to speak to another black domestic worker, asking for “Mrs. Pauline Clay” instead of “Pauline.” The white homeowner was “so incensed by Blake’s impudence” in using a proper greeting for a black servant, that she called the police and filed charges against Blake.<sup>397</sup> Blake was fined fifteen dollars (the

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<sup>396</sup> Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865—1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 16.

<sup>397</sup> Jennifer Rittenhouse, “The Etiquette of Race Relations in the Jim Crow South,” in *Manners and Southern History* ed. Ted Ownby (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 20.

equivalent of three weeks' worth of wages) for "disorderly conduct over the phone."<sup>398</sup> Evelyn Glenn's analysis of the late 1800's segregated Southern labor market also revealed major differences in the expectations for black and white women. Glenn found that, "White 'ladies' were cloistered in the home, where they fulfilled their domestic and mothering duties, but black women who did so were shirking their duty to be productive workers...and seen as 'playing lady.'<sup>399</sup> This notion that there are separate conceptualizations of womanhood—whether one can be a "Mrs.," "Miss" or "lady" depends on one's race—reflects the concept of "racialized womanhood." Racialized gender is the socially constructed difference in gender role expectations "defined by race, ethnicity or nationhood."<sup>400</sup> As students discussed their off-campus interactions with black women, the idea of "womanhood" was constructed alongside racial and class ideologies. Racialized gender constructions defined the acceptability of black women's integration into public and private spaces. In the early part of the Civil Rights Era, many students articulated that black women could never be ladies, and were confined to a lower place in the Southern social hierarchy. However, by the late 1960's many students at the Women's Colleges argued that black women that followed traditional

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2004), 100.

<sup>400</sup> Eileen Boris, "From Gender to Racialized Gender: Laboring Bodies That Matter," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 63 (2003), 10.

Southern notions of femininity and intelligent sophistication were considered womanly enough to be in association with white students.

Using southern belle concepts white women students framed themselves as dignified and sophisticated leaders of southern society. Respectability was one of the most prominent themes of students' discourse on desegregation, and protesting was viewed as the antithesis of respectability. First, students articulated that protesting was meaningless because black Southerners had acquired some rights. When describing the 1960 election between the Republican Party nominee, Richard Nixon, and the Democratic Party nominee, John F. Kennedy, *The Sweet Briar News* applauded non-protestors in the city of Lynchburg. The column read:

On election day throughout the country students picketed for liberal action in Civil Rights by whoever was elected president. This seems ridiculous because both candidates agree in that area. In Lynchburg, picketing did not occur: more pertinent action took place. Several lunch counters were integrated on Monday preceding the polling. The stores should be congratulated for their progress.<sup>401</sup>

In a similar vein, other students argued that the existing position of black Southerners in the 1960's wasn't bad enough to warrant protests. After attending a presentation on the Black Power movement, some Meredith students, thought the speaker's points were "pertinent," but "some points were exaggerated."<sup>402</sup> Black Southerners were to be happy with the freedoms that they had already

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<sup>401</sup> "No Student Picketing in Lynchburg; Intercollegiate Council Takes Form," *The Sweet Briar News*, November 16, 1960, p. 2.

<sup>402</sup> "Howard Fuller's Speech on 'Black Power' Provokes Many Reactions, Much Thought," *The Twig*, November 17, 1966, 3.

received by the mid-twentieth century, and be satisfied that they were given more liberty than they had as slaves. The ideology that Blacks didn't deserve equality, and that they should be happy with the equality they had been given was used to discredit the legitimacy of valid claims of inequality.

In instances when there was positive discourse supporting integration or speaking out against the injustices and violence black people faced as they struggled for integration, there was often an attempt to discredit or lessen the impact of that voice. For instance, when Meredith student, Carroll Hicks, described the "*Daily Worker*," which often criticized desegregation, she designated it as a newspaper of the Communist Party, with "financial problems."<sup>403</sup> She also explained that, "Any offensive action, no matter how small, done to a Negro anywhere in our country is covered by the *Daily Worker*. Illustrative of these small offenses is what the author calls the "Mississippi affair."<sup>404</sup> The Mississippi affair was a reference to the violent riots that broke out when James Meredith attempted to integrate the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) backed by thousands of National Guard. The riots resulted in three hundred people being injured and two people murdered, including a French journalist covering the story. In categorizing the Mississippi affair as a trivial event, the author downplays the violent resistance to integration that occurred throughout the South during the Civil Rights Era. If black protestors were exaggerating their unequal position in

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<sup>403</sup> "The 'Daily Worker,'" *The Twig*, November 9, 1962, p. 3.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*

the Jim Crow South, then the failure of students to support integration or engage in any type of Civil Rights activism was reinforced as valid. Another event that was trivialized was the integration of UGA by Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes, which was met with riots and violence by a mob of over one thousand students and locals. One student explained, “Only a few students created the disturbances. The real problem is created by all the newsmen and photographers who try to stir up trouble.... We would rather not have them (the Negro students) but we don’t want all the mess.”<sup>405</sup> In another retelling of the widely publicized integration of high schools in Little Rock Arkansas, a student minimizes the event. According to the *Agnes Scott News*, Britain’s Labor Party made the following statement concerning Little Rock: “There’s something rotten in the state of Arkansas... white-skinned rottenness that oozes from a black and evilish unseen pigment in their souls.”<sup>406</sup> The *Agnes Scott News* editor discredits the severity of the incident, arguing,

Obviously such commentaries are of the highly sensationalized type, designed to arouse a purely emotional response. Important, in this respect, is the fact that the responsible press in many areas such as Germany, Austria, Japan play the story of Little Rock “calmly, and factually, even sympathetically.”<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> “Interview: Athens, ‘Real Problem—Newsmen,’ University Student Asserts,” *Agnes Scott News*, January 25, 1961, p. 3.

<sup>406</sup> “Foreign Countries Deride U.S. As Arkansas Crisis Continues,” *Agnes Scott News*, October 9, 1967, p. 2.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

For many students, the problems in the South were not related to the inequality of segregation, but rather by false portrayals by outsider news propaganda.

After *Brown* through the 1960's, when students discussed their responses to desegregation, respectability included being dignified, non-radical, and non-violent. In 1963, the editors of Meredith's *The Twig* took a campus poll on "Negro demonstrations," because of the immense amount of newspaper headlines on the "outbursts of racial violence in different parts of the South."<sup>408</sup> The use of outbursts to describe the protests suggests that the black protestors were prone to fits of emotion, rather than calm and orderliness—traits associated with respectability. In demanding equality through integration, black protestors were seen as demanding too much, too soon. Thus, black protestors were often associated with negative traits, such as anger, violence, and impatience—the opposite of Southern belle characteristics. One Agnes Scott student argued,

When change does not come swiftly, the natural reaction is rage and distrust the very emotions seemingly most prevalent among American Negroes. Men come to write off the entire social system as irrelevant and inadequate because it does not assimilate social change immediately.<sup>409</sup>

When recounting local protests events in Raleigh, the editor of Meredith College described the events as "cooperative action" – as nonviolent protests by black

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<sup>408</sup> "Campus Poll Reveals Varied Opinion on Negro Demonstrations in Raleigh," *The Twig*, May 23, 1963, page 2.

<sup>409</sup> "Pragmatism, generosity needed in black studies," *The Agnes Scott News*, February 7, 1969, p. 3-4.

college students.<sup>410</sup> The protests included picketing theaters and restaurants and attempting to gain admission to segregated churches.<sup>411</sup> Although the events were categorized as non-violent protests, in a campus survey, students and faculty admitted that they did not support the demonstrations. Out of the sixteen students and faculty members polled about the local demonstrations in Raleigh, only one respondent was unequivocally against integration and the protests. A freshman student, Jane Quion, explained, “I am very much against the recent Raleigh movement and integration as a whole. I think that if Negroes want good movies and good restaurants they can build some for themselves.”<sup>412</sup> Although the rest of the respondents were generally in favor of integration, only one respondent, a member of the history department, fully supported the protests, explaining, “It seems to me that the student demonstrations so far have been models of orderly and unanswerably justifiable protest. I feel that such students as these today are bound to make better adult citizens tomorrow.”<sup>413</sup> This faculty member established the criteria for a black-led demonstration to be considered appropriate, namely, justifiable and respectable—protests should be sophisticated, orderly, and dignified. Across all of the Women’s College student newspapers, student

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<sup>410</sup>“Campus Poll Reveals Varied Opinion on Negro Demonstrations in Raleigh,” *The Twig*, May 23, 1963.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.* 6.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*



discourse reflected these two elements as essential for lending their support to protests and viewing the protesters as respectable.

Among the fourteen remaining respondents in the Meredith poll, all of them were in favor in full integration of public spaces, except one who didn't believe churches should be integrated. Yet, none of them were in favor of the Raleigh demonstrations because the protests, in their minds, were either not justifiable or because they were not conducted in a respectable manner. Some of the reasons for the protests being considered unnecessary included: integration is inevitable, the protestors haven't exhausted all other democratic means yet, they have no power to change the system, and no "intelligent person can ask for the changes to come overnight." Some of the reasons for the protests being deemed not respectable included: negotiations were more civil than protests, protests simply are not the best way to get equal rights, protestors do not have good attitudes, and even peaceful protests can turn violent, like Birmingham. These frames on the respectability of protests were as Wilson explained, a "body of etiquette" that "instructed many southerners on how to enact regional social typologies."<sup>414</sup> According to students, the city of Raleigh had become one of the "riot-torn" cities in the United States as "the bitter glow of bitter glow of fires silhouetted against the dark sky for several days," while the "Negroes [were] the ones who [were]

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<sup>414</sup> Wilson, *Myth, Manners, and Memory*, pg. 5.

destroying property.”<sup>415</sup> It was assumed that black students were prone to violence, and the protests were used as evidence to support these assumptions even if they were non-violent.

When describing protests, even peaceful ones, students often used words that would invoke fear. For example, in one article, which was an apparent critique of token integration, the editor noted, “In a single terrifying week—from April 4 to 11—Negro rioting occurred in as many U.S. cities as in the entire year of 1967, and a ‘long, hot summer’ is imminent.”<sup>416</sup> Describing the week as terrifying suggests that the protestors were dangerous. The miserableness that the students could be expected to face because of the protests is captured in the phrase “a long hot summer,” which in the South is considered especially dreadful. In addition, by using the word “rioting” instead of “protesting,” the article positions the event as one associated with violence, as peacefulness isn’t generally utilized in connection with the word “riot.” Most of the student discourse at the Women’s Colleges reflected a duty to protect the respectability of their race, and protesting was disrupting this value. In some instances, students utilized examples of protests, even non-violent ones, to define the protestors as violent, uncivilized, and immoral, the opposite of their Southern Belle identity. Black students that white students encountered through integrated off-campus activities were praised and

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<sup>415</sup> Letters to the Editor, *The Twig*, April 25, 1968, p. 2.

<sup>416</sup> Nominal Integration, *The Twig*, April 25, 1968, p. 2.

valued when they did not talk about integration or civil rights issues affecting their communities.

In the early and middle of the 1960's the Black Power Movement was often considered the antithesis of respectability, with its leaders cast as militant, violent and undignified. One article at Sweet Briar articulated this, noting:

The black nationalist movement has been a powerful cause of the angry and violent mood in many Negro communities which could erupt into a racial war...but now the anger is open, encouraged by the revolutionary element of the black nationalist movement which believes that all white Americans are out to destroy all black Americans...Before demonstrators arched for integration a goal now nearly forgotten. Now political activists think of destroying American cities and the white people who run them. It is believed by many that the white man will attempt Hitler's solution, and the word "genocide" is regularly used. A nationalist in Los Angeles has predicted ovens for Negroes...The future promises only more violent eruptions, with probably more careful planning and skilled warfare."<sup>417</sup>

The Black Power movement was seen as a destructive force, capable of propelling the United States into utter chaos, with Whites potentially losing their security and safety. One student at Meredith College, Emily Barbour summarized her attendance of a Stokely Carmichael lecture at St. Augustine University, an HBCU in Raleigh. She explained:

I cannot change my whiteness, nor would I; but I can sympathize with the things Stokely Carmichael wants to do. Even so, I cannot accept his method. Martin Luther King said, "If a white man strikes you, turn the other cheek." Stokely Carmichael's reply to this method was, "tear his arm off. But if a black man strikes you, turn the other cheek." Surely there has to be some way for the Negroes to be accepted equally with the whites.

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<sup>417</sup> "Political Perspectives: Riots—Integration, Segregation or Revolution," *The Sweet Briar News*, September 29, 1967, p. 2.

Stokely Carmichael doesn't want equality as a gift, he wants to take it. There must be some other solution.<sup>418</sup>

The student frames Martin Luther King as the quintessential embodiment of peace; while Carmichael is positioned as a criminal, a burglar in waiting, ready to steal equality from Whites. By characterizing equality as a gift, black people are positioned as beggars, waiting for the generosity of white Southerners to provide them with full enfranchisement into the Southern body politic. Students at the Women's Colleges often articulated a fear about the possibility that Black Power movements were going to lead to a chaotic and unstable society, not realizing the inherent conflict of a racially segregated society.

One way in which white women students sought to prevent the decay of American society was by refraining from protesting and denouncing protests, which were seen as causing chaos and instability in society. Students often sought to distance themselves from rioting and protesting at other colleges in the South. Protesters were considered the antithesis of the Southern Belle ideal, and therefore not included in the positive narrative of womanhood. For examples of respectability in pursuit of desegregation, outsiders were encouraged to look to the Women's College campuses as examples of refined, dignified actions in race relations. At Meredith College, one student described the campus work in Civil Rights, explaining,

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<sup>418</sup> "Tension Rises as Carmichael Preaches Violence, Hate," *The Twig*, October 12, 1968.

Part of the work of the clubs is done among Negroes and thus contributes to interracial good will and understanding, the development of which has been marked at Meredith by steady progress rather than by revolutionary flare-ups. The general policy has always encouraged such steady progress. Long before it was accepted custom, audiences in the Meredith auditorium were non-segregated. There have been joint meetings of various organizations of Meredith and of Shaw University. Such meetings are held on both campuses...<sup>419</sup>

In positioning the school as a patient leader in integration, the student contrasts it with the actions of protestors who engage in “revolutionary flare-ups.” Steady progress is regarded as positive and successful, whereas protesting is considered volatile and unstable, as an unrestrained outburst. One Meredith student recalled the longevity in which Meredith had been “steady” in its progress of race relations through the telling of the story of Dr. Wallace, a Meredith alumni. She explains that Dr. Wallace remembered vividly an International Relations Club exchange with Shaw University, an HBCU in Raleigh, NC, during the 1920’s.<sup>420</sup> Dr. Wallace said, “no one lifted and eyebrow, which shows that progress can be made when things are taken normally and without so much ado.”<sup>421</sup> This story reiterates not only Meredith’s position as an exemplar in dignified dealings with race relations, but also further normalizes meetings and exchanges as “normal” and protests and direct action as abnormal. One student argued that being emotional about civil rights was understandable; it was a “common denominator” among

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<sup>419</sup> “What about equality,” *The Twig*, November 30, 1962, p. 2.

<sup>420</sup> “Dr. Wallace Reminisces About Meredith Girls Tennis with Dr. Campbell, Alice in Wonderland,” *The Twig*, February 23, 1967, p. 4.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

everyone involved.<sup>422</sup> However, she explained, “But we also have a responsibility to try to see the situation always in terms of cool reason. Our sanity is something we can share with our parents, with school children, and with each other. We owe it to our future to play this part in keeping mobbism out of Southern streets.”<sup>423</sup>

The student puts forward the idea that we are all part of humanity, with emotions and feelings. Yet, she differentiates the responsibility of students at the Women’s Colleges, who have the duty to stay measured in their activities and attitudes, in contrast to those radicals duking it out in the Southern streets. In Raleigh, students were invited to attend meetings on the city and “racial problems” where Blacks and Whites could “discuss *intelligently* any subject with the white or negro could be stimulated, so that a step could be made toward overcoming the racial barrier.”<sup>424</sup>

Referring to the sit-ins and non-violent protests in Raleigh, students and citizens were already praised for dealing with segregation and “the clash of values” in a more sophisticated” manner than those in the city of Birmingham.<sup>425</sup> The Birmingham reference likely refers to a 1963 bombing of black-owned property by white police and the KKK. These actions were subsequently followed by protests by thousands of Black demonstrators, who were met with police violence, water hoses, and police dogs—all of which received international media coverage.

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<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> “City Government, Race Problem Discussed by Reid and Winters,” *The Twig*, May 23, 1963, p. 4.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

College administrators, acting in loco parentis, often reinforced these notions of womanly respectability through strict campus rules and regulations. As late as 1968, women students at Auburn University in Alabama were prohibited from participating in campus demonstrations. In the case of a demonstration, women were instructed to “close the blinds on their windows, shut the doors to their rooms, and ‘sit quietly in the hall until the demonstration [was] over.’”<sup>426</sup> A 1961 graduate of Sweet Briar College recalled that she was chastised by the Dean of the college for her civil rights activism in the local area of Lynchburg.<sup>427</sup>

As integration started to take shape in the South, white women continued to use the Southern Belle model of womanhood to determine if black women were deemed respectable enough to be integrated into white campuses. In the late 1960’s, as white women students defined how black students should be integrated onto their campuses, they recognized that equal access to segregated education facilities was more or less a fundamental right. A few students articulated these views prior to the 1960’s, many aligning their support with democratic pluralism ideals. For example, in a 1954 Meredith campus survey of students’ views on the *Brown* decision, the results were varied, but there were students who expressed strong views in favor of integrated schools. No views were privileged, as the newspaper captured both discourse on the importance of integration and the views that segregation should be maintained. Sally Drake expressed, “I think segregation

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<sup>426</sup> McCandless, *The Past*, 224.

<sup>427</sup> McCandless, *The Past*, 230, 231.

of any race is unconstitutional and opposed to the idea of freedom upon which our country was founded.”<sup>428</sup> Another student expressed, ““I advocate non-segregation in every walk of life. What a glorious day it will be when those now discriminated against can share with us the wonderful opportunities that Meredith offers.”<sup>429</sup> The Court ruling was deemed a “step toward a more Christian democracy.”<sup>430</sup> Likewise, in a 1956 article in *The Twig*, integration was encouraged:

An argument frequently heard is that we cannot afford to integrate our schools because it will lower our educational standards. Any ‘can’t afford’ argument similar to this is the argument from expediency. At first glance, an argument sounds reasonable, but actually it is highly immoral and undemocratic, because it ignores the question of what is right and wrong completely, asking simply, “What is best for me?”<sup>431</sup>

A 1954 Sweet Briar article on the United States National Student Association (NSA or USNSA), offered, “The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled out segregation in the public schools and we can either try to work out peaceful integration or secede from the union. The South tried the latter solution once. It didn’t work.”<sup>432</sup> The NSA along with Christian student associations were generally on the forefront of integration efforts. These organizations offered interracial opportunities for exchange, and their meetings were generally integrated, even

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<sup>428</sup> “Students State Views on Supreme Court Decision,” *The Twig*, November 12, 1954, p. 4.

<sup>429</sup> “Views on Segregation Expressed,” *The Twig*, November 12, 1954, p. 2)

<sup>430</sup> “Students State Views on Supreme Court Decision,” *The Twig*, November 12, 1954, p. 4.

<sup>431</sup> “Re-examine Our Ideas,” *The Twig*, May 4, 1956, p. 2.

<sup>432</sup> “Why Student Leaders Voted for integration,” *The Sweet Briar News*, October 13, 1954, p. 4.



when student attendees' campuses were still segregated. After the *Brown* decision, a Special Committee for the NSA urged immediate desegregation of colleges and conditional integration in Southern primary and secondary schools.

They explained,

Segregation in education by race is unethical and unwise. It is now also unconstitutional. The USNSA pledged to seeking the elimination of such segregation urges the swiftest possible integration of the races at all educational levels in all parts of the country. In the face of ethical concepts, legal requirements and global ramifications there can be no justification for delay in the implementation of the Supreme Court decision.<sup>433</sup>

One article explained NSA's understanding of equality, explaining,

The basic tenet of equality becomes meaningful only when it is realized in all phases of human activity. In economics, politics, education—in the workings of society—the elimination of physical barriers limiting access to rightful opportunities is vitally necessary. The removal of these barriers along, however, cannot create equality of opportunity since prejudice exists in the mind as well as being manifested through discriminatory legislation. Education is a fundamental instrument through which the elimination of discrimination and prejudice can be accomplished.<sup>434</sup>

The students in the National Student Christian Federation (NSCF) also were against desegregation. During the sit-ins at Patterson's Drug Store in Lynchburg, Virginia on December 14, 1960, six students were arrested, and the NSCF gave their support to the students, explaining, "Civil disobedience can be a means to demonstrate not against the rule of the law or custom, but against the wrongness of particular laws or custom; it can be used responsibly, and with restraint as a

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<sup>433</sup> "Special Committee Suggests Definite Ways to Implement The Supreme Court Decision," *The Sweet Briar News*, October 13, 1954, p. 4.

<sup>434</sup> "Minutes From NSA Assembly Shows Interest in Desegregation, Aid," *The Sweet Briar News*, October 5, 1955, 5.

vehicle for seeking a less discriminatory civil order but not for the destruction of the civil order itself.”<sup>435</sup> The USNSA also condemned acts of violence against the black community, such as the 16<sup>th</sup> Street church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, urging the “federal government to delay no longer in sending troops to Birmingham, Alabama, to protect the lives and rights of a people who have been abandoned to racist terrorism.”<sup>436</sup>

Individuals that favored integration often explained that they had positive, personal experiences with other black students. Sally Drake for example, explained, “I have had favorable personal experience with non-segregation and therefore cannot see anything disagreeable about it.”<sup>437</sup> In personal first-hand narratives, students often suggested what they shared cultural affinities with black students, such as the same interest in music, education, travel, religion, and intellectual advancement. One Meredith student, Barbe White, retold her experience with black students through an exchange program, at Bennett College, one of the two HBCU’s for black women in the United States. She explained,

I spent the weekend at Bennett College, which as you may know, is a senior Negro woman’s college. Spending the night in the dormitory, I was able for the first time to become personally acquainted with other students of my age, who came from a variety of backgrounds and who have varied interests. We stayed up until past midnight in a ‘hen’ session. What did we talk about?-dates, money shortages, this McCarthy situation, our travel

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<sup>435</sup> “Letters to The Editor,” *The Sweet Briar News*, January, 11, 1961, p. 2.

<sup>436</sup> “NSA Condemns Negro Bombing,” *The Sweet Briar News*, October, 2, 1963, p. 6.

<sup>437</sup> “Students State Views on Supreme Court Decision,” *The Twig*, November 12, 1954, p. 4.

experiences, our plans for the future, and all the other things foremost in a college girl's mind....I could wish to have any of these girls as a roommate and best friend. These were all intelligent, well-informed, thinking, creative personalities.<sup>438</sup>

The Sweet Briar students that went to Barnard for an exchange program explained that they had a “priceless experience of having communicated openly and freely with Negro and white young people who are concerned about reaching eventual solutions to and understandings of the problems of promoting integration.” They also came to believe that “when people find that they have the same interests, similar intellectual capacities and educational backgrounds; compatible personalities, common goals, then, how can anyone be so petty as to ruin the means of communication by drawing a color lone?”<sup>439</sup> Two Sweet Briar students participated in an exchange at Hampton University, a coeducational HBCU, where they attended a seminar, “Racial Crisis in the USA and its solution,” lived in the dorms, and attended classes. The students declared that they were “entertained royally,” and felt that the experience of living in the Negro college community was “a real awakening. They found that the basic differences between Hampton Institute and Sweet Briar were due to the fact that the one was coeducational and the other not, rather than the racial composition of the student body. The delegates concluded that one weekend was just not long enough to gain

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<sup>438</sup> “Letter to Editor,” *The Twig*, April 30, 1954, p. 2.

<sup>439</sup> “Biracial Conference Profits All,” *The Sweet Briar News*, February 26, 1964, p. 4.

full benefit from the visit and agreed that they would be very interested in participating in a week-long exchange program.<sup>440</sup>

As College Boards of Trustees started to open up segregated colleges to black applicants, some students still saw themselves as protectors of the high integrity and intellectualism of their colleges. They expressed concern that black students would not be qualified to enroll in their colleges because they hadn't received the proper intellectual training. White women students essentially saw themselves as the intellectual Republican Mothers of the college – as the guardians of high collegiate standards. They expressed concern with the degradation of academic standards by the admission of black women students into their colleges. Students often expressed concern that black students were likely educationally inadequate for admission to their schools. Some students were resigned to saying, “little can be done about it” because black students are inadequately prepared. They argued that black students were unprepared for admission to their colleges because they attended subpar education institutions or because of their substandard biology. One newspaper contributor noted, “The Negro student on the threshold of considerable status and security, is so highly motivated that he more than makes up for other handicaps.”<sup>441</sup> Thus, black students were praised for their work ethic, but their purported inferior abilities were naturalized.

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<sup>440</sup> “Pat Gromel, Cindy Michel Attend Hampton Institute Seminar on Race,” *The Sweet Briar News*, May 11, 1966, p. 3.

<sup>441</sup> Fewer Negroes Drop Out, *The Profile*, November 17, 1966, 2.

At Agnes Scott, one invited speaker, Dr. Arthur Jenson of UC Berkeley, described the inferiority of black students, which he explained was based on genetics. A student summarized Jenson's lecture that, "Negroes as a race, or genetic pool, have a lower ability to do what school instruction and IQ tests demand, reason, and solve problems... and "that too little attention has been paid to the role of biology in the formation of learning ability due to the prevailing reliance on environmental theory."<sup>442</sup> When describing a rebuttal by Carl Rowan of the *Atlanta Constitution* a "distinguished Negro columnist" the student argued that, "counter-evidence on which a serious denial of Jenson's charge could be based was not presented."<sup>443</sup> The student noted, however, that "more professional sources" have also expressed concern over Jenson's claims.<sup>444</sup> Thus, even in acknowledging that Jensen's claims were questioned, the student discredits the black commentator as intellectually incapable of validly challenging Jenson's claims. Thus, white knowledge is privileged as superior. As elite, white women students shifted their focus from being guardians of the old south to guardians of the future they saw a new role within the college as protectors of the integrity of the leadership class. This leadership class would be made up of elite, intellectual women, with the grace, upstanding moral leadership, and dignified femininity to set the standards for which other women could aim to achieve.

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<sup>442</sup>"Head Start Data Discouraging Copple says 'Too little, Too late,'" *The Profile*, November 7, 1969, page 1.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

As students confronted the real prospect of integration in the late 1960's, students often articulated that they were not in favor of any type of affirmative action programs that weighted race as a factor in admissions. Intellectualism was espoused as essential and only students with the "same qualifications" were deemed suitable for entry. One Professor at Agnes Scott College, declared, "I'm not accusing Agnes Scott College of discriminatory admittance policies, the fact of the matter is that few black students have the academic background or the economic standing to apply to Agnes Scott College."<sup>445</sup> Students often articulated that "qualified Negro students" should gain admission to their colleges. Black students that were not accepted into white women's colleges were seen as responsible for their own failure to gain admissions. For example, one Meredith student explained, "Meredith has never rejected any *qualified* application for admission because of race. The Meredith policy of high academic standards has always held precedence over special privilege of wealth, position, or color."<sup>446</sup> When asked in a survey about how they felt about integration, one Sweet Briar freshman explained, "If a Negro girl has the qualifications needed to be accepted at Sweet Briar, I would not be offended."<sup>447</sup> For many students they relied on an established myth of meritocracy to guide their opinions on integration even when the reality of segregation was an everyday encounter within their campuses and

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<sup>445</sup>"Grubb: only individuals can solve 'racism.'" *The Profile*, October 4, 1968, 2.

<sup>446</sup> "Nominal Integration," *The Twig*, April 25, 1968, 2.

<sup>447</sup> "Students Give Opinion on Hearing, On integration at Sweet Briar," *The Sweet Briar News*, March 17, 1965, p. 4.

throughout southern institutions, such as churches, movies, restaurants, and shopping venues. For these students, the absence of black women on campus had little to do with institutional racism, but more to do with black students' own abilities. Through a focus on intellectualism as the central component of admissions into their schools, white students could disavow their role in perpetuating racial hierarchies.

### Southern Belles – Leaders of the New South

To be leaders of a new era of Southern life, students were encouraged to shed their passivity, a trait associated with Southern belles. They were also conscious of their stereotype as apathetic and capricious women. One Agnes Scott student urged students that they should “be sick of being classified as cloistered idealists.”<sup>448</sup> One editorial explained that outsiders viewed students at Sweet Briar as Southern Belles who were obsessed with Old South romanticisms, which they continuously sought to emulate so much that they were rendered pathetic and dependent. The article explained, that Sweet Briar students were viewed as “a mass of clean looking self-possessed girls who giggle and chatter annoyingly loudly to one another on the bus into Lynchburg.”<sup>449</sup> A Sweet Briar girl was obsessed with the Lost Cause, comparing “all of her callers to her ‘Daddy’... who

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<sup>448</sup> “Spelman Exchange Broadens Scott’s Liberal Horizons,” *The Profile*, April 7, 1965, p. 2.

<sup>449</sup> “Stunned S.B. Stereotypes Stand Corrected,” *The Sweet Briar News*, March 9, 1960, p. 3.

is a mixture of Robert E. Lee, Thomas Jefferson, and Governor Faubus all rolled into one.”<sup>450</sup> She also romanticized the days of the Old South, representing herself as a descendant of the planter class; “a delicate child representing Southern maidenhood” from “a genteel family that possessed a large fortune until the Civil War,” with “old Isaiah and Cora Lee” still offering a ‘Yes Miss.. I’ll do that for you’ so much so that “she cannot even adjust to a simple bed making routine.”<sup>451</sup> One Agnes Scott student articulated a similar sentiment, although she offered a slightly more modern conceptualization of the Southern Belle college, explaining “Outsiders think Agnes Scott is a sheltered college where nice, mannerly, complacent girls go who will eventually graduate to become mothers, housewives, and active PTA and Junior League members.”<sup>452</sup> In the mid to late 1960’s, students at the Women’s Colleges wanted to change their reputations, establish themselves as active leaders, and shed their images as frivolous girls who saw the world as a distant place. Breaking away from the Southern Belle tradition of apathy involved students developing their worldview and understanding the world outside of the college. In the past, non-action was viewed as respectable, and activism was considered radical. In 1960, one Agnes Scott student noted, “‘Radical’ is still a four-letter epithet in campus vernacular.”<sup>453</sup> Prior to the 1960’s

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> “What do you think?” *The Profile*, October 30, 1970, p. 4.

<sup>453</sup> “Ghosts Unsheeted,” *The Agnes Scott News*, June 6, 1960, p. 2.



radicalism was considered the antithesis of the Southern Belle ideal. At Agnes Scott, one speaker criticized the campus as “a hotbed of apathy.”<sup>454</sup> The editor agreed, noting that there were only about “twenty or thirty radicals on campus,” with most of the students being “the conservatives, who want to leave things just as they are, or who, more often, aren’t really sure how things are.”<sup>455</sup>

Another criticism of students at the Women’s Colleges was that they were not only apathetic, but also only concerned themselves with frivolous matters. A Sweet Briar editorial encouraged students to expand their thinking beyond juvenile day-to-day activities, so they could become the next generation of leaders. The article exhorted:

Forget that party in Charlottesville for a few minutes in order to plan something far more important than a costume. The future of America is honestly in our hands... We are in college to learn to think: let us all get an A for mature opinions which we believe in enough to uphold. Surely years that will be of more worth than the A we got on quiz for which we did nothing but cram.<sup>456</sup>

One reason students were viewed as apathetic was they didn’t seem to be concerned with the real world outside of the college. The obsession with campus life allowed students to stay sheltered from the realities of the world. At Meredith, an editorial criticized students for being too campus-centric, exhorting:

There is quite a tendency among college students, especially after they’ve been in college for two or three years, to forget that there is another world

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<sup>454</sup> “A.S.C –Hotbed of Apathy,” *The Agnes Scott News*, April 27, 1960, p. 2.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> “Exec Board Asks Serious Thought By Student Body on Integration,” *The Sweet Briar News*, January 18, 1961, p. 2.

beyond the halls of learning. Oh, it occurs to them at odd moments, and they even become aware of it, briefly, during vacation periods, but for the most part college is life as far as they are concerned.<sup>457</sup>

In one editorial, a student argued that for her and her fellow students,

it would be good for us to not only ‘rock the boat’ but it might not be bad if we fell out and went under a few times. Although at the present, we may not be rocking the boat, but we are rotting on the riverbank.... Where are you? Too busy getting an “education?” Too busy fighting with a suitemate? Too busy goofing off?...What are you doing? Sleeping? That does not seem to help rock the boat at all.”<sup>458</sup>

In a Letter to the Editor, Martha Stone also used the boat metaphor to condemn campus apathy, arguing that at Meredith, “‘Don’t rock the boat!’... seems to be the prevailing sentiment in our ‘nice’ apathetic ‘Meredith community.’ She goes on to ask, whether the school newspaper, the “race issue,” and “even the venerable English department” are “issues too controversial for the sheltered Meredith lady to face?.... Are we to live in an unreal world on Hillsboro Street away from the clamor and reality of the world?”<sup>459</sup> One of the explanations for the shift on the Women’s College campus, away from apathy to activism could be the influence of the rise of visible student demonstrations in the middle to late 1960’s. For example, between 1967 and 1968, over seven million students were enrolled in college and there were over 220 student demonstrations at over 100 colleges and

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<sup>457</sup> “Two Worlds For College Students,” *The Twig*, March 16, 1956, p. 2

<sup>458</sup> “Letters to the Editor,” March 25, 1965, p. 2.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*

universities.<sup>460</sup> Although students were in semi-walled communities of elite, Southern college campus, they were not isolated from the visual images and media retelling of student activism across the country. Sara Evans notes that with the influence of the Civil Rights Movement, led by Southern Blacks, “young white women” gained a “necessity to forge a new sense of themselves, to redefine the meaning of being a woman quite apart from the flawed image they had inherited.”<sup>461</sup>

The triviality for which students were associated was captured in this criticism of the student body by a Meredith College editor, when she encouraged her student body to, “Think patiently: We fought about dancing...What are we doing about integration.”<sup>462</sup> Students at the Women’s Colleges were protected from the world and the complications of desegregation. Another editor at Meredith College criticized students’ apathy by showing the dichotomy between campus life and the real world, just outside the walls of the college. The editor presents two different scenes, apparently happening at the same time. In Scene 2, “Winston-Salem is convulsed with race riots. Bitterness and hostility reigns, and destruction, wrought by prejudice, abounds.”<sup>463</sup> However, on campus, in Scene 3, “Girls lounge around dormitory rooms as they watch soap operas and drink diet

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<sup>460</sup> Norman E. Isaacs, et. al, *The Student Newspaper* (Washington DC: American Council on Education, 1970), 1.

<sup>461</sup> Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: the Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 57.

<sup>462</sup> “The Fifth Column,” *The Twig*, October 4, 1957, p. 3.

<sup>463</sup> “Worlds Apart,” *The Twig*, November 16, 1967, p. 2.

drinks. They discuss what they will wear Saturday night or why they got 94 on a quiz when they knew enough for 95.”<sup>464</sup> Within the walls of their college they could hide out in their “respective ivory towers and ignore vital issues” for which they “should be informed and thoughtful” as the “generation which must resolve the question.”<sup>465</sup> One Agnes Scott article scolded students for their apathy in race relations, international affairs, and even student affairs on campus, when there were “so many opportunities for student expression.”<sup>466</sup> One Sweet Briar student suggested that students were completely ignorant to the world outside of the college. She asked her fellow students, “Did you know that there is a world outside? Did you know that Malcolm X was just shot, that there is still a racial crisis, that the University of California is still in an upheaval that Khrushchev is not still the leader in the Soviet Union that things are really tense in Vietnam, that there is a world outside?”<sup>467</sup> In the *Agnes Scott Profile*, an editorial criticized students because they “became bogged down with daily work and forget to challenge and question what they are doing. They do not communicate with Atlanta, but prefer to be walled in on campus. They do not read, and know little about other campuses, much less other countries and such movements as black

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<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

<sup>465</sup> “Integration Speeches Promote Ideas,” *The Sweet Briar News*, October 10, 1956, p. 2.

<sup>466</sup> “Garden of Gripes,” *Agnes Scott News*, Wednesday, May 15, 1960, p. 2

<sup>467</sup> “Bzzz,” *The Sweet Briar News*, March 17, 1965, p. 2.

power, socialism.”<sup>468</sup> Students articulated that the student body at the Women’s Colleges was too sheltered to generate effective, worldly leaders.

Students involved in interracial associations or organizations, were highly critical of the apathy towards exploring the communities that hosted the colleges. They believed that students were not taking advantage of the diverse perspectives that their cities, like Raleigh and Atlanta, had to offer. They were remaining behind their walls of privilege, both literally and figuratively. One Agnes Scott student associated with Intercollegiate, an integrated group of students from the Atlanta area, offered this hope, “As they realize that this campus is too narrow a world to exist in, it is hoped, to, that Scott students will take advantage of the opportunity to broaden themselves as individuals through communication with a dynamic and varied community of college and universities.”<sup>469</sup>

Students were not only encouraged to shed their apathy, but to also become active in changing the entrenched social order of the South. As the leaders of the New South, they couldn’t sit idly by and watch the battle for equality, but needed to make a concerted effort to lead the South in a progressive direction. They needed to make a change in the way that they were doing things, distancing themselves from the past era of inactivity. In a Letter to the Editor of Meredith’s *The Twig*, the author asks the student body:

How many of us are asking ourselves, in the wake of Dr. King’s murder,

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<sup>468</sup> “Retreaters Ask Sharp Questions,” *The Profile*, September 22, 1966, p. 7.

<sup>469</sup> “Something of Value,” *The Profile*, May 12, 1965, p. 2.

and the nightmare that followed, what have we as individuals and Meredith as an institution done to help prevent such things from happening? I suppose that anyone can cite some few things in each category. All of us have made our small contribution to better race relations when it has been convenient to do so... We have our tutorial program and occasional interracial meetings and we are even going to admit a Negro student or two next year. There will be other small friendly gestures of this kind; but can we honestly say that Meredith has lived up to its responsibilities in this regard? If the answer is no then we admit a measure of apathy in this vital issue and we ought to be concerned now to find the most rapid and significant ways to begin making up for our shortcomings.<sup>470</sup>

The author lists a range of things students can engage in to move racial integration forward, such as recruiting students from black high schools, recruiting faculty, and adjusting the application requirements for black students. Students were encouraged to experience the “world outside” and take a stance on racial inequality and violence, even if this stance was radical, a stance deemed undesirable a decade prior. One Sweet Briar student exhorted students to become involved in Civil Rights activities, arguing:

We at SBC are often too much concerned with maintain the status quo and avoiding ‘trouble.’ Our refusal to take the constructive forceful and peaceful steps that are within our power has caused Negroes to resort to violence. If we want justice and peace in our nation, we will have to act now. Yes, there will be offended White men and women, but we cannot allow a rotten and unjust status quo to continue any longer. If we don’t use peaceful means the Negroes will be forced to use violent ones. If we believe in quality and brotherhood, we must work for it, not just talk about it.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> “Letters to the Editor,” April 25, 1968, 2.

<sup>471</sup> “Letters to the Editor,” *The Sweet Briar News*, April 19, 1968, p. 3, 4.

Students, such as this one at Sweet Briar, believed that inactivity would actually result in more chaos in the South, not peace. Non-violent action, such as protesting was not viewed as offensive as it had been in the past. Inactivity was considered immoral; it was shirking one's duty to lead the South into a new, stable era. If the students of the Women's College failed to act, they would be culpable for idly standing by and watching the South fall into ruin. The desegregation of the South was an issue that simply could no longer be ignored. In response to a chapel talk by Howard Fuller, the student reiterated Fuller's point that "no one can ignore the problem of integrating the Negro into the world of the white man because no one is exempt from human interaction, and also because in this situation the principle of 'I'll just ignore it, and it will go away' will no longer fit."<sup>472</sup> In the late 1960's the newspaper starts to be used to challenge apathy and acknowledge those who were involved in worthy Civil Rights activities.

#### Southern Belles – Encouraging Diverse Learning & Diverse Interaction

Students described that they could become leaders of the New South by embracing diversity, which was seen as essential to the acquisition of worldly knowledge. Students in the late 1960's articulated that they wanted to become part of the new nation. In the past, students saw themselves, as gatekeepers to the university and white students from good Christian homes with high academic standards were the preferred candidates for admission. However, many students

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<sup>472</sup> "Progress," *The Twig*, November 17, 1966, p. 2.

thought the advancement of “cultural diversity” was worth the consideration of race as a factor in admissions, sometimes over high academic scores. In describing the student body of her college, one student noted that it was “too homogenous and restricted valuable cultural interaction and exposure.”<sup>473</sup> Students often understood that inequality in education in the South diminished the chances for many black Southerners to have the credentials for entry into the private schools. In the late 1960’s interaction with different cultural groups was starting to become desirable as a means to advance learning. White women students started to articulate that admitting black students would enhance their own worldly knowledge, which was a requirement for leading the South into a new era. One Agnes Scott student expressed this sentiment, explaining, “If the diversity of the social and cultural backgrounds found in the student body increases, then (it is reasonable to assume) the depth and value of this kind of educational experience increases. Therefore, we should consider enrolling more black students...”<sup>474</sup> Enrolling black students and even hiring black faculty would result in “an enriched educational experience for all due to increased cultural interaction.”<sup>475</sup>

To receive the benefits of diversity, students started to ask for deliberate action to be taken to enroll black women. Students explained that their colleges

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<sup>473</sup> *The Twig*, October 11m 1968, p. 2.

<sup>474</sup> “Letters, P.B. Reinhart,” *The Profile*, October 16, 1970, p. 2.

<sup>475</sup> “Reinhart probes ASC black failings,” *The Profile*, May 16, 1969, pg. 2.



would be better colleges if they made “greater sincere efforts to enroll Negroes.”<sup>476</sup>

One student recommended more affirmative measures to recruit more black students. She asked, “In diversity of the student body and faculty. Where is a Jewish faculty member? Where is a black faculty member? Why don’t we offer full scholarships with a living allowance to black students...”<sup>477</sup> Another student offered suggestions for increasing the number of black students on campus, arguing that it was a Christian duty to actively seek out a diverse student body. She declares,

As concerned Christian women we have a responsibility to substitute a policy of deliberate integration for the nominal one. This can be achieved through intensive recruiting of Negro high school students, provision for sufficient funds for scholarships, employment of negro staff and administrative employees and even admittance of a group of Negroes with marginal academic standards. While a lowering of academic standards would be regrettable, in the interest of equality and morality, this and the other steps would be Meredith’s reminder to the community that her students are aware of and working to remove scars of racial unrest in Raleigh.<sup>478</sup>

Another student suggested that Meredith needed to do a better job in advertising its inclusive policy; she argued that Meredith should “make it clear through recruiting procedures, etc. that a girl’s race does not prohibit her admission.”<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

<sup>477</sup> “Letters,” *The Profile*, February 13, 1970, 2.

<sup>478</sup> “Nominal Integration,” *The Twig*, April 25, 1968, 2.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

Many white women students in the late 1960's began to argue that simply increasing the structural diversity at their colleges would enhance their learning experiences. By admitting more black students, they predicted that cultural interaction would happen naturally, and would be a worthwhile endeavor to enhance their own intelligence. The homogeneity of their colleges did not generate a climate "conducive to objective discussions of race relations."<sup>480</sup>

Another student asked,

Can we however, realize fullness of understanding until our minds have sought out all kinds of people and all manner of diverse problems in that these people have around them, hugging them tightly like stripes on a barber-shop pole. We are so homogenous here in this school and even in this state, that there is one area in which we are almost totally lacking association and understanding—the world of the Negro.<sup>481</sup>

In 1966, the Editors of Agnes Scott's *Profile* made an explicit statement in favor of diversity in their office, explaining, "The PROFILE, has several staff openings and is considering applicants without regard to race, religion, or national origin."<sup>482</sup>

Students also started to speak out on instances of discrimination on campus that affected the experience of black students and disrupted diverse opportunities for learning. They wanted to make sure that black students could be fully integrated into campus life. One of these areas involved discrimination in an approved housing list for Sweet Briar students. This list of housing options,

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<sup>480</sup> "Student to Student," *The Post Script*, May 28, 1965, p. 2

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> "Notice," *The Profile*, September 22, 1966, p. 2

provided students with the contact information of host families to stay in the cities of Charlottesville and Lexington, but this list, in essence, was separated by race. Many of the hostesses on the list refused to host black students, and those that accepted black students, wouldn't simultaneously accept white students. Students pointed out that the school had accepted black students since July 14, 1967 so they "should accordingly be allowed to share equally all privileges of white students in all areas of the college's influence."<sup>483</sup> 472 students along with 58 administrators, staff, and faculty signed a petition asking that the college extend its integration policy into its housing policy, and have one housing list for all students. The editors of the *Sweet Briar News*, asked, "Will Sweet Briar continue to be a leader in the community or will it shirk its responsibility and continue to condone the prejudices of some hostesses?"<sup>484</sup>

Agnes Scott editors reported the view of a transfer on the racial climate at Agnes Scott, declaring, "She also felt that there was bigotry in the school...As a Southern, institution for women, Agnes Scott should definitely be doing something for the Southern black woman. Here we are at a women's college in Atlanta with two or three black women among 800. Tokenism is not my idea of integration."<sup>485</sup> Students were calling out their own institutions for their discriminatory practices through use of the college press. In describing acts of

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<sup>483</sup> "Petition Presented At Exec.," *The Sweet Briar News*, April 26, 1967, p. 1, 4.

<sup>484</sup> "Accept Responsibility," *The Sweet Briar News*, April 26, 1967, p. 2

<sup>485</sup> Transferring-no myth, *The Profile*, May 8, 1970, p. 1.

ensorship by the college administration, one student at Columbia College recalled an incident in which the administration refused to allow a play to be performed on campus, “not due to the quality of the play, but because it required a negro male lead.”<sup>486</sup> Apparently, the director felt that “the public would not be ready to receive such a play.”<sup>487</sup> The author responds:

Perhaps. But we have confidence both in the college personnel and the outside patrons of our dramatic productions that if they approve of quality drama in the first place, they will approve of more enterprising productions...In short, we resent this umbilical cord-like existence, being strapped to antiquated institutions, and being denied the right to exist as individuals.<sup>488</sup>

The argument is centered around the college acting in loco parentis, while students wanted to be treated as individuals, with the rights of free expression. The argument focused little on the idea of equality or integration—that a black male should be able to lead an artistic production in which white women also participate. Nevertheless, it is another example of students challenging their administration over paternalism and policies that are discriminatory in nature.

For the most part, by the late 1960’s students were articulating that full integration and equality was a necessary step for the South to evolve into a modern locale. One student, explained, “As an anti-segregationist, I believe that integration will make a better future because a greater peace will be prompted and culturally, because equal opportunities will eliminate more quickly the social

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<sup>486</sup> “Censorship Evident At CC,” *The Post Script*, January 26, 1968, 2.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

stratification which hurts our racial relations today.”<sup>489</sup> One student even noted that cross-racial interaction needed to occur outside of just mere lectures and speeches. She explained,

Artificial, contrived situations like seminars and brief exchange programs will only emphasize the differences between blacks and whites. What we really need, after we know the differences, is the opportunity to see beyond them. Only through personal interaction in the routine of daily life can we see the basic similarities, which define people as people.<sup>490</sup>

Through these exchanges and interactions, students started to change their discourse to reflect that black students were just like themselves, and thus deserved to be integrated fully into American life.

To support their views on full integration students often utilized first-person narratives, describing their encounters with other black students at conferences and exchanges. At an interracial conference sponsored by the YMCA, YWCA, and the Student Advisory Committees, where the majority of attendees were black, one Meredith student articulated that the cross-racial interaction was the “most exciting aspect of the trip.”<sup>491</sup> Through the conference, she came to realize, “the desire of the educated Negro to be involved with the development of his generation in American society, not just as a Negro, but as a Christian citizen.”<sup>492</sup> Through interactions with black students, white women at the Women’s Colleges

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<sup>489</sup> “Letters to the editor,” *The Twig*, May 23, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>490</sup> “Limp Gesture,” *The Profile*, October 11, 1968, p. 4.

<sup>491</sup> “Letters to the Editor,” *The Twig*, May 12, 1966, p. 2.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*

discovered that they shared many interests with black women students. One Meredith student who went to a retreat roomed with a black student and explained, “it only took the time necessary to unpack for us to become fast friends and develop the loyalty and close feeling that you have for your own college roommate here at Meredith.”<sup>493</sup> As students started to gain cross-racial experiences, they often shared their experiences as positive narratives.

Agnes Scott College developed an exchange with the HBCU, Spelman College, because of its proximity and similarity to Agnes Scott, an exchange where “many Scott students made their first real friendships with Negro college students,” and where “once the step had been taken, color was forgotten.”<sup>494</sup> One Agnes Scott student explained that she appreciated the exchange because she had the “experience of knowing the students well enough to dislike some as well as like others.”<sup>495</sup> She found the students “receptive, open and friendly.”<sup>496</sup> Another student, Lucy, enjoyed the program, “because everything was ‘so easy,’” and “nothing was forced.”<sup>497</sup> Lucy enjoyed sitting around the dorm, discussing college life, such as dating and rules, and even went so far as to attempt the “jerk.”<sup>498</sup> One

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<sup>493</sup> “International Retreat is Held during Thanksgiving Holiday,” *The Twig*, December 19, 1962, p. 4.

<sup>494</sup> “Spelman Exchange Broadens Scott’s Liberal Horizons,” *The Profile*, April 7, 1965, p. 2.

<sup>495</sup> “Spelman Exchangers Value Relationships,” *The Profile*, April 28, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*

aspect of their visit, which made the experience of these women so pleasant was that the “race problem” was not discussed. One student appreciated, just learning about the women and their lives on campus and was glad “the conversation didn’t center on race.”<sup>499</sup> Instead of talking about what was seen as a divisive issue, the student, “found common bonds with the students in their similar problems, plans, hopes,” and “had begun building friendships.”<sup>500</sup> Another Agnes Scott student who participated in the exchange, was also happy that she did not have to discuss the Southern racial situation with Spelman students. She explained, “I thought they would talk more about race relations, and I’m glad we haven’t. We talk like college students and I don’t realize there’s a difference unless I look around.”<sup>501</sup> She described Cheryl, a sophomore at Spelman and President of her class as “typical of those who are overflowing with bits of wisdom and wit—a biology major who acts like an English major and whom everybody thinks is a French major.”<sup>502</sup> In describing the exchange, students articulated that black students at Spelman were just girls, with shared interests. They were considered extremely hospitable, because they did not talk about race relations, which made them respectable, Southern women.

In describing the integrated Intercollegiate group of black and white

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<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> Spelman Students Discuss Reactions, Sandy Prescott,” *The Profile*, April 7, 1963 p. 1.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid.

students from all over the Atlanta area, one Agnes Scott student articulated that the group discussed, “topics of interest to all college students,” with topics “from literature to politics.”<sup>503</sup> The student also noted that:

Although the group is integrated, it tries to avoid the racial issue altogether. This makes intercollegiate one of the few situations where Negro and white students can meet without centering their talk around topics which immediately divide the group down the middle. This allows individuals to meet each other as people who share common opinions and problems and who can manually gain exciting insights from new and different viewpoints...”<sup>504</sup>

Students believed that integrated association was beneficial for learning about black students, and developing an appreciation of the shared connections across races. Yet, often, these students articulated that they wanted to avoid talking about race with black students, because it was divisive. Students appreciated when they could associate with black students, that were “just girls,” not wound up by racial politics. The quality of the interaction became an overarching factor above race. As Agnes Scott students were entering into student teacher positions, many of the girls said they were most concerned with “getting a good teacher to work with,” “not with the teacher’s race or color.”<sup>505</sup> They started to acknowledge that they needed to become more interested in diversity, and building relationships with other women across racial lines. In one *Twig* article, the student body was asked, “The race question for Meredith girls is extremely

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<sup>503</sup> “Something of Value,” *The Profile*, May 12, 1965, p. 2.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>505</sup> “Atlanta schools integrate,” *The Profile*, January 30, 1970, 6.



relevant as this school prepares to integrate. Are we ready to involve ourselves in knowing people of other races so that we can accept them because we know them?”<sup>506</sup>

One of the ways in which students could become leaders of the New South was by encouraging the gathering of knowledge about desegregation and perspectives from black people on living in the South. To encourage learning through increasing cultural diversity, students started to invite speakers, participate in exchanges, and attend conferences. In the middle of the 1960's much of the student discourse shifted to calling out apathy and inactivity, and demanding that students at least educate themselves about the “race issue.” Hosting seminars, lectures and conferences discussing Southern history, politics, and legislation on race was part of this education process. Southern women's colleges begin to invite speakers on campus, to talk about racial issues. Students saw it as an important step to become knowledgeable about race, so they could lead the new era of the South.

Inviting speakers on race and hosting conferences became an integral part of the college campus in the middle of the 1960's. From students' commentary on these conferences, these conferences provided more than just surface-level knowledge on issues involving race and equality. For example, on November 20, 1965, eight speakers came to Columbia College to share progressive ideals on the South and

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<sup>506</sup> Letters to the editors, *The Twig*, March 25, 1965, p. 1, 6.

race at the “Southern Affairs Seminars.” Topics included white supremacy, Southern history and slavery, the Southern economy, religion and Southern culture. There was attention paid to recognizing and understanding the Southern past, but students also articulated an imperative to move forward towards Southern unity. Columbia students, “agreed that such seminars are good things and that there should be more of them.”<sup>507</sup> One three-day southern conference, Challenge ’65 started with the idea that, “If only one student can be shaken out of his apathy, then we have accomplished our purpose.”<sup>508</sup> The conference, entitled, “The Emerging World of the American Negro,” was attended by approximately five hundred students across different schools, including students from Columbia College. It featured the “Who’s Who in the field of race relations.”<sup>509</sup> The students even discussed the need for “radical change” and “knocking down barriers”—sentiments that would be deemed too progressive just a decade prior. One conference attended by Columbia College students in 1966 in South Carolina featured the theme of “justice” and featured speakers giving frank presentations about the inequality black Americans and the poor face within the justice system.<sup>510</sup> In January, 1961 *The Sweet Briar News* advertised The Southern Leadership Conference workshop on non-violent protest, voter regulations, and

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<sup>507</sup> “Eight Speakers Share Ideas At Southern Affairs Seminar,” *The Post Script*, December 7, 1965, p. 1, 4.

<sup>508</sup> “Students Discuss ‘World of Negro,’” *The Post Script*, April 2, 1965, p. 4.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid.

<sup>510</sup> “Conference Speakers Discuss ‘Justice,’” *The Post Script*, March 28, 1966, p. 3, 4.

community planning.<sup>511</sup> On November 21, 1966, students from an American Culture and Society group at Sweet Briar attended a local Amherst area NAACP meeting.<sup>512</sup> Not only were students learning new content, but they were gaining skills to actively participate in the social movements of the Civil Rights Era.

One of the newest ideals to make an appearance on white Women's College campuses in the 1960's was Black Power ideology. As the Black Power Movement became more visible in the South, some white college women had come in contact with the Movement through lectures outside of the college, guest speakers, or through reports from other students, often captured in the college press. The assertion of "blackness," "Black Power," and demands for civil rights was often juxtaposed beside a resurgence in old southern heritage narratives. Black Power was often characterized as a hostile takeover of America, with a goal of excluding the white masses. There was even concern that the assertion of Black Pride served as an affront to national cohesion. Yet, when some white students experienced interaction with the Movement in the late 1960's, they began to question their own position or sympathize with activists, particularly when they were assured that their relative economic and social position was safe from disruption. For example, after attending a presentation on Black Power, one Meredith College student explained that she was "relieved to know that to some

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<sup>511</sup> "Non-Violence: Leaders Convene For Conferences Concerning Sit-Ins," *The Sweet Briar News*, January 18, 1961, p. 2

<sup>512</sup> "Sociology Class Attends Meeting of NAACCP," *The Sweet Briar News*, December 2, 1966, p. 3, 5.

Negroes 'Black Power' did not mean a forcible takeover."<sup>513</sup> Columbia College brought civil rights activist, Victoria DeLee to campus for a luncheon with students and to lead a program entitled, "Dialogue With DeLee."<sup>514</sup> DeLee was raised in South Carolina and witnessed the lynching of black Southerners and perpetual violence against them and herself, even once being rendered unconscious by the violent blow of a white landowner whose fields she was sharecropping. She began a civil rights crusade in the 1940's, which focused on anti-lynching, voter registration, school desegregation, and lobbying the federal government for civil rights protection. The article reported that although Mrs. DeLee "hated all white people and vowed that, when she grew up, she was going to kill as many whites as she could before getting caught," she heard a sermon, found God's wisdom, and along with her own actions, put her "total faith in God and the "young people of America to change the status quo."<sup>515</sup>

Students invited speakers, such as Matthew Perry, Jr. the Chief Counsel for the South Carolina chapter of the N.A.A.C.P., and an "authority" on race relations whose "address concerned the race relations in our state and what a Columbia College girl could do to improve them."<sup>516</sup> In the late 1960's black speakers, educators, politicians, activists became prized lecturers and guests on these

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<sup>513</sup> "Howard Fuller's Speech on "Black Power" Provokes Many Reactions, Much Thought," *The Twig*, November 17, 1966, p. 3.

<sup>514</sup> "Dialogue with DeLee," *The Post Script*, March 13, 1970, 3.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid.

<sup>516</sup> "Matthew Perry Speaks On State Race Relations," *The Post Script*, October 1, 1969, p. 1.

campuses. They were described less as novices with suspicious qualifications, and more as important experts in their fields, who had valuable knowledge to contribute to the campus, and who were deemed to be “authority” figures on race relations. In one forum at Columbia College, black University of South Carolina students were invited as guests and talked about education inequality in the South, protesting, and token integration.<sup>517</sup> The program was apparently so well received on campus that at least half of the attending students remained for informal discussions with the speakers until the Student Center closed and then after that, they talked until the dorms were locked.<sup>518</sup> When Marion Wright came to give a “clear presentation of the Negro students’ position in the South” the *Agnes Scott News* praised the presentation as a “rare opportunity for us to have such intercourse with a student of the race, which, in the South, is generally considered to be diametrically opposed to our own.”<sup>519</sup> They further explained,

We should be grateful to Marion for coming to Agnes Scott for obvious reasons. It was for many of us the first close contact with a Negro student. It was a good contact, a stirring and honest declaration of purpose from a stimulating person. And there are others like her, I for one, do not wish to be deprived of the privilege of knowing them.<sup>520</sup>

Students started to publish articles that challenged symbols of Southern Heritage and criticized the associated myths. Thoughtful articles about how the

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<sup>517</sup> “Forum Discussions Center on Vietnam War, Race Relations,” *The Post Script*, May 17, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>519</sup> “A.S.C –Hotbed of Apathy,” *Agnes Scott News*, April 27, 1960, p. 2.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*

reproduction of power, white supremacy, racism, and inequality are perpetuated in society become more prominent as featured articles. For example, in 1969, Columbia College printed a black power critique of “The Young Eliza.”<sup>521</sup> Some of the critiques included that slavery was never challenged as immoral, the theme of freedom only applied to white characters, and stereotypes of black people as lazy and docile provided amusement for the “lily-white audiences.”<sup>522</sup> The article also provided a description of what Black Power signifies, what the movement intended to do, and the editors’ purpose in publishing the article, which relied on Columbia College’s mission—“to develop cultured individuals who will become intellectual and spiritual assets in all human relations” and provide “a vital awareness of the contemporary problems of organized society together with an understanding of responsibilities leading toward their solution.”<sup>523</sup> Students started to publish information pieces about the history of black Americans and their contributions to American society. For example, they featured articles about black soldiers during American wars, as well as the injustices they faced even though they fought for their country and their freedom, in many cases.<sup>524</sup> Through exposure to the critical consciousness of Black intellectual and Black Power

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<sup>521</sup> Black Power Intellectuals Might Criticize “Young Eliza,” *The Post Script*, March 14, 1969, p. 3

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 4.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>524</sup> “Race Makes Little Difference When Dying for One’s Country,” *The Post Script*, May 6, 1966, p. 4.

thought, students at the Women's Colleges started to understand and rebuke the stereotypes that held up cultural myths of Southern heritage.

## Conclusion

In the middle of the 1950's and early 1960's as students embraced the Southern belle ideology, gentility and respectability helped perpetuate the racialized social hierarchy of the South. Black students that white students encountered through integrated off-campus activities were praised and valued when they did not vocalize their stance on integration; they were admired when they had faith, patience, and weren't too demanding. On the other hand, protestors became the antithesis of the Southern Belle ideal; they were the undignified, rowdy crowd who were prone to violence. White women saw that they had a duty to protect the Southern order and protestors were seen as antagonizing to this duty, as they caused chaos and instability. The Southern Belle ideal of femininity and protectionism continued to be entrenched in students discourse in the late 1960's as students considered the Women's Liberation Movement. Students continued to favor their separate status as "women" who were worthy of protectionism, as this secured their racial and class privilege. Historian Anne Goodwyn Jones explains, "Southern girls who assume the roles of belle and lady take on an entire history of the meaning of the South—its class, race and gender systems and its past and

future.”<sup>525</sup> The important message in Jones’ statement is that women “assume” these roles. Southern Belle identity as a continuous lineal object from the antebellum South is a mythical element of an overarching myth of Southern Heritage. Southern Belle identity is a social construct, not a natural predestined role. Etiquette and respectability became racialized as a means for distinguishing white cultural identity and securing its place in the top of the Southern racial hierarchy. Etiquette and respectability became a justification for continuing existing patterns of exclusion.

In the late 1960’s the Southern Belles at the Women’s Colleges started to question their southern heritage and how it related to their views on black students. They wanted to be forward-looking, and be guardians of the South in a more progressive way – in a way that only elite, intelligent women could. Through off-campus interracial interactions, students started to frame black women students as more aligned with the student belle ideology—“as more like us.” Students, especially those associated with Christianity, started to invite black women and black men on campus to speak about their experiences in the South. They started to talk about Black Studies and being culturally in tune with the rest of the nation. Particularly in the late 1960’s students pushed back on overt prejudice, student apathy, and student inactivity.

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<sup>525</sup> Charles Reagan Wilson, *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 4: Myth, Manners, and Memory* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 43.



## Implications

This dissertation provides new insight on the Civil Rights Era, Southern cultural myths, and the central role of elite, white women in rejecting and maintaining established racial and gender hierarchies in the South. The myth of Southern distinctiveness provided the major ideological foundation for white women students' attitudes on desegregation and their views of their roles within the shifting racial and gender climate in the South. The utilization of this cultural myth by white women students in their desegregation discourse yields several broad implications.

First, by using mythical representations that are aligned with a history of the oppression of black Americans, and reproducing these as natural, common sense, ideals, white women students furthered perpetuated explicit and implicit racists ideologies. Stuart Hall calls this phenomenon, "inferential racism," which is similar to Bourdieu's conceptualization of doxa, but explicitly linked to race. For Hall, inferential racism encompasses, "those apparently naturalized representations of events and situations relating to race, whether 'factual or 'fictional,' which have racists premises and propositions inscribed in them as a set of unquestioned assumptions."<sup>526</sup> In fact, James Lull argues that, "Hegemony

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<sup>526</sup> Stuart Hall, "The whites of their eyes: Racist ideologies and the media," in *Gender, race, and class in media: A critical reader* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) ed. Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), p. 20.

requires that ideological assertions become self-evident cultural assumptions.”<sup>527</sup> Thus, for white supremacy to remain entrenched in American society, racial representations that support white supremacy have to become so naturalized that receivers of these representations take them as fact, and remain unaware of their role in perpetuating racial inequality. For example, even students in favor of desegregation framed Southern Heritage as a real cultural product as they argued that students should rid themselves of it. By arguing that students should end their continued reliance on the Southern Heritage ideal, even student integrationists further perpetuated its existence as real, rather than questioning its legitimacy outright. The controlling myth of Southern distinctiveness became entrenched and reinforced in the socially homogenous environment of the segregated college.

Secondly, from this research we see how the interaction of gender, race, class, and regional identity promoted a very specific understanding of Southern norms and culture. Specifically, the framing of the cultural myth of Southern distinctiveness by white, elite women encouraged the perpetuation of racial inequality for black women and gender inequality for white women. These elite, white women students occupied a very particular role in the South’s cultural hierarchy as the guardians of the moral and social order of the South. Utilizing norms around respectable behavior for Southern women, these women linked

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<sup>527</sup>Lull, “Hegemony,” 62-63.

respectability with racialized and gendered understandings of womanhood and social activism.

Students at the Women's Colleges considered themselves to be "respectable ladies" and the preeminent Southern Belles. Through the cultural myth of Southern distinctiveness, "lady" became racialized such that black women were not deemed ladies. In the social hierarchy of the Old Plantation, black women as slaves, were excluded from the category of lady, empowering the white homeowner to exclusive rights as lady over the house, which included power over the slaves. Students continued this norm, positioning potential black women students as something other than lady. For students at the Women's Colleges, black women students could prove their closeness to the ideal of a Southern lady by showing their respectability, by being "just girls." This standard of respectability and the positioning of black women as something other than lady, justified their continued exclusion from the elite institutions for white women up until the late 1960's.

Being a "lady" gave white women a powerful position in southern society—some power over white men and power over both black men and women. The maintenance of this position was so important to the students at the Women's Colleges that it became undesirable to participate in any movement seeking to advance women's equality. Protesting, attending rallies, and simply challenging the racial and gender hierarchy of the South were undignified activities, not appropriate for Southern Belles. Thus, the myth of southern distinctiveness

became a way to depoliticize women students, discouraging them from participating in the Civil Rights movement and the Women's Liberation Movement. "Gender equality" was especially seen as a radical idea. The cause was too disruptive to established Southern hierarchies, just like desegregation.

Lastly, through this research we can see how the maintenance of power can be supported through pervasive reliance, and reproduction of cultural myths, particularly among elite groups sharing the same class and racial backgrounds. Stephen A. Smith argues that "the mythology of the contemporary South was not entirely the product of carefully planned persuasive strategy by a formal alliance of modern mythmakers, but neither was it the completely accidental result of unconscious public rhetoricians."<sup>528</sup> "Southern social typologies were not isolated tropes but parts of a structured system,"<sup>529</sup> organized by elites, religious leaders, and political masterminds to secure their prominence in the post-Civil War Era. By equating segregation with the natural order of southern life, elites were able to solidify their relative position within the dominant group, encourage dominant cultural cohesion, and create racialized boundaries around group membership. Students even articulated that both Blacks and Whites understood and appreciated that southern society is held together by the common norm of racial segregation. Segregation as an integral aspect of a distinct Southern diaspora was the dominant discourse, and in a homogenous environment, this type of racialized myth faced

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<sup>528</sup> Smith, *Myth, Media*, 135.

<sup>529</sup> Wilson, *Myth, Manners*, 5.

little challenge. The plight of black Southerners and the inequality they faced was largely ignored. When students started to engage in cross-racial interaction and attend diverse programming, the dominant myth that black Southerners appreciated the Southern racial hierarchy was disrupted. Thus, it is important to think about the ways in which cross-racial interaction and increased integration of historically homogenous spaces, can disrupt cultural myths that promote racial inequality.

The Women's Colleges in the 1950's and 1960's as molders of emerging elite, white women, provided an important location for students to contemplate what roles they would play as women in reaffirming or challenging racial and gender inequality on campus and in society upon graduation. These students tucked away behind the racially homogenous fences of the elite women's college, faced little challenge to their conservative ideals. Through an analysis of the student newspapers during the Civil Rights Era we get a snapshot of these discourses, attitudes and opinions and discover how the controlling myth of Southern distinctiveness became entrenched and reinforced in the socially homogenous environment of the segregated college. We also see how students' increasing involvement in cross-racial interaction and diverse learning opportunities, may have supported the disruption of some of these entrenched discourses. This dissertation not only helps us to understand how cultural myths reinforce racial and gender hierarchies, but how students utilize these myths to construct, racialized, classed, gendered, and geopolitical understandings of social

issues. This dissertation also reinforces the importance of understanding how women's intersecting group identity characteristics, may affect their understanding of important social issues and their willingness to participate in various social movements.

Appendix A**Keyword Search Terms for Digitized Student Newspapers**

Black  
Brown v. Board  
Civil Rights  
Colored  
Desegregation  
Discrimination  
(In) Equality  
Freedom  
Integration  
Jim Crow  
Ku Klux Klan (KKK)  
Liberty (ation)  
Martin Luther King (MLK)  
Negro  
Nigg\*\*  
Protest  
Race (ism) (ist) (ial)  
Riot  
Segregation  
Sit-In  
Slavery  
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)  
Supreme Court  
White Supremacy

Appendix B  
**The Women's Colleges**

<b>Colleges</b>	<b>Agnes Scott</b>	<b>Columbia</b>	<b>Meredith</b>	<b>Sweet Briar</b>
Founding date	1889	1859	1899	1906
Accreditation	1907	1938	1921	1920
Associated church upon founding	Presbyterian Church	Methodist Church	Baptist Church	Private Grant from an individual
Top Religious Identity of Students (1954)	Presbyterian	Methodist	Baptist	Unknown
Institution type	Private	Private	Private	Private
Students' geographical Background (1954)	Southern, approximately 44% from Georgia, .3% from the North	Southern, approximately 94% from South Carolina, 1% from the North	Southern, approximately 91% from North Carolina, .9% from the North	Virginia, New York and Texas, 33% from Virginia, 24% from New York, and 15% from Texas
Number of students in (1954)	455 residential students, 83 day students	538 students	602 students	199 students
Tuition Costs (1954)	\$1,275	\$848.50	\$795	\$2,000
First Year Black Women Admitted	1965	1966	1968	1966
First Year a Black Woman Graduated	1971	1969	1971	1968



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