

The Heteronormative Structures of Greek Life at Lafayette

Lexi Long

Professor Armstrong

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Introduction

This paper attempts to illustrate how heterosexuality shapes the Greek Life system at both Lafayette College and in the University circuit. It is divided into two parts: part I explains the history of fraternities and sororities at Lafayette using archival data gathered over decades. Both creation stories are similar in that social improvement outside of the classroom was greatly needed, but the execution in itself was very different. By comparing the formation of fraternities and sororities directly, it is evident that there is a contrast between how men and women are treated at the college. Part II of the paper delves into the culture from which sororities and fraternities thrive on. It speaks on how gender affects language and why strict binaries are hurtful to people who identify as something other than a man or a woman. It also touches on masculinities and femininities traditional in the Greek Life structure, and how this breeds a harmful culture of heteronormativity, leading to sexism in the social scene. The party culture in sororities and fraternities survive off of the power structure, where men are at the top and women attempt to gain favors through their physical appearance. Finally, the end of the paper speaks on homophobia particularly prevalent in Greek Life, and the differences between how men and women illustrate their discomfort towards it. Lastly, the paper ends in possible solutions to make Greek Life a more tolerant and welcoming system.

Part I: The Creation of Fraternities at Lafayette College

Even before the first class of men walked down the halls of Pardee in the spring of 1832,¹ secret societies at Lafayette College existed. Although the Board of Trustees was opposed to the formation and upkeep of these organizations, their displeasure was unheard. Initially, the secret

¹ Gendebien, Albert W. "Part I-Fraternities Arrive on Campus." *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience*, Lafayette College Archives, Mar. 1998, sites.lafayette.edu/greeks/part-i/.

societies of Washington and Franklin served as literary clubs that promoted deeper intellectual thought and the love for English literature. Although academic in nature, Washington and Franklin became a secret brotherhood where passwords were used, meeting places were hidden, and extracurricular brother bonding activities were encouraged. These societies were initially founded in a “spirit of rebellion against a strict disciplinarianism that treated the young men as boys; a pedagogical system that taught them mainly Latin and Greek in as dull a way possible—recitation—and offered little if anything else except chapel and church services.”² Life at a liberal arts university in the mid to late 1800s was traditional, especially at a Presbyterian school like Lafayette. Because of its religious roots, Lafayette was particularly conservative regarding alcohol, and was a completely dry campus. Students attempted to take advantage of the dry-campus law by using a Son’s of Temperance Movement organization as a coverup for another secret society, but it was swiftly rejected.³

Although the administration continued to fight against the formation of fraternities, the students bypassed them all together and secretly obtained the national charters, later forming the first Greek chapters of Phi Kappa Sigma in 1853 and Delta Kappa Epsilon in 1855.⁴ The Trustees proposed a weak solution in 1857 including a pledge that stated: “by a resolution of the Board of Trustees, every student is required to sign a pledge that, during his college course, he will have no connection with any secret society without previous permission of the Faculty.”⁵ Although the college attempted to enforce this pledge on its students, they had virtually no power. At this point, almost 50% of the entire student body was involved in some sort of

² Gendebien, Albert W., *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience*.

³ Gendebien, Albert W., *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience*.

⁴ Gendebien, Albert W., *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience*.

⁵ *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Lafayette College, for the Year 1858-9*, Easton Pa. p. 13.

organization,⁶ so it was impossible to discipline more than half the student population. After various rebellions between administrators and students, including a mobbing of the president,⁷ Lafayette realized that fraternities were here to stay.

By 1891, the well-established fraternities decided that in order to strengthen their brotherhood, houses needed to be built. Although one would expect more resistance from the administration, enrollment was rising and more space was needed to house students. Because of this, Lafayette realized that it would be a good investment in the long run to help finance the construction⁸ of the fraternities so that they could expand the student population. This illustrates that the institution's main incentive is and has always been expanding capital, even though they were fighting against the formation of fraternities for decades. In the end, money matters, and the fraternities made greater funds available, as they were able to pull a significant amount of weight financially when constructing the houses. Essentially, the college got more student housing for half the price while making twice as much money for rising enrollment. By the early 1940's, fraternities dominated campus. There were 19 chapters, all of whom had decent living arrangements and the best dining options in comparison to food and dorms for unaffiliated men.⁹

Although allowing fraternities to openly recruit new members and officially become a part of the Lafayette community helped students have more social and intellectual opportunities outside of the classroom, it also promoted discrimination based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and religion. Many fraternities had national rules which were born out of prejudice for non-white, queer, or non-Christian men, that were followed at Lafayette: "members must be

⁶ Gendebien, Albert W., *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience*.

⁷ Gendebien, Albert W., *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience*.

⁸ Gendebien, Albert W., *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience*.

⁹ Gendebien, Albert W. "Part II-Their Rise to Prominence." *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience*, Lafayette College Archives, Mar. 1998, sites.lafayette.edu/greeks/part-i/.

men, free born and of free ancestry, and without Negro blood, and have the character and bearing of gentlemen.”¹⁰ By imposing these eligibility laws upon the student population, multiple binaries were both created and enforced. Immediately the student body was divided into those who were Christian, white men who performed their gender correctly, and those who strayed from the “ideals” of what a man “should be.” You were either a frat boy, or you were the shamed “other.” The fraternity system became the hegemony, as members represented the majority of students on student government who ran all political and social organizations, and those independents who were somehow able to participate in student life were often not heard. A harsh power structure was created where white, straight, Christian men were at the top and everyone else, those who were already minorities at the school to begin with, were treated as lesser.

Although the 1960’s was a time of great changes in attitude towards race, gender, and religion, it also affected the public’s perception of fraternities and what they represented.¹¹ Many students, coupled with anti-war sentiment, began to feel unpatriotic, something that strictly contrasted with the ideals of the Greek system. Because of this, fraternities began to struggle and alumni support also dwindled. This negatively affected the college because they relied on fraternities to house many of their upperclassmen, and if the fraternities were struggling, then they would lose money while also having to drop enrollment. Although the college did not openly advocate for the end of discrimination policies in fraternity bylaws, a few fraternity systems, like Delta Sigma, allowed black men to join their fraternity against the wishes of nationals.¹² By doing this, the fraternity system became more open and paved the way for the

¹⁰ Gendebien, Albert W., *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience 2*.

¹¹ Gendebien, Albert W. “Part III-Their Role in a Changing Campus.” *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience*, Lafayette College Archives, Mar. 1998, sites.lafayette.edu/greeks/part-i/.

¹² Gendebien, Albert W., *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience 3*.

trustees to make a change in the school's discriminatory enrollment policies as well. Although at this point they accepted people of color and people of other religions, it was relatively rare for them to do so. By 1962, "the trustees took action to bring about the end of the discriminatory clauses of the national Greek letter fraternities."¹³ Although this was a good thing in theory, discriminatory practices did not and still have not ended completely. Fraternities remain exclusive, where only people who fit the the norm have a chance of getting a bid. The fraternity bidding system is difficult because one can be blackballed from the rushing process based on his physical appearance and how others perceive him to be, even before he is truly known by the brothers choosing him.

The creation of fraternities at Lafayette College gave students more power to form self-reliant groups with men who had similar values and goals to achieve. While this would seem like a good idea, the Greek system instead thrived off of exclusivity and imposed harmful binaries that negatively affected many men's college experiences. If you were not in a fraternity, you were seen as the "other" and were cast off into various alienated groups. The college did nothing to control this toxic environment and instead ignored the discrimination its students were facing. The administration cared only about expanding capital by any means necessary, even at the cost of the wellbeing of their students. As the Greek system began to struggle, the college then decided to impose anti-discrimination laws to make sure the Greek system still had adequate numbers for housing requirements. Although fraternities were meant to enrich young men's lives, it instead formed a hegemony that relied on keeping white, straight men who performed

¹³ Gendebien, Albert W., *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience* 3.

their gender “correctly” at the top and left the others to struggle.

Part I: The Creation of Sororities at Lafayette College

The first class of women was admitted to Lafayette College in 1970, much to the chagrin of male students and alumni alike.¹⁴ By the time women students were first polled in the February of 1971 in an issue of *The Lafayette*, it was indicated that almost “half of the respondents (26 out of 54) expressed ‘substantial dissatisfaction’ with their experiences at the college.”¹⁵ Many women were disgruntled because there were not enough social opportunities available specifically for women. Much like minority students pre-1960s, Lafayette women felt as though they were on the outside looking in. They could not take advantage of fraternity meal plans and their residence halls were not adequate. By January of 1972, the first recorded letter regarding sororities was sent to Herman Kissiah, the dean of students from 1967 to 1999, from Miss Linda Graham, a representative of the Delta Zeta national chapter.¹⁶ Graham proposed the idea of going to Lafayette to gauge interest in whether or not the women on campus would like to form a sorority, but Dean Kissiah swiftly rejected the idea some days later. He responded that there was “no interest in starting a sorority,” and in fact, there were “negative feelings against it.”¹⁷ Although Dean Kissiah stated that women were disinterested, in reality, they were not polled until four years later in October of 1976. Within this poll, only 288 out of 580 women responded, which means that they actually did not have enough data for the reading to be completely

¹⁴ Gendebien, Albert W., *Lafayette College and the Greek Experience* 3.

¹⁵ Archives , Lafayette. “Timeline: History of Coeducation at Lafayette.” *Timeline-Lafayette: Coed in 1970.*, 2018, sites.lafayette.edu/coeducation/historical-timeline-of-coeducation/.

¹⁶ Graham , Linda. “The Creation of a Sorority at Lafayette College.” Received by Herman Kissiah , 31 Jan. 1972.

¹⁷ Kissiah, Herman. “Re: The Creation of a Sorority at Lafayette College.” Received by Linda Graham, 12 Feb. 1972.

correct. It was impossible that Kissiah accurately took into consideration the needs of the women of the college, as it was evident that they were dissatisfied with their social programs.

After talk of sororities was brought up to students, procedures for establishing women's social clubs began to take place in April of 1976.¹⁸ This investigation, which was in accordance with student government and faculty, along with the dean, first wanted to see if women desired or needed social programs. In 1981, the report of committee on women's social programs was released.¹⁹ Once again, only half of the women were polled, so it was difficult to know if the report was completely accurate. The poll took place in 12 residence halls, where the result was that more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the women polled wanted some sort of social mobility, which mostly included dining and residence options.²⁰ Of the women who took the survey, 25% specifically wanted sororities.²¹ Many of those people wanted sororities because of the feeling of sisterhood, unity, comfort, and having a true place to call home. Even the women who would not join a sorority for themselves weren't necessarily against the Greek system. Many of those who strongly opposed sororities were not even women, but male fraternity students. In a letter to the editor in February of 1979 of *The Lafayette*, Stephen Fedder '79 stated that he was not in favor of sororities because "they [would] merely be a new tribe...raising their own flag for that uncertain 'unity.'"²² While he agreed that fraternities tended to be cliquy, he also stated that women had trouble being "individuals" and instead clung to group ideology.²³ By believing that

¹⁸ Kissinger, Dean. *Procedures for Establishing Women's Social Groups*. 1976, *Procedures for Establishing Women's Social Groups*.

¹⁹ Kissinger, Dean. *Report of Committee on Women's Social Programs*. 1981, *Report of Committee on Women's Social Programs*.

²⁰ Kissinger, Dean. *Report of Committee on Women's Social Programs*.

²¹ Kissinger, Dean. *Report of Committee on Women's Social Programs*.

²² Fedden, Stephen. "Sororities at Lafayette." Received by The Editor, 27 Feb. 1976.

²³ Fedden, Stephen. "Sororities at Lafayette."

women banding together to form a group of people with similar interests was a harmful idea, Fedder assumes that all the women on the campus are unable to form their own cohesive thoughts, and instead are followers incapable of independence. It's ironic that Fedder states that women can be "cliquesty," when in reality, fraternities had been the stable hegemony since the college first started. Unlike fraternities, national sororities that would possibly form on the Lafayette campus were only allowed to do so if they had a policy of no-discrimination based on race or belief.²⁴ In reality, it wouldn't make women weaker, but would instead allow for overall social improvement. The majority of women stated that they felt left out of many social opportunities simply because the campus revolved around men and the fraternity system. If they had their own sororities or other social programs, they could have a sense of belonging and gain more control over their college life.²⁵ In addition, the bylaws imposed by the sororities during rushing are designed to be less discriminatory in comparison to fraternities: women are selected by majority vote instead of unanimity (and no blackballing is allowed), their references are simply from someone who knows them well (a teacher, minister, etc.) instead of by an alumni of the chapter, and they do not haze new members.²⁶ All of their bylaws would keep up with the times, unlike the discriminatory orders imposed by the fraternities for over fifty years. Finally, the sororities would not involve Lafayette with any financial burden, and would instead pledge allegiance to the college.

By the early 1980s, the Lafayette administration decided that it was in their best interest to allow for the formation of a sorority on campus. Because the number of fraternities on campus was declining, the school needed the houses once occupied by the frats to be filled. However, the

²⁴ Kissinger, Dean. *Procedures for Establishing Women's Social Groups*.

²⁵ Kissinger, Dean. *Procedures for Establishing Women's Social Groups*.

²⁶ Agler, Betty. "A Letter to the Board of Trustees from Delta Zeta." Received by Herman Kissiah , 15 Feb. 1972.

houses in need of residency (specifically, Hamilton and Reeder Houses) had many issues that would be difficult for sororities to cope with.²⁷ Firstly, the houses were both far away from campus, and this posed a security threat for women walking to and from campus at night without enough street lights. Secondly, noise complaints had been an issue in the past by surrounding neighbors; this was mostly because of the large parties the fraternities had been holding. In addition, the upkeep would be difficult for these houses, and more staff would need to be hired—this would cost the school money that they were not willing to spend on Greek life. In order to ensure that Lafayette benefitted the most, it was necessary that the sororities were financially stable and could finance themselves in most aspects. Lafayette would own these houses, but the sororities were still self-sufficient and would receive no help from the administration in daily activities and programs. Unlike the alumni and trustee support the fraternities had from the college, sororities had to start from scratch without true guidance from the administration.

In December of 1979, the sorority on campus, which later became affiliated with Sigma Kappa national sorority, was officially recognized. In the upcoming winter months, three more sororities, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Pi Beta Phi, and Alpha Gamma Delta, were established. Although the Lafayette administration “saw no need for” sororities, it was evident that they were very much wanted by the student body at this time. More national chapter representatives came to campus in February and presented the values and benefits of their sororities to over 200 women a day.²⁸ By the 1990s, there were six fully functioning sororities, with over 280 members.²⁹ Similar to fraternities, eventually the administration came around to the idea of

²⁷ Noblett, Donald U. “Housing For Sororities.” Received by Herman Kissiah, 25 Sept. 1979

²⁸ Sivulich, Alice. “Confirming Reps for February.” Received by Leslie Collins, 20 Dec. 1979.

²⁹ College, Lafayette. “Sophomore Affiliation Statistics (1998).” Easton, 2018.

sororities because they helped Lafayette maintain their upward incline of enrollment, as fraternities that were falling through the cracks were replaced by sororities that were able to fill the houses to capacity each semester. There was both a want and a need for more Greek life organizations at Lafayette, and today, around 39%³⁰ of the total student body population participates in a sorority or fraternity.

Part I: Conclusion

By looking at Foucault's analysis of institutions, it is evident that Lafayette uses the juridico discursive to reinforce uniformity, which creates binaries.³¹ Law is equated with power and fairness, and Lafayette as an institution applies these laws. However, by enforcing these codes and prohibiting the formation of secret societies, this simply made students want to be involved with it more to rebel against the institution. Although Lafayette had the ability to say no in this situation, in reality, capitalism in itself was what truly had the power. Lafayette did not agree with the Greek system, but money was ultimately what they needed. In this case, they needed the fraternities to fill their unoccupied houses to capacity. When the fraternities began to under enroll, suddenly sororities were their new solution. Although Lafayette as an institution had power over the Greek system and how they formed, capitalism had power over Lafayette. Lafayette did not agree with the discriminatory laws that the national fraternities had in their bylaws, but it was difficult for them to spark a change for fear of losing the money from housing. Lafayette's formation of Greek life also reinforces the idea that society is organized into groups that form the hegemony and the minority naturally.³² In this case, the white heterosexual men

³⁰ "Greek Life." *Greek Life at Lafayette College*, 2017, greeklife.lafayette.edu/.

³¹ "Part IV, Chapter 1 ." *The History of Sexuality*, by Michel Foucault and Robert Hurley, Penguin Books, 1990.

³² "Part IV: Chapter 11." *The Social Construction of Sexuality*, by Steven Seidman, W.W. Norton & Company, 2015.

formed a group only including themselves and took advantage of the fact that they had the privilege of being perceived as “normal.” With this, their group maintained all of the student power at the school, and shut everyone else out who did not fit the same mold.

Part II: How Gender Works in the Greek System--Language

The creeds of both fraternities and sororities are the fundamental ideals from which one strives to attain. During the new member period, sophomores are required to memorize the creed so that they can fully understand what being in that sorority or fraternity truly represents. Although all of the charters include promoting a growth in character, being kind and charitable, and being intellectually curious, they are exclusive in themselves. Every chapter on the Lafayette campus has a creed or saying that enforces the binary between men and women. For instance, the Alpha Phi charter of 1978 states that “candidates for pledge membership in the fraternity shall be regularly enrolled women students...the article of our fraternity is the promotion of growth in character, unity of feeling, [and] sisterly affection.”³³ Pi Beta Phi states that their membership is only “limited to full time women students,”³⁴ and Sigma Kappa, the first sorority on campus, provided activities only to “interested women.”³⁵ DKE believes in the “maintenance of gentlemanly dignity,”³⁶ and Phi Psi states that they are a “brotherhood of honorable men.”³⁷ Delta Upsilon’s main slogan on their national website is “building better men.”³⁸ While these are

³³ United States, Executive Board, “Alpha Phi International Charter.” *Alpha Phi International Charter*, Article II, 1978.

³⁴ United States, Executive Board, “Pi Beta Phi International Charter.” *Pi Beta Phi International Charter*, Article III, 1978.

³⁵ United States, Executive Board, “Sigma Kappa International Charter.” *Sigma Kappa International Charter*, Article II, 1978.

³⁶ “Rho Chapter of Delta Kappa Epsilon.” *The Objects of DKE*, 2016, greeklife.lafayette.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/89/2013/01/DKE-Input-on-Membership-Standards.pdf.

³⁷ “The Creed of Phi Kappa Psi.” *Phi Kappa Psi Lafayette*, 2016, sites.lafayette.edu/phikappapsi/about-phi-kappa-psi/.

³⁸ “Leadership Institute.” *Delta Upsilon*, 2018, www.deltatau.org/.

all seemingly simple statements, language is important. By using the words men and women, all people who identify as something other than cisgender are greatly discouraged from the possibility of being a part of Greek life.

While there is no law that prevents a trans or non-binary individual from rushing and joining a sorority or fraternity, words have the power to completely exclude someone and prevent them from feeling comfortable. Unfortunately, this is not a problem exclusive to Lafayette. All of the creeds and charters (that are amended every few years to stay up with the times but have done nothing to include non-binary or transgender individuals) come from the mouths of national sororities and fraternities.³⁹ Even if Lafayette wanted to do something to help trans and non-binary people to feel more comfortable, it would be nearly impossible to change the very articles upon which every chapter of Greek life relies on. The national chapters of each fraternity and sorority do not take into consideration the needs of an individual chapter's wishes, and instead, the national executive board⁴⁰ votes on issues pertaining to the overall Alpha Phi system, or Phi Kappa Psi system, for example. On the National Panhellenic Website, their mission is to create "organizations that are the one place on a college campus, where through a shared single-sex experience, young women or men can enjoy a sense of belonging, empowerment and personal development."⁴¹ Although the Panhellenic Council rules in accordance with Title IX anti-discrimination laws, the Dear Colleague Letter, a clause in the Panhel bylaws, states that a fraternity or sorority should be "permitted to deny membership to a

³⁹ "NPC Gender Identity Study ." National Panhellenic Council , 2016, npcwomen.dynamic.omegafi.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2037/2017/11/Branded-Gender-Identity-August-2017.com.

⁴⁰ NPC Gender Identity Study ." National Panhellenic Council , 2016.

⁴¹ NPC Mission." National Panhellenic Council , 2016. <https://npcwomen.dynamic.omegafi.com>.

transgender [individual] without jeopardizing its Title IX [privileges].”⁴² At the same time, it is up to a chapter’s discretion to let a transgender person join the sorority or fraternity, but only if they identify with the same gender as the chapter that they are entering. For example, a person who wants to join a fraternity must either be a cisgender male or a transgender male. They cannot be a cisgender female, or a male who is transitioning to female. Although the Foucaultian line slightly shifts to catch up to the times,⁴³ non-binary individuals are still excluded. A person must either identify as a female or a male in order to participate in Greek life. The creeds, the foundation of all new member experiences, reinforce the harmful binary that excludes an entire population that exists in the world. The words used, although seemingly simple, prevent Greek life from truly being inclusive and a welcoming part of college life for all who wish to join it.

Part II: How Gender Works in the Greek System--Masculinity, Femininity, and the Social Scene

Fraternities thrive on the ideals of what a “real man” is defined to be: a strong, tough, buff, competitive person.⁴⁴ In order to perform the male gender correctly, one must act in a way which shows that they are not feminine. A man must be effortlessly intelligent, have competitive interactions with other men, and must definitely not be gay.⁴⁵ If a man is gay, they are “losing their gender”⁴⁶ because they are crossing the binary into femininity. In a fraternal setting, one must constantly reinforce the idea that they are straight and a “normal male.” This is especially evident during the new member period, where pledges are consistently “hazed” in order to

⁴² “NPC Gender Identity Study .” National Panhellenic Council , 2016.

⁴³ “Part IV, Chapter 1 .” *The History of Sexuality*.

⁴⁴ “Chapter 1.” *Self-Made Man: One Woman's Year Disguised as a Man*, by Norah Vincent, Penguin Group, 2007.

⁴⁵ Kimmel, Michael S. “Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity.” *Theorizing Masculinities*, pp. 119–141., doi:10.4135/9781452243627.n7.

⁴⁶ Kimmel, Michael S. “Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity.”

illustrate that their members are the toughest men who received bids during formal recruitment. Mockery typically leads to fear, stress, and anxiety, which often causes a man to outwardly act violent in order to reassert his masculinity.⁴⁷ This perpetuates toxic masculinity because asserting one's physical power often leads to a culture of intolerance and overcompensation.

In fraternity culture, men constantly must reassure others around them that they are not gay by maintaining the idea that women are objects and that men are superior to women.⁴⁸ In order to reinforce heterosexuality as the norm, fraternity men attempt to have sexual relations with as many women as possible and make it a topic of discussion within the following days so everyone knows that they are a true man.⁴⁹ This type of masculinity is based solely on sexual aggression towards women, and that the "heterosexual masculinity in fraternities is constructed over the use of women's bodies."⁵⁰ This is seen in the language used, opinions, and lifestyle of fraternity members, that new members tend to learn to repeat through "locker room talk."⁵¹ Many men continue this unhealthy culture in order to distance themselves from having a subordinate status, as speaking up would potentially lead to accusations that would threaten their manhood. Because of this, it is a vicious cycle where there is only one true way to be masculine, even if it hurts other people.

Sorority culture generally reinforces binaries because either one looks and acts female or one does not. Although sorority members attempt to gain greater social mobility and advocate

⁴⁷ Kimmel, Michael S. "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity."

⁴⁸ Kimmel, Michael S. "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity."

⁴⁹ Worthen, Meredith G. F. "Blaming the Jocks and the Greeks?: Exploring Collegiate Athletes and Fraternity/Sorority Members Attitudes Toward LGBT Individuals." *Journal of College Student Development*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2014, pp. 168–195., doi:10.1353/csd.2014.0020.

⁵⁰ Anderson, Eric. "Inclusive Masculinity in a Fraternal Setting." *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 10, no. 5, 2007, pp. 604–620., doi:10.1177/1097184x06291907.

⁵¹ Anderson, Eric. "Inclusive Masculinity in a Fraternal Setting."

ideas of femininity.⁵² Even in joining a sorority in itself, one must identify as a woman. However, the definition of what a “true woman” is depends on each individual’s opinions of it, but in Greek life, typically their ideas are similar. In sorority culture, women are sexual objects in relation to men. A real woman is someone who is attractive to a man; in order to successfully be an object, a woman must appear feminine. Long hair, makeup, skirts, and dresses, are all physical manifestations of what a female should look like. Each sorority has a certain “look” or “brand,” that every woman in the sorority must follow in order to be accepted; anyone who strays from the norm will most likely conform to those standards or will not get a bid in the first place.

The Greek social scene relies on heteronormative structures. Men are in control of the party scene because they are the hosts, are the distributors of alcohol, and create the invite lists. In return, men maintain their agent status, whereas the women remain as sexual objects.⁵³ The main way women get power is through cultural capital, meaning that in exchange for their participation in the hookup culture, they get the invites to parties, receive free alcohol, and continue to find success in the social world.⁵⁴ While it seems like a give-and-take situation, women still lose because they remain the objects in the end.⁵⁵ Although they use gender strategies⁵⁶ to get what they desire, women truly have no power because they are still considered inferior. They are “caught in the crossfire of the heteronormative structures”⁵⁷ that men use to

⁵² Handler, Lisa. “In The Fraternal Sisterhood.” *Gender & Society*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1995, pp. 236–255., doi:10.1177/089124395009002006.

⁵³ Hamilton, Laura. “Trading On Heterosexuality.” *Gender & Society*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2007, pp. 359–372., doi:10.1177/0891243206297604.

⁵⁴ Hamilton, Laura. “Trading On Heterosexuality.”

⁵⁵ Hamilton, Laura. “Trading On Heterosexuality.”

⁵⁶ Hamilton, Laura. “Trading On Heterosexuality.”

⁵⁷ Hamilton, Laura. “Trading On Heterosexuality.”

remain comfortable in their masculinity. Men cannot maintain their agent status without women as sexual objects at their parties. Both men and women participate in the “erotic market,”⁵⁸ meaning that they exchange their relative cultural capital in order to get what they desire. The thought of a woman being a lesbian in a sorority system is harmful because the woman cannot use her gender strategy to get social benefits from men. While women are not outwardly homophobic, they distance themselves from anyone who might associate them with being a lesbian because they will lose the power they get from being an object.⁵⁹ A sorority member might not be outwardly unfriendly, but a potential new member who is a lesbian is unattractive to a sorority.⁶⁰ Much like the conventional masculinity that fraternities thrive off of, traditional femininity also is what keep sororities successful. Without members who use their bodies to get what they desire out of the social scene, men will not keep inviting them to parties and their status as a sorority will greatly decline.

Part II: Conclusion

Although fraternity and sorority culture breeds a culture of heteronormativity, something that is harmful for the overall culture at Lafayette College, not everything included in Greek life is bad. In 2017, over \$83,000 was raised for various philanthropies at Lafayette.⁶¹ In addition, the all-Greek GPA is equal to that of their non-affiliated peers.⁶² Five Greek life members were nominated for Lafayette’s Pepper Prize, with three nominees being women.⁶³ Each sorority and fraternity chapter on campus has various chapter positions that are in charge of academic affairs,

⁵⁸ Hamilton, Laura. “Trading On Heterosexuality.”

⁵⁹ Hamilton, Laura. “Trading On Heterosexuality.”

⁶⁰ Hamilton, Laura. “Trading On Heterosexuality.”

⁶¹ “Greek Life.” *Greek Life at Lafayette College*.

⁶² “Greek Life.” *Greek Life at Lafayette College*.

⁶³ “Greek Life.” *Greek Life at Lafayette College*.

community service, risk management, sexual assault programming, and financial wellbeing.. Although the heteronormative party culture could be better, it has and continues to improve every year. A Safe Zone training exclusively for Greek life students is available each month. This training includes “material related to identity development, common language, what it means to be an ally, and how to approach situations that the individual may encounter.”⁶⁴ In Alpha Phi Fraternity, for example, there is a zero discrimination policy, which is strictly followed and will result in disciplinary action. The only way a negative culture can be stopped is through education and action. While each fraternity and sorority has a separate reputation for how welcoming they are to different types of diversity, the overall culture continues to improve. It is impossible to make sure every individual is tolerant of other types of people due to the fact that every person from Lafayette has come from a different place with a distinct education system and families with unique values. What is evident, however, is that Greek Life is attempting to make a change for the better, even if that change seems small.

⁶⁴ “Lafayette Safe Zone Program.” *Gender and Sexuality Programs Student Organizations Comments*, 2018, gsp.lafayette.edu/safezone/.

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