Lafayette College's Move to Co-Education (1969-1976) Through the Voices of Pioneering Women

Carly Johnson
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CONTENTS

Abstract

Lafayette College historically transformed from an all-male institution to co-education during the late 1960s and early 1970s, amidst the backdrop of socio-political upheavals in the United States. Through an analysis of oral histories, institutional records, and college newspapers, the research illuminates the experiences of the pioneering classes of women and the institution's preparedness to accommodate them. This paper argues that Lafayette College was inadequately equipped for this transition, facing challenges ranging from resource deficiencies to issues of equity in academic and social spheres. Drawing upon 20 selected oral histories, predominantly from female students and faculty members of the first cohort, supplemented by counter perspectives, the research highlights the significance of using direct narratives to comprehend the complexities of co-education. The oral testimonies from the first class of women at Lafayette College vividly illustrate a spectrum of experiences ranging from empowerment, feminism, and joy to instances of outright sexual harassment and fear on campus, shedding light on a narrative previously unheard. The subsequent chapters delve into the socio-political atmosphere preceding the institution's decision, academic stereotypes, faculty interactions, and social experiences of female students, aiming to provide a nuanced understanding of Lafayette College's transition and its broader implications in gender politics and educational access in the United States. Through this study, oral histories emerge as critical tools in challenging established narratives and enriching historical scholarship, particularly in areas such as women's history.

Acknowledgements

Back in the spring of 2022 I first set foot in the Lafayette College Special Collections as a part of my HIST 206 primary source project. I had questioned whether I was meant to be a historian, as I grappled with my passion as a writer and English major but loved the experience of telling a story based in history. I knew there was something inside me that needed to spur my historical brain. That is when I stumbled upon the Easton Dixie Cup Factory image collection. I began to write a narrative of women in the factories, their experiences quickly getting lost in the stories of the nameless Eastonian women in the photographs- I had never felt so much joy, nor did I realize that archival work could spark this kind of enthusiasm. I was hooked and I wanted more, but this time even more rooted in women's experiences- so doing a history honors thesis was a must.

As a woman I have often felt unheard or unappreciated in this patriarchal mess of a society. I have spent 23 years of my life advocating for myself and other women who cannot speak up, and on campus I became part of Pards Against Sexual Assault, an organization committed to advocacy, education, and support. I have spent countless hours of my four years asking myself why all women, let alone on this campus, have been put down, unheard or not believed. I wanted to know if women on Lafayette's Campus had always felt this way, if they too had struggled like I did and often still do. I knew the college had only been co-educational for so long, and I knew the Special Collections had a wide breadth of materials about the college's history- but I was blown away by the quantity, richness, and uniqueness of the co-educational oral history project. So, there I was, a passion for giving a voice to women, and at least five boxes of primary source material raring to go.

I want to thank my readers, Professor Foroughi (who briefly sat on my committee), Professor Sanborn and Professor Armstrong, whose academic work and careers have been a source of inspiration to me. Thank you for the time and care taken in reading my work. I also want to thank Professor Rebekah Pite, who was the professor for my first college class, and for HIST 206. I cannot begin to share how those formative classes impacted my writing and the importance of historiography. Of course, I cannot forget Co-Directors of special collections & college archives, Elaine McCluskey Stomber and Ana Ramirez Luhrs- you both blew me away in your knowledge and consistent positive energy that made spending hours in special collections something I always looked forward to.

Most importantly, I must thank my incredible thesis advisor, Professor Caroline Sequin. As I sit down to reflect on the completion of my thesis, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude, and I cannot help but extend my sincerest thanks to you for your unwavering guidance and support throughout this journey. Your mentorship has been invaluable to me. Your expertise, patience, and willingness to share your knowledge have truly made a difference in my thesis work. Your insightful feedback, constructive criticism, and encouragement have helped me navigate through the challenges and uncertainties that often accompany such a significant undertaking. Your commitment to pushing me beyond my limits has inspired me to strive for nothing less than my best. I am grateful for the time you invested in our discussions, the thoughtful advice you provided, and the genuine interest you showed in my research. As I embark on the next chapter of my academic or professional journey, I carry with me the lessons learned under your guidance and the confidence that your mentorship has instilled in me. Please know that your impact on my time at Lafayette will be enduring and deeply cherished.

Introduction

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Lafayette College, a historically all male institution since its establishment in 1886, embarked on a historic journey towards co-education, a transition that would reshape the institution's landscape and echo the socio-political currents of the time. This pivotal period marked not only the integration of women into a traditionally male-dominated space but also underscored broader discussions around gender equality and access to education in the United States. Concurrently, the war in Vietnam emerged as a focal point of protest among college campuses nationwide. As noted by historian E. M. Schreiber, "among the accredited four-year colleges and universities in the United States in the 1967-8 academic year, the war in Vietnam was the most popular protest issue."[1] This sentiment of dissent and activism reverberated through Lafayette's halls, intersecting with the burgeoning "Sexual Revolution" that was reshaping societal norms and values. The metaphor of the "Sexual Revolution" became emblematic of the slow change in sexual attitudes and behaviors during the 1960s, reflecting a broader cultural shift towards liberation and autonomy.[2] While there was a growing push for sexual liberation and autonomy, these social changes clashed with the prevailing conservative values that existed until the end of the 1960s regarding traditional roles and expectations within relationships and gender dynamics. Against this backdrop of social upheaval and cultural transformation, Lafayette's decision to embrace co-education symbolized a commitment to progress and inclusivity, aligning with the zeitgeist of the era.

The significance of the first classes of women admitted to Lafayette College cannot be overstated. As pioneers in a previously male-dominated institution, they not only broke barriers

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[1] E. M. Schreiber. "Opposition to the Vietnam War among American University Students and Faculty," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Sep. 1973), 288-302

[2] Tom W. Smith. "The Sexual Revolution?" The Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Autumn, 1990), 415-435

but also laid the foundation for future generations of female students. Their presence marked a turning point in the college's history, catalyzing discussions on gender equality and challenging traditional notions of education. The experiences and achievements of these trailblazers served as inspiration for subsequent cohorts of women, demonstrating resilience, intellect, and leadership in various fields. Beyond the confines of Lafayette, their impact extended to broader society, contributing to the ongoing push for gender parity and inclusivity in educational institutions and beyond. As symbols of progress and empowerment, the first women of Lafayette College occupy a crucial place in the narrative of both the college's evolution and the larger societal shifts of their time.

However, amid this undeniably momentous change, their journey was not without significant challenges. As pioneers in a male-dominated institution, they often struggled to feel integrated within the college community. Many encountered resistances from both faculty and peers, facing skepticism about their capabilities and aspirations. In addition to social isolation, these women grappled with a lack of resources tailored to their needs. Academic support, and mentorship, were scarce or not as readily available to them as they were to their male counterparts. Despite their resilience and determination, these trailblazers faced numerous obstacles in their pursuit of education and acceptance, highlighting the complexity of their role as pioneers in the fight for gender equality.

I argue that Lafayette College was grossly underprepared for the integration of women onto its campus. The institution grappled with challenges ranging from inadequate resources and safety concerns to issues of overall equity in academic and social spheres. Additionally, the move towards co-education at Lafayette reflects broader trends in the socio-political climate of the United States, driven by changing legislation and evolving notions of equal access to

education. Moreover, the experiences of these first women underscore the challenges women face on campus, both academically and socially, characterized by instances of harassment, inadequate resources, and intense pressure. Though these experiences significantly impacted women's ability to thrive within Lafayette College's campus, they nonetheless demonstrated resilience, strength and adaptability given the circumstances.

The historiography of colleges and universities transitioning to co-education in the United States offers a multifaceted narrative. Though there is a breadth of studies that similarly convey the 1960s and 70s as an unprecedented period of growth in co-educational Universities, they do not depict this narrative on an individual level. In other words, we do not hear from individual students. Much of the evidence available stems from quantitative top-down perspectives, relying heavily on administrative statistics and institutional reviews. Among the wide array of literature, Christine Lundt, Susan L. Poulson, and Leslie Miller-Bernal published an entire collection of studies of individual institutions.[3] In the case study of The University of Rochester's move to co-education, cite the percentage of female enrollment and election to Phi Beta Kappa, a liberal arts honor society, to depict the academic experience of women.[4] While this depicts a quantitative perspective of women in academics, these sources make it challenging to fully grasp the firsthand experiences in the classroom. In contrast, the inclusion of direct testimonies from the women themselves provides some valuable insight into how the first cohort of women viewed and experienced the transition to co-education. Firsthand accounts often convey stark realities, shedding light on the challenges and triumphs experienced during this pivotal period of change.

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[3] Christine Lundt, Susan L. Poulson, and Leslie Miller-Bernal. *Going Coed: Women's Experiences in Formerly Men's Colleges and Universities.*(Vanderbilt University Press, 2004.)

[4] Lundt, Poulson, and Miller-Bernal. "To Coeducation and Back Again: Gender and Organization at The University of Rochester." 55-79.

Examining an individual study of a university going coed provides in-depth insights into the unique challenges and successes the institution faced during the transition. This detailed perspective highlights personal experiences of students, faculty, and administrators, revealing how coeducation influenced policies, practices, and the campus community. It can offer localized effects on students' academic performance and social integration, providing lessons for other institutions considering similar changes. Testing broader trends on a smaller scale helps validate or challenge national-level assumptions and enriches our understanding of the impact of coeducation.

This thesis is crucial to the study of co-education in the United States as it prioritizes these direct narratives, placing them at the forefront of understanding the complexities surrounding the integration of women into higher education institutions. By highlighting the voices of those directly impacted, it enriches our understanding of the social, cultural, and institutional dynamics at play during the transition to co-education in the United States. Moreover, this thesis demonstrates shortcomings of becoming co-education, demonstrating that these are not singular stories of success, but also one of hardship and sometimes, gendered violence. Though Lafayette College is just one case study in the landscape of historically male colleges going coed, the extensive evidence of firsthand accounts sheds new light.

This study delves into the experiences of the pioneering classes of women at Lafayette College during this transformative era, examining how their arrival intersected with the gender politics of the time and assessing the institution's preparedness to accommodate them. I use oral histories, along with institutional records and the college newspapers to illuminate the multifaceted dimensions of this significant historical moment.

Oral histories serve as a vital methodology in historical research, offering unique perspectives and insights that enrich our understanding of the past. They play a crucial role in challenging established historical narratives, particularly in areas such as women's history, by uncovering hidden stories and perspectives. As oral historian Alessandro Portelli notes, oral history has the critical value of "being able to open completely different areas of historical research such as representations of culture, not just through 'literal narrations but also the dimensions of memory, ideology and subconscious desires.'"[5] This emphasis on subjectivity and memory highlights the nuanced understanding that oral histories provide, enriching our comprehension of historical events. Oral histories also offer valuable glimpses into the subjective experiences and meanings behind historical events. "Personal reminiscents were 'preserved in the memory of the informant' and 'are often astonishingly detailed… and very diverse… falsification rarely occurs."[6] They provide a unique perspective on daily life and material culture, particularly among illiterate or marginalized groups, as Luise White observes, "oral sources give us information about illiterate people or social groups whose written history is either missing or distorted."[7] Interpreting oral history materials requires careful consideration of narrative theory and potential biases introduced by interviewers. While there may be some issue about the reliability of oral testimonies, they offer invaluable contributions to historical scholarship, especially in illuminating the voices of marginalized groups and revealing dimensions of history often overlooked by conventional written accounts.

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[5]Alessandro Portelli. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories : Form and Meaning in Oral History*. SUNY Series in Oral and Public History. (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1991) https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.lafayette.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=8408&site=ehost-live.

[6] Luis White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Central Nairobi,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,1990).

[7] White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Central Nairobi.*

However, issues of reliability of oral testimonies can also occur as they are based on retrospective memories that may be subject to distortion over time. As noted by scholars Julianne Nyhan & Andrew Flinn, "concerns were most frequently expressed over the reliability of the material collected by oral history interviews for use in historical research."[8] This uncertainty raises questions about the accuracy of testimonies and the potential biases introduced by interviewees or interviewers. We even see similar trepidation expressed from Christine Adams Kauffman during her interview in 2002. Kauffman states she wished the school "had the foresight to interview us in 1972 and now in 2002 so that we'd have an accurate history of what it was like, not what my recollections of it were like…." as she believed she was answering "from today's perspective."[9] Historians Julianne Nyhan and Andrew Flinn argue that "the real critical value and strength of oral history is in its difference, not in seeking to describe the past 'as it really was' ('mere reconstruction') but in being able to open up completely different areas of historical research such as representations of culture," therefore, implying that an oral history that doesn't explicitly discuss specific historical events can still be valuable.[10] When asked a question about political issues on campus like anti-Vietnam War sentiment, Kauffman didn't recall "any single thing standing out," suggesting she should have read her yearbook before she came to the interview so that she "could have a better recollection of all of the issues."[11] This instance suggests that Christine Adams Kauffman had a memory bias, in that she most likely only spoke upon events that impacted her. This is not to say that there were not any female students that were involved in the political issues, but that Kauffman's oral history points

[8] Julianne Nyhan & Andrew Flinn. "Why Oral History?" in, *Computation and the Humanities: Towards an Oral History of Digital Humanities* (Springer Open 2016) 21-34.
[9] Christine Adams Kauffman, interview by Vivienne Felix, *Lafayette College Special Collections,* August 11, 2002, 42.
[10] Nyhan & Flinn. "Why Oral History?" 21-34.
[11] Kauffman, interview by Vivienne Felix, August 11, 2002

towards other experiences as deeply influencing her time at Lafayette. However, what Kauffman says paints a picture of daily life. This is where oral history succeeds. Even if certain historical events are not directly addressed, oral history can provide insights into the social and cultural context in which those events occurred.

I draw upon 54 oral histories collected throughout the academic years of 2002-03 and 2003-04 by then College Archivist Diane Shaw and Assistant College Archivist Kristen Turner, as well as four EXCEL scholars, Sarah Shuster '12, Vivienne Felix '03, Kamaka Martin '04, and Amanda Roth '04, three of whom served as the interviewers for the project.[12]. The interviews of early female students, faculty members, and administrators from the late 1960s and early 1970s shed light on their experiences and perspectives.[13] These interviewers meticulously documented and analyzed these narratives to uncover the complexities of the transition to co-education. This study underscores the importance of using oral histories as a critical tool for historical inquiry, particularly in capturing the experiences of marginalized and historically silenced figures. The description from the official website created in 2012 is as follows:

> The Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project (OHP) focuses on Lafayette students who witnessed the remarkable period of social change that saw an increased presence of African Americans and women on campus. By interviewing these pioneering African American and women students the College Archives has gained a better understanding of what it was like to be immersed in and, ultimately, to help reinvent a traditionally white, male world. While the initial focus has been on alumni/alumnae, the Archives has also interviewed faculty and administrators, as well as white, male students who were also part of these pivotal years of transition.[14]

Out of the 54 interviews conducted for the EXCEL oral history project I used 20 of them for this thesis. 17 of them were selected first because the interviewees were in the first cohort of

[12] Sarah Shuster "Introduction: College Archives Oral History Project." Lafayette Coed in 1970. https://sites.lafayette.edu/coeducation/oral-history/.
[13] Sarah Shuster "Introduction: College Archives Oral History Project.
[14] Shuster "Introduction: College Archives Oral History Project."

women, matriculated fall of 1971, or they were one of the few female professors from the time. I also included three of the men's oral histories to allow for counter perspectives. Though I do include some male perspectives, I chose to focus prominently on women's interviews given the rationale for this thesis. Additionally, only five of the interviews from the selected 20 were from black students, which reflects the college's lack of racial diversity within the student population. I was not the conductor of the interviews or involved in the process of choosing the interviewees or creating the transcripts. This is somewhat limiting given that I was not able to be selective on what information I gathered from the first women, some of which could be incomplete narratives that hinder a comprehensive understanding. I analyzed what was available in the same way I would any other historical text. Therefore, the three subsequent chapters and their subjects were chosen based on insights in the interviews, rather than a bias I could have had as an interviewer. This proved challenging when I wanted more depth from a response, and instead I had to make assumptions based on other evidence and my own experiences.

The subsequent chapters of this study will delve into various facets of Lafayette College's transition to co-education. Chapter one provides an overview of the socio-political atmosphere in the United States preceding and following the institution's decision to admit women. Chapter two delves into the academic landscape, examining stereotypes, interactions with faculty, and the experiences of pioneering female professors, while Chapter three explores the social experiences of female students, including living arrangements, social activities, and issues such as drug and alcohol use and sexual assault. Through this comprehensive examination, I aim to provide a nuanced understanding of Lafayette College's transition to co-education and its broader implications within the context of gender politics and educational access in the United States.

Chapter One: The Move to Co-Education at Lafayette

In contemporary times, the sight of women pursuing higher education alongside men within co-educational institutions has become so commonplace that it is easy to overlook the profound historical shifts that enabled this reality. This chapter delves into the transformative journey Lafayette College undertook to become a co-educational entity, exploring the societal, cultural, and institutional dynamics that both facilitated and resisted this fundamental change. Despite the care taken by the faculty committees, board of trustees and various administrators, the administration was still unprepared for women in the tangible practice of becoming coed. The shift to coeducation was not only ultimately driven by a desire for financial gain but was also marked by entrenched ideas about gender roles and femininity, which resulted in inadequate preparation and adaptation of the college's environment to accommodate female students. This lack of preparation reflected the pervasive cultural biases of the time and led to challenges in ensuring equal opportunities and a supportive experience for the incoming female students.

Higher Education In The United States, 17th Century to Present

Higher education institutions have existed in the United States since the 17th century. Harvard College, established in 1636, is recognized as the first institution of higher learning in the country.[15] Co-education, (and the lack of) has always been closely related to sexism. In the early days of higher education in the U.S., access was limited to a small group of privileged white men, primarily due to societal norms and beliefs about who should receive an advanced education. This exclusion was rooted in discriminatory views of the time, which prevented women, Black people, enslaved people, Indigenous people, and other marginalized groups from

[15] Patricia Albjerg Graham, "Expansion and Exclusion: A History of Women in American Higher Education," *Signs, University of Chicago Press*, 3,4, 1978 759-773.

attending. The first women were admitted to U.S. higher education institutions in the 19th century. According to social historian Patricia Albjerg Graham, women "were unable to enroll in any college until Oberlin College permitted them entrance in 1837" with the intention of creating "thoroughly schooled wives" of religious ministers.[16] In the war eras of WWI and II, the enrollment of women surged in formerly all-male schools. Similarly, the establishment of women's colleges soared at the time given that the young men were expected to fight. However, the enrollment of women during wars was not about women's equality, and rather opportunistic for higher education institutions to not lose money through the lack of male students. Though there was a surge of women students in higher education, there were still hundreds of institutions, such as the "Ivy Leagues," who did not yet admit women, with Columbia being the last to go coed in 1983.[17] As of 2011, women accounted for 57 percent of all Bachelor of Arts degrees in the United States, with 97 percent of these degrees awarded by co-educational institutions.[18] However, the normalization of women's presence in universities is a relatively recent phenomenon, starkly contrasting with the landscape before the 1960s.

The delay in the integration of women into co-educational universities in the United States can be attributed to a combination of societal norms, cultural attitudes, and institutional traditions deeply rooted in historical gender roles. The prevailing belief in separate spheres for men and women, with men typically associated with the public sphere of work and education, while women were confined to the domestic sphere, reinforced this segregation. Additionally, there were fears that allowing women into higher education institutions would disrupt the

[16] Patricia Albjerg Graham, "Expansion and Exclusion: A History of Women in American Higher Education," *Signs, University of Chicago Press*, 3,4, 1978 759-773.
[17] Patricia Albjerg Graham, "Expansion and Exclusion: A History of Women in American Higher Education"
[18]Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, "Putting the "Co" in Education: Timing, Reasons, and Consequences of College Coeducation from 1835 to the Present," Journal of Human Capital 2011 5:4, 395.

traditional collegiate environment or compromise academic standards.[19] It was not until the mid-20th century, amid increasing demands for gender equality and social change spurred by movements such as feminism, that universities began to reassess their admissions policies and embrace co-education. Even then, resistance to change persisted in some quarters, but gradually, the benefits of inclusivity and diversity became more widely recognized to administrators of single sex institutions, leading to the eventual widespread acceptance and implementation of co-education across universities in the United States.

Given the history of higher education in the United States and the trends in women's integration into higher education, Lafayette College's decision to become coeducational in 1970 can be seen as relatively late. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many institutions were already admitting women. Colleges such as Oberlin, Vassar, and Wellesley had been providing higher education to women since the mid to late 1800s.[20] By the 1970s, the push for gender equality and civil rights was gaining momentum, and many other colleges and universities had already transitioned to coeducation.

Why Did Lafayette College Go Coed?

Lafayette's move to co-education can be explained by the social-political landscape of the 1970s, including the Vietnam war, women's rights movements, and the decreasing volume of single gender Universities. Having begun in 1955, The Vietnam War was highly contested by many Americans in the 1960s, especially on college campuses where "students and faculty were among the first groups to voice opposition to the war."[21] In fact "in the 1967-8 academic year the

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[19] Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, "Putting the "Co" in Education: Timing, Reasons, and Consequences of College Coeducation from 1835 to the Present," *Journal of Human Capital* 2011 5:4, 395.
[20] Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, "Putting the "Co" in Education: Timing, Reasons, and Consequences of College Coeducation from 1835 to the Present," *Journal of Human Capital* 2011 5:4, 395.
[21] E. M. Schreiber. "Opposition to the Vietnam War among American University Students and Faculty," *The British Journal of Sociology*, 24, 3, 1973, 288-302.

war in Vietnam was the most popular protest issue" on college campuses.[22] The Vietnam War was a deeply divisive issue that sparked intense debates and dissent across the country. On college campuses, students played a pivotal role in the anti-war movement, organizing protests, sit-ins, and demonstrations to voice their opposition to the war and demand social change.[23] These protests often intersected with broader movements for civil rights, women's liberation, and campus reform. In this charged atmosphere, discussions about co-education were not merely about educational policy but were also imbued with broader questions about equality, social justice, and the role of institutions in fostering a more inclusive society. This existed beyond the early discussions of co-education and impacted the first women. One of the first women, Liza Lucy, pointed out that this era of Vietnam was a "grim and scary time" and that there were "protests on campus."[24] Likewise, Michelle Vedus Deeney states that it was a "tough time" as all students felt "touched by the war," with friends being drafted and going to Vietnam, as well as organizing anti-war demonstrations on campus.[25] By acknowledging the political tensions of the Vietnam War era, one can better understand the motivations behind the decision and appreciate the significance of the change within its historical context. The push for co-education was influenced by a desire to challenge traditional gender norms, promote diversity and inclusivity, and respond to the evolving demands of an increasingly vocal and politically engaged student body. Moreover, the decision to go co-educational could be seen as part of a broader wave of social change sweeping through American institutions during this tumultuous period.

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[22] Schreiber. "Opposition to the Vietnam War among American University Students and Faculty,"
[23] Schreiber. "Opposition to the Vietnam War among American University Students and Faculty,"
[24] Liza Lucy, interviewed by Amanda Roth, August 1, 2002, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*
[25] Michelle Vedus Deeney Interviewed by () Lafayette College Special Collections, (). 23

According to Professor of English James R Vitelli, writing retrospectively of his experience in 1986, out of approximately 2,000 colleges nationwide, Lafayette College was among 75 that were still a single sex institution.[26] Rival school Lehigh University had likewise also begun their steps towards co-education; eventually accepting women in the fall of 1971. This is a consistent trend in the United States over time, as "the switching from single sex was also fairly constant from 1835 to the 1950s before accelerating in the 1960s and 1970s," with many United States former men's colleges becoming co-educational "between 1968 and 1972"[27]

In 1967, Professor Vitelli, with a vision for the future of the institution, made a motion during a June faculty meeting to create a committee tasked with investigating the possibility of co-education. This motion, seconded by Professor of History, Albert Gendebien, faced little discussion but garnered an overwhelming "YES" vote from the faculty. Upon the approval of the motion, the special committee was created, made up of a representative group of faculty from all curricular divisions and tenure. This committee consisted of professors, alumni, an athletic director, and the school dean. One member of the committee was, at the time, the only female professor on campus: Professor of Education, Clay Ketchum.[28] This marked the first step towards a huge transformation in the college's history.

The committee published their findings in a thirteen-page report on the feasibility of co-education at Lafayette College March 1968.[29] Basing their findings on national trends, case studies from neighboring colleges, and potential benefits for the college, the report leans extremely in favor of becoming co-educational. To aid in potential curriculum changes that

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[26] James R Vitelli in *The Biography of a College, Being the History of the Third Half-Century of Lafayette College.* (Maryland: Wonder Book, 1986) 636
[27] Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, "Putting the "Co" in Education: Timing, Reasons, and Consequences of College Coeducation from 1835 to the Present," *Journal of Human Capital* 2011 5:4, 395.
[28] Albert W. Gendebien, *The Biography of a College, Being the History of the Third Half-Century of Lafayette College* (Maryland: Wonder Book, 1986) 636
[29] Co-education Report, Special Committee March 1968,

becoming coed would bring, the report used empirical data from neighboring schools Bucknell (coed in 1883), Moravian (coed in 1954), and Muhlenberg (coed in 1957). Among the arguments presented, much of their evidence came from studies such as Mabel Newcomer's *A Century of Higher Education*, and Eli Ginsberg's *Lifestyles of Educated Women*.[30] These sources not only point out the benefits for the higher education of women, but they also demonstrate the pivotal role of modern empirical research in shaping the committee's perspectives on education and gender dynamics. Additionally, societal pressures, as elucidated in these studies, underscored the urgency for institutions like Lafayette College to adapt to changing societal norms and expectations, ensuring relevance and inclusivity in the ever-evolving landscape of higher education.

One of the first points made in the report cites that, "trends for the last generation have been moving with increasing acceleration towards sexually mixed education…" and out of "2252 institutions of higher learning in the country…only 35 for men" were left.[31] Likewise, "the number of women obtaining bachelor degrees has increased 69%, while men only 50%" highlighting the shifting social demographics of higher education.[32] In the context of Lafayette College, admitting women would align with this trend of increasing female participation in higher education. The recognition that admitting women could improve academic records also played a crucial role in motivating this bold initiative: The inclusion of women would create a larger pool of impressive applicants for the school to admit, as according to the report, "women who go to college come from higher ranks of achievement," and choose to come to college

[30] Mabel Newcomer, *A Century of Higher Education for American Women.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959). : Eli Ginsberg *Lifestyles of Educated Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).
[31] Co-education Report, Special Committee 1968, 1.
[32] Co-education Report, Special Committee 4.

primarily for "academic reasons first."[33] Similarly, outside of academics the report suggests women would "have a positive social effect" on campus: creating a "relaxed and natural" atmosphere, improve co-curricular activities, and keep students on campus during breaks and weekends.[34] This section is less supported by directly mentioned evidence, and very much rooted in gender stereotypes. At the time, it was found that many Lafayette Students would not stay on campus during weekend, therefore, this assumption that women would make the men want to stay is interesting. It seems that the school is assuming that women could entertain the men, or perhaps allow for heterosexual social scenarios such as going on dates. Therefore, this reasoning is attributing the quality that perhaps the women admitted would be for the purpose of primarily social benefits rather than academic. Likewise the improvement in co-curricular clubs such as "choir, theater and cheerleading," creates this idea that the women who come to Lafayette will only be interested in the arts, or supporting male sports rather than playing those sports themselves.[35] In short, the report found that admitting women would enhance "selectivity" in admissions, "academic quality" in the classroom, and relaxation in "social life."[36] at the conclusion of the reasoning, the committee makes the movement:

> THEREFORE, It is moved that the faculty recommend to the Board of Trustees
> 1)That the admission of females to all degree programs at Lafayette college be authorized.
> 2)That, effective as soon as practicable, the College admit females on a commuter basis;
> 3) That appropriate changes to campus facilities be initiated as promptly as possible to permit the admission of females on a residence basis, and.
> 4) That females be added to the student body over the next few years with no diminution in the size of the male student population as presently planned.[37]

[33] Co-education Report, Special Committee 5.
[34] Co-education Report, Special Committee 6.
[35] Co-education Report, Special Committee 6.
[36] Co-education Report, Special Committee 12.
[37] Co-education Report, Special Committee 8

Note that the second statement suggests that the college should first only allow women on a "commuter basis."[38] Though this was not implemented in the final decision accepted, the special committee thought that by having women to commute would allow for a smoother transition. It is also likely that this suggestion had the lack of on campus housing for women in mind. A clear conclusion, and a frequent criticism of the report was that the committee did not distinguish any arguments against co-education. Whether this comes from a committee bias or not, for these committee members remaining single sex was not the option. In their defense, the committee stated that they had not found any "'educational' arguments in favor of the all-male college," with the report only mentioning male students who specifically wanted to go to an all-male institution as a drawback from an admissions standpoint.[39] A short six months following the formation of the committee, the Faculty took a historic step on April 2, 1968 and voted to recommend to the Board of Trustees that "the admission of women to all degree programs at Lafayette College be authorized as soon as practicable."[40]

Alumni Reactions To The Potential for Co-Education

Albert Gendebien, one of the very members of the special committee, outlines in his biography of Lafayette that the recommendation to turn co-educational left the college with two problems, "achieving consensus and implementing the change."[41] The true challenge, as Professor Gendebien points out, was making the alumni community "converted to the conversion"[42] of co-education. The resistance to co-education is evident in documents from the era, namely in op-eds from the Lafayette Newspaper, *The Lafayette,* and most notably the Winter

[38] Co-education Report, Special Committee 12.
[39] Co-education Report, Special Committee 12.
[40] Co-education Report, Special Committee
[41] Albert W. Gendebien, *The Biography of a College, Being the History of the Third Half-Century of Lafayette College* (Maryland: Wonder Book, 1986) 512.
[42] Albert W. Gendebien, *The Biography of a College,* 510.

1969 Issue of the *Lafayette Alumnus* Magazine. This issue was published in response to the June decision of the board, where staff, students, and alumni contributed arguments for the proposal of a Coed institution. This issue, made up of seventeen articles, presented opinions that were both in favor and against the move to admitting women. What can be gathered from the written contributions in the alumni magazine is that the younger generations of alumni felt much more strongly in support of the faculty decision. For example, class of '51 alum, Warren F. Lee's article "We're 50 Years Behind the Times," argues that since Oberlin College became coed in 1837, there has been decline in the perceived value of single-sex schools, and in fact by the turn of the 20th century, only 29% of schools remained exclusively for one gender.[43] Lee likewise states that "arguments that mixed classes create distractions, corrupt morals, and place women in an environment of unnatural competition appears to be ludicrous"[44] Another alum, Charles B Teske class of '54, wrote an article aptly titled, "Our Masculine Pride Has To Go," which argued that moving with the trend of higher education being coed was more important than tradition.[45] On the other hand, male students from earlier classes were resistant to the idea of co-education, in favor of tradition. Franklin S. Weston class of 1919, J Richard Seitz class of 1937, and William E Reaser class of 1930 all wrote critically of co-education.[46] The notion of tradition, anchored in an all-male campus, became a significant factor, because many believed staying single sex maintained the college's exclusive male institution it was set up to be.[47]

[43] Warren F. Lee, "We're 50 Years Behind the Times" *Lafayette Alumnus* 1969
[44] Warren F. Lee, "We're 50 Years Behind the Times"
[45] Charles B Teske "Our Masculine Pride Has To Go," *Lafayette Alumnus* 1969
[46] "COEDUCATION: is it for Lafayette?" *Lafayette Alumnus,*1969.
[47] "COEDUCATION: is it for Lafayette?" *Lafayette Alumnus,*1969.

Alumni Questionnaire

Preference of respondents by number of replies

Classes	00-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-68	Total
Favoring all-male	127	286	231	185	446	310	1,585
Favoring admitting women	30	62	111	166	294	445	1,108
No preference	7	20	16	16	39	17	115
% response from decade	25%	24%	18%	17%	18%	20%	20%

Response by occupation

Occupation	Clergy	Educator	Profes-sional	Business	Gov-ern-ment	Engineer-ing & Science	Other
Favor all-male	26%	37%	50%	62%	35%	63%	64%
Favor admitting women	65%	58%	48%	35%	55%	33%	32%
No preference	9%	5%	2%	3%	10%	4%	4%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No. of responses	46	245	365	866	105	681	481

Figure 1. *Alumni Questionnaire Responses based on class and occupation.* December 1969. Lafayette Alumnus.

Likewise, the college endeavored to allow alumni to express their opinion through a questionnaire that was published in the magazine, which "approximately 2,800 Lafayette men responded to" approximately one in five alumni.[48] Of those who responded, 56% felt that the college should remain all male, however a majority of those who had graduated after 1955 favored becoming co-educational, thus the younger alumni favored the transition (fig.1). In terms of response by occupation there is about a halfway split of professionals favoring or not favoring the admittance. The alumni affairs committee, and by extension, the college did not see the results of the poll as a "mandate nor a deterrent for the admission of women."[49] Similarly, given the college's ties to the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), the inclusion of women threatened the resources for those programs. These kinds of objections highlighted the inherent tension between preserving institutional heritage and adapting to the changing times.

[48] "COEDUCATION: is it for Lafayette?" *Lafayette Alumnus,* 1969.
[49]Albert W. Gendebien, *The Biography of a College*, 515

In stark contrast to the apprehension expressed by some alumni, the student body stood unified in enthusiastic support for the transition to a co-educational institution. With fervent advocacy, students found a variety of ways to articulate their endorsement to both the faculty and the esteemed Board of Trustees. After the presentation of the special committee's report, the Student Council formed their own committee to support the planning for co-education. Among their support, the student committee even organized demonstrations at the annual Lafayette Lehigh Rivalry Football Game in the fall of 1968. The most telling example of student support for co-education, was an identical poll of the alumni questionnaire only for the current students. Unlike the alumni questionnaire, the process was meticulous as they selected every fourth student for an in-person interview allowing for 400 students to express their opinion. This sample poll indicated "overwhelming support for co-education," with "77.3 percent being in favor" and "22.4 percent against" solidifying the resounding endorsement of this educational approach among the student body.

The oral histories suggest the administration "made 'going coed' a media event," suggesting that the school perhaps felt some social pressure to succeed. Early in the process of recruiting women, the school even published an article on the first two women who submitted their enrollment deposits to Lafayette College in the spring of 1970 Alumni magazine. These women, Joyce S. Cohen and Susan L. Trotter are lauded by then head of admissions Richard W. Haines for their "excellent records in and out of the classroom."[50] While this kind of treatment could make some of the female students special, it could also feel superficial. Michelle Vedus Deeney portrays this disjunction, as retrospectively she felt they "were paraded around… but at the time, [the first women] enjoyed the attention and the chance to show alumni that co-

[50] "The First Two," *Lafayette Alumnus*, 1970.

education was good."[51] Liza Lucy testimony concurs, as she thought the women were "selected to make… a good impression… and prove to the alumni that it was a good decision to let women in.[52] Thus, one can assume the pressure already placed on the first women, even before their beginning as matriculated students that coming fall.

In a document titled "Profile of the class 1973," published by admissions for high school guidance counselors in the event that the school was approved to become coed, they stated that for the class of 1974, they expected a class of "115 freshman women and approximately 20 transfer women… in addition to 400 freshman men," remaining a small college that would accommodate women in separate dorms.[53] A year later, in the fall of 1970, the doors of Lafayette College officially opened to its first class of female students. However, this transition was not without its challenges.

From Idea to Practice

Not only would co-education impact tradition, but also the faculty recognized there would be major adjustments that would need to be made to the facilities, the curriculum, as well as the gender makeup of faculty and admin. Despite the board's efficient approval, for the ad hoc committee, the implementation plan was to be a "methodical and long-range" development.[54] President Bergathon, the president of Lafayette College, predicted that implementing the co-education plan would come with a substantial price tag. The estimated costs were projected to be 10.5 million dollars for admitting 600 women and 17.5 million dollars for admitting 1,000 women.[55] The costs would include refurbishing on-campus student housing, "a fine arts building,

[51]Michelle Vedus-Deeney, interviewed by Vivienne Felix, September 13, 2002, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project* 12
[52] Liza Lucy, interviewed by Amanda Roth, August 1, 2002, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project*
[53] *Profile for the Class of 1973*
[54]Albert W. Gendebien, *The Biography of a College*, 515
[55] Office of The Provost, "A Summary of Model C-2000"

physical education, administrative and heating facilities."[56] The staff developed many models for comparing the costs, but eventually landed on a projected model of enrollment of 2,000 students by 1977, with a three to one ratio of men to women.[57] Despite these financial concerns, the overarching motivation for the plan's acceptance was the potential for overall academic improvement, and therefore the board worked hard to find an enrollment plan that would not affect the endowment or capital funding.

The Board of Trustees, in 1969, approved a resolution recommending "that women be admitted to all programs of the college" by a 19-9 vote.[58] This decision was monumental, representing a significant departure from the college's all-male institution: the decision to admit women marked a departure from over a century of tradition, 145 years to be exact. At this meeting, President of the Board of Trustees, Ralph Gottshall articulated the hesitancy, yet need to adapt: "I have learnt to put personal feelings apart and act on the basis of facts…When change proved better than the old ways, we changed"[59] Gottshall acknowledged the inherent challenge of separating personal emotions from decision-making processes. However, he underscores the necessity of doing so, recognizing that subjective biases can cloud judgment and impede progress. In the official documentation the Board of Trustees gave four statements for their reasoning for going coed. These reasonings are almost, if not entirely lifted from those given by the special committee:

> 1. a desire that Lafayette should serve all members of society; 2. the overwhelming preference of the college age population for the coeducational environment; 3. the fact that the admission of women would increase considerably the market from which the College selects its students and, 4. the belief that the admission of women would strengthen the academic and social programs of the College[60]

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[56] Office of The Provost, "A Summary of Model C-2000"
[57] Albert W. Gendebien, *The Biography of a College*, 520
[58] Board of Trustees Report, June 27th, 1969
[59] Ralph Gottshall, President of the Board of Trustees. June 17, 1969
[60] Ralph Gottshall, President of the Board of Trustees. June 17, 1969

As evidenced by the quote, half of the reasoning from the Board of Trustees involves improvement directly for the administration of the college. Similarly, we see the social pressure upon the board, commenting that Lafayette's "role in society is better filled if our doors are opened for all students."[61] The board's decision-making process, including the consideration of alumni opinions, reflects a balance between tradition and pragmatism. Ultimately, the move towards co-education was not only a symbolic departure from tradition but also a strategic financial decision aligned with the evolving educational landscape and societal expectations. "The faculty were instructed to develop a program 'as quickly as feasible'."[62] The decision to shift to a coeducational system was less about promoting inclusivity and more about aligning with other institutions to expand the applicant pool, aiming to enhance the overall caliber of the student body through a broader selection of candidates.

Female Alumni Reflect on Insufficient Support on Campus

One of the most obvious challenges faced by the college in the transition was housing. According to Gendebien, the college had planned for a "gradual program of conversion and new construction over the four year period of transition" starting with the remodeling of Ruef Hall or "New Dorm" as it was titled at the time.[63] The remodeling included adding facilities "deemed attractive to women," including adding bathtubs and more kitchens.[64] Referencing the changes, Liza Lucy highlights how the choices were deemed strange by the women who lived there: "they put bathtubs in the dorm because they found women like to take baths? And they put kitchens on the floors,"[65] This choice is among the many interpretations made by the administration of what

[61] Ralph Gottshall, President of the Board of Trustees. June 17, 1969
[62] Lafayette Alumni Magazine, 1969
[63] Albert W. Gendebien, *The Biography of a College*, 520-21.
[64] Albert W. Gendebien, *The Biography of a College*, 521.
[65] Liza Lucy, interview by Amanda Roth, August 1, 2002, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project* 34.

female students would want, such as assigning roommates based on "height and weight so that we could exchange clothes."[66] Clearly these changes were rooted in gender stereotypes and highlighted that the school was not entirely sure of the tangible needs the first class of women would need. Lucy suggests that though the changes are "very charming in stories," it emphasized that the administration "were not ready for [women]."[67]

Overall, the oral histories from the first women vary in their reactions to the efforts made by the administration in the transitional period. However, all of them demonstrate that the school was not ready. Christine Adams Kauffman reflects that "the administration didn't always do the right thing, but they always listened…." suggesting there was a learning curve for both the women and admin.[68] Similarly, Deborah Everett-Holley states that "no thought process that really went into the depths of we're going coed," indicating a perception of insufficient thought being given to the implications of co-education.[69] Alma Scott-Buczak reflected, she had the impression that "a bunch of older men were trying to prepare for the arrival of a bunch of 18 year old girls- Not a clue," though "as something popped up, the next day it was fixed," implying that the decision-making process may have been reactive rather than proactive, and that there was a disconnect between the administration's understanding of the needs and experiences of female students.[70] These quotes suggest that there was a lack of thorough consideration or planning by the administration regarding the decision to admit female students.

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[66] Liza Lucy, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project* 34.
[67] Liza Lucy, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project* 34.
[68] Christine Adams Kauffman interview by Vivienne Felix, August 11, 2002, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project*
[69] Deborah Everett-Holley, interview by Kamaka Martin, Lafayette College Special Collections, July 1, 2003, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project* 5.
[70] Alma Scott-Buczak, Interviewed by Amanda Roth, Lafayette College Special Collections, August 14, 2003, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*39.

Conclusion

Overall, the move towards co-education among esteemed institutions like Lafayette College ushered in a significant era of opportunity for women pursuing higher education, as highlighted by the quote: "The change to co-education among the 'little' Ivies (Amherst, Haverford, Wesleyan, Williams, and other prestigious liberal arts colleges such as Bowdoin, Colgate, Hamilton, Lafayette, and Lehigh) has long been viewed as one of enormous importance….their switch enabled large numbers of high-performing women to be educated in schools that trained the nation's leaders and whose graduates entered the finest professional and graduate schools."[71] This pivotal shift broadened access to top-tier educational opportunities for women, empowering them to excel alongside their male counterparts in environments that historically shaped the future leaders of various fields. By integrating women into these esteemed institutions, the educational landscape became more inclusive and conducive to fostering diverse talent, ultimately enriching academia and society.

While the move towards co-education among esteemed institutions marked a significant advancement in opening opportunities for women in higher education, it has not completely leveled the playing field. Despite their access to high-quality education and often outperforming their male peers in academic settings, women continue to face systemic challenges in the professional world. Men still dominate in leadership positions across various industries, and the gender pay gap persists, with women earning less for equivalent roles. This discrepancy highlights the ongoing struggle for true gender equality, demonstrating that while education can

[71] Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, "Putting the "Co" in Education: Timing, Reasons, and Consequences of College Coeducation from 1835 to the Present," *Journal of Human Capital* 2011 5:4, 395.

be an equalizer, deeply rooted societal norms and biases still need to be addressed to achieve equitable representation and compensation for women in the workforce.

"The college's efforts (going coed) mirrored the world at large," observed Darlyne Bailey, encapsulating the tumultuous journey towards co-education.[72] Clearly there was the meticulous research and deliberation undertaken by the administration in the decision-making process of becoming co-educational. However, as the institution embarked on the tangible changes necessary for co-education, cracks began to surface. While initial planning showcased dedication and foresight, the execution of pivotal changes, such as renovating a women's dormitory, revealed administrative shortcomings. This phase highlighted a disconnect between vision and implementation, as the practical realities of integrating female students exposed systemic inadequacies. Despite these challenges, the journey towards co-education symbolized a transformative era. As we navigate the complexities of this transition, it becomes apparent that the true test lies not only in the decision to change but in the ability to effectively navigate and adapt to the ensuing transformation. The forthcoming chapters will depict the firsthand narratives and accounts of the first classes of women, shedding light on their academic and social encounters during their early days on campus.

[72] Darlyne Bailey, Interviewed by Kamaka Martin, Lafayette College Special Collections, March 26, 2003, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project*

Chapter Two: The Academic Experience

In a notable statement reflecting the anticipation and criteria surrounding the admission of women to Lafayette College, an excerpt from a 1969 official document articulates the institution's expectations and aspirations for its incoming female students: “We anticipate that the young women who enter Lafayette will be academically as strong as at least our current male students, but we seek and hope for more than sheer academic power. We deem it essential that the first woman to be admitted are mature, stable, and outgoing.”[73] This statement comes from Lafayette College’s initial attempts to seek female students in the college admissions process. This document was circulated to high schools, guidance counselors, and anyone seeking information on the school’s new venture into becoming co-educational.

The qualities of being mature, stable, and outgoing, as articulated by the educational institution regarding the admission of young women to their programs can be perceived as steeped in traditional gender stereotypes. These expectations align with societal norms that often place pressure on women to fulfill certain roles and behaviors. The notion of maturity and stability, for instance, may reflect outdated stereotypes of women as nurturing caregivers or emotionally steady individuals, reinforcing the expectation that women should exhibit emotional control and reliability. Similarly, the expectation of being outgoing can perpetuate stereotypes of women as naturally sociable and accommodating, adhering to traditional gender roles that prioritize sociability and interpersonal skills. Placing such emphasis on specific personality traits like maturity and outgoingness can inadvertently reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and

[73] Lafayette College, Profile of the Class of 1973

expectations. This perpetuates the notion that women should conform to certain gendered roles and behaviors, limiting their freedom to express their individuality and diversity.

By seeking out mature and outgoing individuals, the school aimed to create a cohesive and supportive learning environment, where students can engage actively in discussions, collaborate effectively on projects, and contribute positively to the overall academic atmosphere. The emphasis on maturity and stability could be interpreted as the school's attempt to ensure that its students possess the emotional resilience and responsibility necessary to navigate the challenges of academic life successfully. Additionally, the preference for outgoing individuals may stem from the desire to facilitate social interaction and networking opportunities within the student community. Outgoing students are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities, engage with their peers, and build meaningful connections both inside and outside the classroom. This social engagement can enhance the overall college experience and contribute to students' personal and professional development.

Interestingly, Christine Adams Kauffman when asked about the "Lafayette Ideal" and how realistic those expectations were stated: "The Lafayette ideal was an attractive, smart woman who played field hockey, was a cheerleader, and was on the student government. And I think that I can think of about fifteen of my friends from the Class of 74 who meet those standards in criteria."[74] In other words, emphasizing that Lafayette's appeal for women that fit a mold were not achieved in practice.

The Academics of Incoming Students

The early academic experiences of women in college were marked by high performance and competitiveness, which sparked a range of responses from their male peers, including

[74] Christine Adams Kauffman, interviewed by [] *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.* 41.

admiration, skepticism, and sexist biases rooted in pervasive gender stereotypes. Even though the oral histories highlight issues that women vocalized, when discussing academics, it is important to recognize the perspectives of the first men as well. Given the extreme selectiveness of admissions for these first women, the female students had higher overall GPAs and SATs relative to their male counterparts: In fact, "Women's Mean SAT Scores are at least 10% higher than the male scores in almost every category except math" with the average score for the SAT verbal section (on a scale of 800), 591 for men; 608 women.[75]

The better academic performance factored into a competitive dynamic within the academic space, often to the chagrin of some male students. An article written in 1971 cited one male student stating he thought that the women were more prepared academically for college, but on the other hand, some male students thought that women used their 'femininity to their advantage" with a poll of 132 out of 185 agreeing with the statement.[76] This "advantage" is asking a male professor to 'go easier' on the women. However, the women polled found only 24 out of 75 agreed with the statement. [77]

This tension and competition manifested itself as sexist mentalities from the men, such as what Vedus-Deeney discussed: "Some male students verbalized that if women were attractive then they couldn't compete academically… it was really an education for them to learn that women could compete."[78] The quote highlights pervasive gender stereotypes prevalent in the 1970s, particularly regarding women's academic abilities and their perceived value based on physical appearance. The notion that male students believed attractive women couldn't compete

[75] Lafayette College, Profile of the Class of 1973
[76] Frank Claps, "We're Students First, Then Women," 1971
[77] Frank Claps, "We're Students First, Then Women," 1971
[78] Michelle Vedus-Deeney, interviewed by [] *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project*

academically reflects deeply ingrained stereotypes that undermine women's intelligence and capabilities based on their physical appearance.

This belief suggests a troubling correlation between attractiveness and academic competence, perpetuating the harmful stereotype that women are valued primarily for their appearance rather than their intellect, or that an attractive woman could not also be intelligent. It also underscores the systemic bias against women in academic settings, where their abilities are unfairly judged and diminished based on superficial criteria rather than merit. Moreover, it sheds light on the prevailing attitudes of the time and the educational journey necessary for some male students to recognize and confront their own biases. However, Dean of Students Earl A. Pope in 1971, highlighted that the admission of women improved the "overall quality of academic performance," regardless of the many issues that are discussed in the oral histories.[79] This highlights the exceptional academic performance of the first women students, the ensuing tension and competition with male peers, and the persistence of gender stereotypes and biases in academic settings, while noting that the presence of women improved overall academic quality.

Experiences with Professors and The Classroom

The first female students at Lafayette College faced a challenging environment due to a lack of female advocates and mentors, limited representation among faculty and administration, and reliance on peer support to navigate their academic and social experiences. Given that at the time when Lafayette College became coed in 1970 there was only one female professor, there was a severe lack in female advocates for these first women. The first classes of women in many instances had to take on a supportive role in place of female faculty. Diane Elliot said she did not

[79] Frank Claps, 1971 "We're Students First, Then Women," 22.

feel "supported in [her] first semester" and that the "college had failed in that area."[80] According to Elliot, many women in that first class felt the same: "I realized at the time that there wasn't any support. I turned to the other women who also did not know what to do."[81] Some of the respondents commented on the role of the female transfer students as Resident Advisors within the 'new dorm.' Therefore, much of the social and mental wellbeing of students fell upon young adults. Elliot's frustration extended beyond her living and social life, but even in the classroom and in academic spaces "a woman [professor] might have impacted me, but I never had the opportunity to know."[82] As a result, female students may have struggled to forge connections with male professors who may not have fully understood their experiences or provided the mentorship they needed. This environment made it challenging for female students to develop meaningful relationships with male professors, as they lacked visible female role models, felt constrained to supportive roles, and relied heavily on peer support for their social and emotional needs.

While the administration had some clear plans for supporting the first female students, there were significant tangible issues. The college lagged in establishing gender equality within its system. For example, there was only one female dean, the assistant dean of students, no women on the board of trustees until 1975, and a severely skewed gender ratio issue within the faculty. Many of the women from the oral histories even remark on the fact that they never even had a female professor in their entire college career.[83]

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[80] Diane Elliot, Interviewed by Amanda Roth, Lafayette College Special Collections, March 15, 2004, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 35.
[81] Elliot, 34.
[82] Elliot, Interviewed by Amanda Roth, Lafayette College Special Collections, March 15, 2004, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 34.
[83] Alma Scott-Buczak, Interviewed by Amanda Roth, Lafayette College Special Collections, August 14, 2003, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 21.

Overall, the oral histories comment on the male professors' lack of experience with female students, rather than overt gender discrimination. An example cited within the oral histories is something as plain as a male professor saying "okay gentlemen " at the beginning of a class, failing to recognize the new male and female make-up of the classroom.[84] Overall, for male professors there was a learning curve for teaching both male and female students. The first women remark that there was a general "clumsiness," as well as a lack of sensitivity to "gender issues."[85] Gender issues here referred to questions, problems, and concerns related to all aspects of women's and men's lives. Likewise, it would take on a mental toll for the female students, as Patricia Haines commented that it felt like a "lot of work- getting people to understand that it's different now," "it" referring to the gender makeup on campus.[86] In discussions surrounding the evolution of campus demographics and academic programs, concerns over insensitivity towards women's needs emerge. These concerns are articulated by Haines, who highlights a perceived disparity between efforts to diversify the student body and the lack of corresponding adjustments in academic curricula. In fact, a class dean at the time, Dean Earl A Pope, remembers multiple women asking to be treated as "a student first and then a woman."[87] This critique underscores the importance of aligning demographic shifts with responsive academic initiatives to create an inclusive educational environment:

> I think there was a lot of insensitivities (towards women). They were slow to do the curriculum work to accommodate the different students that they had invited here. I mean they wanted to change the demographics of this campus- but didn't pay attention to the academic programs that we wanted here.[88]

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[84] Susan Basow, Interviewed by Amanda Roth, Lafayette College Special Collections, August 29, 2003, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*
[85] Patricia Haines, Interviewed by Amanda Roth, Lafayette College Special Collections, August 19, 2003, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*5, 28.
[86] Haines, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 5.
[87] Frank Claps, "We're Students First, Then Women," 1971, 15-16.
[88] Patricia Haines, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*

Some women expressed concerns about insensitivity towards women in academia, particularly regarding the adaptation of academic programs to accommodate diverse student demographics. This is not to say that women required a different curriculum than men, but rather that the first female class had specific wants and needs that many observed were not yet being met on campus Their views suggest a disconnect between the intention to diversify campus demographics and the actual implementation of supportive academic initiatives for women. The academic programs that women wanted as suggested by an article written in 1971 was more courses about "elementary education, fine arts and for a small percentage, psychology"[89] This information came from a poll in which 44 out of the 75 women respondents agreed with the aforementioned statement.[90] This idea that the school did not provide those courses is further suggested in Liza Lucy's testimony as she states that besides not having courses, the school was also lacking in facilities: "I mean the theater was unbelievably pathetic…The Art Department was maybe two rooms big. and music, same thing. So, the things that you consider, you know, liberal arts, fine arts, were almost nonexistent."[91] This statement suggests a disconnect between the intention to diversify campus demographics and the actual implementation of supportive academic initiatives for the targeted demographic, specifically women. Haines implies that while efforts were made to change the composition of the campus population, insufficient attention was given to addressing the specific academic needs and preferences of women students. In addition to the insensitivities, some of the first women believed that "some professors [were] extremely opposed to women students and [made] every effort to make this known," thus creating an environment of toxicity.[92]

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[89] Frank Claps, 1971 "We're Students First, Then Women," 16.
[90] Frank Claps, 1971 "We're Students First, Then Women," 16.
[91] Lucy interviewed by Amanda Roth, 22.
[92] Frank Claps, 1971 "We're Students First, Then Women," 22.

Additionally, reflecting on her academic experience at Lafayette in 2002, Karen Komolos stated she would've gone "to a bigger school," for her passion in architecture because the academics at the time "were a disappointment," given there weren't "enough classes…good professors yet…It didn't even have a major. They didn't treat it seriously, period."[93] Therefore, perhaps in the academic sphere the issue was with the women's choice in school, rather than innately Lafayette's issue. An interesting concept about the desire for more "female" courses is the challenge of defining what a female class is. The article suggests that women are more interested in the liberal and fine arts, which at Lafayette College were and still are predominantly pursued by female students. However, this perspective perpetuates the stereotype that women are less interested in STEM subjects, which is not the case.

In fact, the first class of women at Lafayette included many female engineers. Patricia O'Donnell, one of the oral history participants, cited the lack of courses tailored to her interests as her reason for transferring to Pennsylvania State University.[94] The oral histories suggest that the challenges women faced were more about the unequal male-to-female ratios in any given classroom or the feeling of not being welcome in traditionally male-dominated classes. For example, Liza Lucy described feeling "awkward" as the only woman in a class full of men, particularly given the small class sizes in the lecture halls.[95] In addition to the lack of female professors, there were male professors who questioned the validity of women attending a historically male college or taking classes in traditionally male subjects such as the sciences.

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[93] Karen Komolos, "Association for Lafayette Women Panel," (Speech, Easton, PA, March 2002).
[94] Patricia O'Donnell, Interview by Amanda Roth, Lafayette College Special Collections, November 15, 2002, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,*18.
[95] Lucy interviewed by Amanda Roth, August 1, 2002, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project* 22.

Diane Elliot recounts that some science professors believed it "wasn't the place for a woman" and that she had to prove her ability before receiving any support.[96] This bias created a constant pressure for her to demonstrate her competence each time she entered a science classroom. Unlike her male peers, who were often presumed competent from the start, Diane had to work twice as hard to earn recognition and respect.

This scrutiny based on gender could create a challenging environment, where a woman not only had to excel academically but also constantly validate her presence in the field. The pressure to prove oneself in a male-dominated domain could take a toll on a new first-year student, highlighting the additional obstacles women faced in pursuing careers in science.

The stark gender imbalance in classroom settings often left women feeling isolated and alienated, creating difficulties in academic engagement, and increasing their exposure to bias and discrimination. In the classroom, some women had “usually one, two or three women in a class,” “10-15% female in my classes,” or to the extreme was the “only woman in a classroom of forty men.”[97] This situation presents a challenging dynamic in academic settings. This stark gender imbalance brings about several difficulties. Firstly, it can evoke feelings of isolation and alienation for women, who may struggle to find a sense of belonging. Moreover, the lack of female peers means limited opportunities for collaboration and support within the classroom. Women may find it challenging to engage in discussions or voice their opinions when they are in

[96]Diane Elliot, Interviewed by Amanda Roth, Lafayette College Special Collections, March 15, 2004, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*

[97] O’Donnell, interviewed by Interview by Amanda Roth, Lafayette College Special Collections, November 15, 2002, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*

Dietz Interviewed by Vivienne Felix, Lafayette College Special Collections, August 6, 2002, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*

the minority, further exacerbating feelings of marginalization. Additionally, being outnumbered by men increases the likelihood of encountering microaggressions, unconscious bias, or even overt discrimination from peers or instructors.

Christine Kauffman also discussed office hours meetings with male professors as occasionally uncomfortable experiences. Kauffman states, "I went to talk to the professor about [a bad grade], I cried, and he was very uncomfortable because I don't think he'd ever had a student crying in his office before."[98] Kauffman is using gendered stereotypes to make sense of the interaction by implying that the male professor's discomfort was due to a lack of experience in dealing with emotional situations typically associated with women. By suggesting that the professor had likely never encountered a crying student before, Kauffman is perpetuating the stereotype that women are more emotional than men and that men are ill-equipped to handle displays of emotion. This assumption relies on traditional gender roles that prescribe men as stoic and emotionally detached, while women are expected to be more emotional and vulnerable. By attributing the professor's discomfort to his gender and lack of experience with emotional situations, Kauffman reinforces these stereotypes and subtly suggests that the professor's response was influenced by his masculinity.

In a distressing incident detailed by Bailey, a female student found herself subjected to sexual harassment by a male professor. During a meeting, the professor brazenly proposed to change a "grade if [she] date [him]."[99] This instance of harassment exemplifies the quintessential "quid pro quo" (what for what) harassment where power dynamics supersede any notion of

[98] Kauffman, interviewed by [] *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 27.
[99] Bailey, Interviewed by Kamaka Martin, Lafayette College Special Collections, March 26, 2003, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 17.

genuine consent or mutual respect.[100] Bailey's account underscores the insidious nature of such behavior, highlighting the absence of protective measures like Title IX or other nondiscriminatory legislation that could have shielded the student from such exploitation. Title IX did not even exist until June 23, 1972, nor did the school investigate practices that may violate it until 1975. The lack of support structures for the student, compounded by a dearth of female advocates within the faculty and inexperienced resident advisors, paints a bleak picture of the institutional response to such egregious instances of sexual harassment.

Shifting focus to literature regarding sexual harassment on a national scale, as Bailey's experience poignantly reflects, Sheldon Stark demands, "when does the workplace become polluted enough with sexual comments, nude pictures, and humiliating horseplay to become actionable?" This rhetorical inquiry underscores the urgent need for comprehensive policies and support mechanisms to address and prevent such misconduct within academic environments. Dianne Williams, a victim of harassment in the workplace and early advocate for charging perpetrators for their acts, states that sexual harassment was "a very emotional experience, a very degrading experience, a very humiliating experience."[101] Being subjected to unwanted advances, comments, or actions can evoke a range of intense emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger, and shame. These emotions can significantly affect a person's well-being, mental health, and ability to function effectively in their workplace. The characterization of sexual harassment as "a very degrading experience" emphasizes how it strips victims of their dignity and self-respect.[102] Sexual harassment frequently occurs in front of others or in environments where victims feel

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[100] Sheldon J Stark, 1992 "Sexual harassment in the workplace: lessons from the Thomas hill hearings" in *women's issues*

[101] Carrie N. Baker, "Race, Class, and Sexual Harassment in the 1970s" *Study of Women and Gender: Faculty Publications* 11

[102] Carrie N. Baker, "Race, Class, and Sexual Harassment in the 1970s" Study of Women and Gender: Faculty Publications 2004 11

exposed and vulnerable. The intrusive and often graphic nature of the harassment can leave victims feeling deeply embarrassed and ashamed, leading to social isolation and withdrawal. For a female student at a newly co-ed college, the experience of sexual harassment can be particularly harrowing and long lasting. They may find themselves navigating unfamiliar social dynamics and power structures, where male professors or peers may exploit their positions of authority or privilege to engage in inappropriate behavior. The lack of established norms and protective measures can exacerbate the impact of sexual harassment, making it even more distressing for female students who may already feel isolated or marginalized in a predominantly male environment.

The Experience of Female Professors

The section on the experiences of female faculty is crucial to understanding the first cohort of female students because it reveals the broader institutional challenges women faced, thereby providing context for the students' experiences, and highlighting potential parallels in their struggles for equity and inclusion. In the United States, as women initially entered the teaching profession, they were encouraged to perceive it as a noble calling, tasked with the mission of rescuing underprivileged children.[103] However, lacking access to higher education compared to their male counterparts, these women faced challenges in effectively educating students, leading to lower compensation and the perpetuation of stereotypes suggesting that women excelled in nurturing rather than teaching. Nonetheless, the landscape began to shift during World War II as economic demands and changing societal attitudes facilitated greater access to higher education for women.[104] The period following the mid-1960s and early 1970s

[103] Dana Goldstein (2014). The teacher wars: a history of America's most embattled profession. New York : Doubleday.
[104]Judith Glazer-Raymo. Shattering the Myths: Women in Academe. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. Print.

marked a significant turning point as many colleges in the US transitioned to co-education, allowing women to pursue higher education and academic careers. Consequently, U.S. colleges and universities gradually increased their hiring of female faculty during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite these advancements, many female faculty members described their experiences both on and off campus as marked by feelings of inadequacy, discomfort, impostor syndrome, and being marginalized.[105]

In the article, "The Challenge of Change: One Year Later," written in 1971, provost Robert S Chase comments on the changing landscape of professors the college hired, with the need for more women highlighted.[106] Chase states that the college hired "a greater percentage of women in the last two years (1969-1971) than we ever have before," yet in his opinion didn't believe that the school "needed more women professors," just because they were now "coed," which as explored was not the popular opinion of female students.[107] At the time of the article's publication, the faculty included "14 women, five of whom have doctorates and two part time," with only Dr Clay A. Ketcham, a professor of Latin and education who had been at the school since 1954 having tenure.[108] This is not limited only to Lafayette College's campus but also in the landscape of academia, where there is a prevailing trend where women predominantly occupy lower professional ranks and nontenure-track positions. As noted by one scholar Bonnie Cook Freidman, "women tend to populate the lower professional ranks and non-tenure track positions."[109] This observation underscores the systemic challenges that women face in advancing within academic institutions, reflecting broader disparities in gender representation

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[105] Nadya Aisenberg, and Mona Harrington. "Outsiders in the Sacred Grove." Amherst: U of Massachusetts, 1988. Print.
[106] Robert S Chase in "The Challenge of Change: One Year Later," 23.
[107] "The Challenge of Change: One Year Later," 23.
[108] "The Challenge of Change: One Year Later," 23.
[109] Freeman, Bonnie Cook. "Faculty Women in the American University: Up the Down Staircase." Higher Education 6, no. 2 (1977): 165–88. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3445603.

across professional hierarchies. At the time, only 20% of doctoral degrees went to women, skewing the pool of applicants with the highest of qualifications.[110] Therefore, having a source that highlights and presents the experience of the few female professors is extremely important, so that their perspective is not silenced by the history of the college.

In a valuable oral history capturing a pivotal moment in academia, Professor Susan Blake's perspective stands out as a rare gem. As one of the few female professors at the time, and notably the sole woman within the collection of oral histories, her insights provide a unique glimpse into the challenges faced by female faculty in academia during the 1970s. Joining the English department in 1974, Susan Blake found herself in a distinct minority, one of only two women within her department: “I checked in the Provost’s office, and indeed there were ten [women] in 1974. And that was six percent of the faculty.”[111] Fresh out of graduate school, at only age 27 she encountered a landscape fraught with patriarchal norms, reminiscent of the experiences recounted by female students of the era, “we were not only few, but we were all very young. I was 27 and the system in those days was very patriarchal.”[112] Reflecting on her early days at Lafayette College, Blake candidly described the atmosphere as entrenched in a pervasive “boy's club” mentality.[113] Recalling the dynamics of college politics, Blake painted a vivid picture of Lafayette as a notably patriarchal institution. She recounted the prevalent jokes about President Bergethon's “early morning checks on faculty,” a practice symbolizing the institutional scrutiny and gendered expectations pervasive within the academic setting, making sure that the women that were hired were doing their jobs correctly, such as being on time.[114] There was also

[110] “The Challenge of Change: One Year Later,” 23.
[111] Blake, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,
[112] Blake, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,
[113] Blake 15
[114] Blake, 15

hardship in the career advancement within the college as Blake remembers that, "once you ascended to the rank of department head, you were appointed for life. So, my department head had been department head since I was born."[115] Similarly, male professors wouldn't take herself or other female professors seriously:

> It was hard for the senior male faculty to think of us as anything other than comparable to their own female children. Also, we hadn't had any models of being female professors. I had no female professors in college or in graduate school. And so, I was doing something new, from scratch. Our relationships with our faculty colleagues were strained, and it was also difficult in the classroom.[116]

This quote encapsulates the challenges faced by female professors in a predominantly male academic environment during the 1970s. The phrase "It was hard for the senior male faculty to think of us as anything other than comparable to their own female children" highlights the struggle for recognition and respect within the faculty. Senior male faculty members, entrenched in a patriarchal system, had difficulty seeing their female colleagues as equals. Instead, they often perceived them through a paternalistic lens, viewing them as lesser or as needing guidance akin to their own daughters. The absence of female role models in academia further compounded these challenges. The lack of representation meant that female professors like Blake had no blueprint to follow. They were pioneering a path as female professors in a landscape dominated by men, essentially starting from scratch. This lack of guidance and mentorship contributed to strained relationships with faculty colleagues and exacerbated difficulties faced in the classroom. The mention of the classroom dynamics underscores the broader issue of gender disparity within the student body. With seventy-five percent of the students being men at the time, female professors were confronted with an imbalance that influenced classroom dynamics.

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[115] Blake, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,
[116] Blake, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,

In the classroom, where male students outnumbered their female peers, the dynamic was fraught with discomfort and resistance. Blake remembers classes being "up to about twenty-eight students…But the women I had were ten out of twenty-six, two of twenty-one, five out of thirty-one, and zero out of twenty-one," making it even harder to forget the feeling of isolation not only as a woman at Lafayette College, but as a young professor.[117] Not only were there issues in the imbalance of men to women, but Blake also recounted instances where male students openly expressed their reluctance to accept female authority, with some even explicitly stating their refusal to take orders from a woman, saying things such as "I don't think a woman can teach me anything," or "I'm not gonna take orders from a woman" as some male students were "very uncomfortable with having women in authority."[118] Researcher Colleen Flaherty suggests that "female faculty are being held to high standards by their students," and "it is more difficult for female professors to meet student expectations, perhaps resulting in poorer course evaluations, and putting more work demands and emotional strain on female professors"[119]Such attitudes and behaviors served as constant reminders of the gendered power dynamics at play, challenging her authority and credibility as a professor solely because of her gender. Throughout her career, Blake navigated the complexities of gender representation across different departments and divisions: "there were things that challenged your position as the professor because you were a woman."[120] While departments like English boasted gender parity among faculty members, others lagged behind, presenting additional hurdles for women striving to establish themselves in academia.[121] Despite the progress made in certain areas, the professor's experiences underscored

[117] Blake, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,
[118] Blake, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,
[119] Colleen Flaherty. "Study finds female professors experience more work demands and special favor requests, particularly from academically entitled students." 2018.
[120] Blake, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,
[121] Blake, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,

the ongoing struggle for gender equality within academic institutions, where entrenched biases and societal expectations continued to shape the experiences of female faculty members. Through Blake's narrative, we gain not only a glimpse into the personal challenges she faced but also a broader understanding of the gender dynamics prevalent within academia during the 1970s. As a trailblazer in her own right, Susan Blake's story serves as a poignant reminder of the barriers women encountered in pursuing academic careers during this pivotal period in history.

In summary, the exploration of the academic landscape for women at Lafayette College during the 1970s reveals challenges and barriers that shaped their experiences. The chapter illuminates the initial expectations set for female students upon admission, emphasizing traits like maturity and outgoingness that inadvertently reinforced traditional gender stereotypes. These expectations, rooted in societal norms, constrained the individuality and diversity of female applicants, reflecting a broader need to challenge and dismantle gender biases in educational settings. Furthermore, the narratives shared in the chapter underscore the struggles faced by female students in establishing meaningful connections with the faculty, which was overwhelmingly made up of male professors. This lack of representation not only hindered academic and professional growth but also underscored the importance of fostering inclusive and supportive environments for all individuals in academia.

Moreover, there were clear challenges encountered by female professors in navigating a predominantly male academic environment, where senior male faculty members often struggled to view their female colleagues as equals. The absence of mentorship and guidance for female professors exacerbated difficulties in the classroom and strained relationships with colleagues, highlighting the need for greater representation and support for women in academia.

In essence, the narratives presented in this chapter serve as a poignant reminder of the gender disparities and biases that permeated academic institutions in the 1970s. By acknowledging these historical challenges and advocating for inclusivity, diversity, and respect in educational settings, we can strive towards a more equitable and empowering academic experience for women and all individuals in higher education.

Chapter Three: Navigating Social Challenges

"I think socially it was harder than it was academically" said alumni Diane Elliot reflecting on the unique pressures and challenges she and her peers faced as they navigated the campus environment. In the fall semester of 1970, Lafayette College welcomed 146 women, 123 of which were first year students, who now have to live alongside their male peers and navigate the complexities of integrating into a predominantly male college community.[122] While one might anticipate that the examination of women's experiences within a college setting would naturally center on the academic realm, the focal point, surprisingly, shifts to the social dynamics associated with residing on campus and assimilating into the historically all-male social sphere. It is through this lens that a recognition of the challenges faced by women in this context becomes evident. This section serves to unravel the threads of the collective social experiences of the inaugural class of women at Lafayette. Beyond academia, their oral histories scrutinize drinking culture, substance use, campus residency dynamics, and the absence of safety measures for women. It delves into the stark realities of sexual harassment, negotiating sexual identities, and confronting societal norms. This chapter interweaves individual narratives from oral histories with empirical statistics that intend to highlight the broader social behaviors of United

[122] Lafayette College, Profile of the Class of 1973

States college students in that era This reveals the vibrant yet tumultuous social lives of these pioneering women.

This chapter also uncovers a range of emotions and challenges faced by these trailblazing women, from feelings of empowerment and excitement to encounters with sexism and societal pressures. Through oral histories and primary documentation, a vivid picture emerges of the complexities and nuances of their social interactions, shedding light on the evolving dynamics within the campus community. This chapter will outline a dissection of the multifaceted social landscape that shaped the early experiences of women at Lafayette College. The narrative surrounding the early social experiences of women vividly illustrates the conflicting expectations imposed upon them: they were expected to date their male peers, strive for marriage before graduation, and engage in sexual activity, all while navigating the challenges of restricted access to reproductive health care, highlighting the paradoxical pressures of societal norms that advocate both for traditional relationships and for uninhibited indulgence in free love, drugs, and alcohol.

Interpreting the Experiences

There seems to be two ways of looking at the experiences of women when they first enrolled at Lafayette. Generally, the first women who were interviewed in the 2000s about their time at Lafayette, stated that being in the first classes was "exciting" or "empowering," but where they differ is in the overall experience.[123] Some state that the small collective of women created a supportive network as they all lived in 'new dorm,' and it was exciting to get to know male students, and be 'feminists.'[124] But as Karen Komolos suggested in 2002, being feminist

[123] Linda Arra, Interviewed by Amanda Roth, Lafayette College Special Collections, July 8, 2003, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project*. 4.
[124] Linda Arra, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 4.

was a very new concept at the time of Lafayette College going coed, as "the word feminism was not in existence."[125] However, there are also first-hand experiences of sexism from faculty and male classmates- such as deplorable behavior of "rating" the women, or upperclassmen using the first-year directory to study all the new women and gain access to their room phone numbers.[126]

Many of the oral histories were conducted in 2002. This is almost 30 years since these interviewees graduated Lafayette College, which means that some of the content is outdated, and that the reliability of some memories can and should be questioned. Even one of the interviewers herself uses the outdated phrase of 'date-rape' when broaching the subject of sexual harassment.[127] There are also cases in which interviewees that do not remember any instances of negative male and female interactions, comment that "it was a different time" or "we didn't know the meaning of discrimination fully."[128] Likewise, women who didn't know of a specific instance of sexual assault would comment "I didn't know of anyone who was assaulted, but it definitely happened, we just didn't talk about it."[129] Their experiences may have included these deeply disturbing instances of sexism, but it didn't hinder their experience at the time given the cultural shifts in recent years. When looking at the oral histories with this lens, it is understandable that some respondents lack specific instances of sexism while on campus. On the other hand, some respondents remember specific events, and comment on how appalling it was that it was not dealt with- but based on their current standpoint. This is seen using the word "retrospectively" in many of the interviews.

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[125] Karen Komolos, "*Association for Lafayette Women Panel,"* (Speech, Easton, PA, March 2002)
[126] Patricia Haines, 3.
[127] Patricia Haines, 29.
[128] Diane Elliot, 34.
[129] Patricia Haines, 29.

It is important to note that the experiences of the first women differ immensely. Not only from differences such as their race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. Retrospectively looking back upon their experiences allows the participants to potentially remember certain memories: negative or positive ones. This is mediated through the usage of primary source material written in the time of the first women's enrollment. By a comparison of the two, there was dissatisfaction in many, if not all aspects of college life.

When looking at some of the primary documentation from the time, one artifact stood out: a poll and opinion piece from a February Issue of *The Lafayette* in 1971. This poll was conducted as a random sample survey collected by a male student in the Marquis dining hall. The interviewer only collected responses from women, which does not allow for a comparison of the perceptions of social life from male students. In the poll, 26 out of 54 female respondents expressed 'substantial dissatisfaction' with their experiences at the college.[130] The three aspects that women expressed the most frustration with, according to the article, was the social life experience, lack of non-material care from the administration and gender specific education, such as women's and gender studies.[131]

Societal Pressures on Campus

There is a recurring term throughout the history of Lafayette's move to co-education as it relates to the first women, and that is "the fishbowl feeling." The term "fishbowl feeling" typically refers to a sensation or perception of being observed or scrutinized, where one feels exposed or vulnerable to the scrutiny of others. This feeling is characterized by a sense of being under constant observation, often leading to heightened self-awareness and discomfort due to the perceived lack of privacy or autonomy. We see this word "fishbowl" used on behalf of the 1970s

[130] *The Lafayette* 1971.
[131] *The Lafayette* 1971.

administration, the students and even the interviewer of the oral history project. This phrase is used to explain the immense pressure that was on the women from the administration and the currently enrolled male students at the time of their matriculation. In her oral history interview, Diane Elliot, class of 1974, when asked her perspective on the "fishbowl feeling" expressed that she felt like "People were looking for us to fail. We were being watched. We were being viewed. We were being criticized."[132] The pressure of being a woman in the first class of women at a formerly all-male school was obviously an experience fraught with challenges, expectations, and especially societal pressures. In the words of the first women, the feeling of being watched was far beyond the administration keeping an eye on their "new experiment," but more so manifested in the social interactions with men.

Not only were the first women at the college observed and critiqued under a microscope, but this scrutiny quickly gave way to cases of sexism and sexual harassment. Patricia Haines, class of 1975, vividly described the atmosphere, stating, "It was pretty grim. It did feel sort of like we were all in a meat market."[133] This imagery highlights the objectification and scrutiny these pioneering women faced, where they were evaluated based on physical attributes rather than their intellect or capabilities. Haines further elaborated on the social dynamics within the student body through other means, "I think the guys used that student directory to make phone calls for dates." The freshman student directory contained images of this first class of women, as well as the telephone extension numbers for their dorm room.[134] The imagery of being in a "meat market" is continued here through the fact that this book was referred to as the "pig book," in recognition of which women looked like "pigs"—in other words not conventionally attractive to men on

[132] Diane Elliot, 14
[133] Patricia Haines 17
[134] Liza Lucy interviewed by Amanda Roth, August 1, 2002, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project*

campus.[135] Many other women from the oral history project such as Linda Dietz, Diane Elliott, Liza Lucy (all class of 1974), as well as professor Susan Blake make mention of this very directory.[136] In fact Lucy commented that this directory "got passed around from fraternity to fraternity getting marked up on who were the cute girls to date and who weren't."[137] Lucy described feeling extremely "offended" by this behavior, but that these kinds of actions were not isolated. Moreover, the safety concerns regarding access to the living quarters of all first-year students on campus rendered these women highly susceptible to potentially unwelcome male attention or harassment. In fact, Lucy communicates an event where men would stand outside of "New Dorm" in the evening yelling, "panty raid" attempting to break into the women's dorm to steal their clothing.[138] Though an act like this could be interpreted as harmless, in Lucy's perspective it was "disruptive" and attributed to the "hostile" environment between men and women on campus.[139] This unruly male behavior trickled through even to female professors on campus, as Susan Blake suggests they were "outraged" by the sexist behavior of male upperclassmen.[140] Though the interviewer does not ask whether Blake or these "outraged" professors made an attempt to change or penalize this behavior, it can be argued that given its normality on Lafayette's campus in the first few years of being co-ed that it perhaps was a non-issue for male faculty.

Heterosexual Relationship Culture: Courtship and Marriage

From the late 60s to the early 1970s, societal norms also heavily emphasized marriage and family as the pinnacle of success for women. This mentality permeated college campuses,

[135] Liza Lucy, interviewed by Amanda Roth, 15
[136] Dietz, Elliott, Lucy, Blake, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*
[137] Liza Lucy, interviewed by Amanda Roth, 6
[138] Lucy, interviewed by Amanda Roth, 6
[139] Lucy, interviewed by Amanda Roth, 5-7.
[140] Susan Blake.

like Lafayette College where women often felt pressured to prioritize finding a husband and starting a family over other pursuits. According to Haines, there was also immense pressure to accept offers of dates, and that to be accepted "socially" you had to have "a different date every weekend."[141] Women were perceived as potential romantic partners, highlighting their objectification and commodification. Reflecting on the external pressures, Haines remarks, "I felt there was a lot of pressure to look nice, be coiffed."[142] This sentiment underscores the societal expectation for women to adhere to traditional standards of femininity. Haines also acknowledges the traditional heteronormative dating expectations, where failure to secure a date was viewed as a reflection of inadequacy: "I mean, people would say, 'If you can't have a date with these odds, you are a real loser."[143] Furthermore, upon being asked if it was important to her own experience, Lucy confesses that there was "a tremendous amount of coupling off" that would ultimately make you feel "pretty lonely if you were not."[144]

Consequently, there was a palpable expectation for women to actively participate in dating culture and effectively "find their husband" during their college years: "Women had the attitude of 'oh my god, if I'm not married by the time I'm twenty-two, it's all over,'" said Caron Anderson from the class of 1973.[145] In fact, a 1992 United States census collected that the median age of a woman's first marriage in 1970 was 20.8.[146] Similarly, Liza Lucy states," It was clear that women getting an engagement ring and graduating, getting out of here with a husband was important to a certain group of girls."[147] Despite the diversity of perspectives and

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[141] Haines, 17.
[142] Haines, 17.
[143] Haines, 18.
[144] Lucy, interviewed by Amanda Roth, 15.
[145] Caron Anderson, Interview by Vivienne Felix, Lafayette College Special Collections, July 9 2003, Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.
[146] Balancing Act: Motherhood, Marriage, and Employment Among American Women, Daphne Spain, Suzanne Bianchi 26.
[147] Lucy, interviewed by Amanda Roth, 24

experiences among women in college during the 1970s, the overarching societal pressure to prioritize marriage and family influenced the college experience for many. It shaped not only social interactions and dating culture but also individual choices and aspirations. These pressures were not unsubstantiated, as at the time "a woman's decision whether to marry often has important consequences for her and her child's economic welfare," thus emphasizing how marriage was not just a societal factor.[148] The tension between traditional expectations and evolving notions of women's roles underscored the broader societal context in which women pursued higher education and navigated their personal and professional goals during that era. However, in a psychological study, created through the use of a "attitudes towards women scale" or AWS which asked college aged men and women a series of questions over the course of two decades related to expectations for heterosexual marriage.[149]it was suggested in 1972 that "first-year college women were more likely to see their future role as a "married career woman with children" (as opposed to "a housewife with . . . children") in 1970 than in 1965."[150] However, over time marriage culture has not entirely changed. We even see in 1989, 18 years after the first classes of women matriculated, so called "domestic traditionalists" assert that the female role of married mothers "making homemade apple pie, home-sown Halloween costumes, hand iron shirts" is part of a cultural tradition that women (and "only women") must strive to carry on.[151] In other words, there are continued cultural norms that pressure women well beyond college.

The social experience in the community appears to be primarily rooted in heterosexual encounters, as indicated by the absence of oral histories referencing any potential homosexual

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[148] Daphne Spain, Suzanne Bianchi (1997) Balancing Act: Motherhood, Marriage, and Employment Among American Women, 25.
[149] Jean M. Twenge ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN, 1970–1995. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21, 1997, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00099.x
[150] Jean M. Twenge ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN, 1970–1995, 36.
[151] Arlie Hochschild & Ann Machung, (1989) "The Second Shift" In Women's Issues

experiences. When questioned, Linda Arra stated that she did not have any "stand out moments of knowing any LGBTQ women or men," suggesting that the community's focus was largely centered on heterosexual relationships.[152] However, there is evidence of strong homosocial relationships among the first women, who demonstrated a supportive bond by looking out for each other. These connections emphasize the value of solidarity and camaraderie among the women in the absence of explicit LGBTQ+ narratives.

Drinking, Drugs and Fraternities

"We were in a different time space. It was free love. There was sex, drugs, rock, and roll."[153]

Delving into the patterns, motivations, and consequences of alcohol and drug consumption among women provides valuable insights into the intersections of gender, identity, societal expectations, and personal agency, thereby enriching our understanding of the diverse range of experiences that women navigate in their daily lives. As Christine Sandy 74' put it, at an *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002, her "mailbox was always jammed with formal little invitations to come to this fraternity or that fraternity," as every weekend saw the campus transform into an epicenter of 'Frat mixers,' social gatherings and other alcohol-induced behaviors.[154] In 1970, there were 19 fraternities with houses on campus.[155] Given there were no dining halls for non-first years, and the fraternities would have chefs and meal plans, they were extremely popular with the male identifying population at the time. When women arrived on Lafayette's campus, their only options beyond Marquis were the limited kitchens in New Dorm, or to join a fraternity's meal plan too.[156] Similarly, fraternity parties were "the only social life, if

[152] Linda Arra, Interviewed by Amanda Roth, Lafayette College Special Collections, July 8, 2003, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project*.
[153] Karen Komlos, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,
[154] Christine Sandy, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,
[155] Christine Sandy, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,
[156] Christine Sandy, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,

women wanted to stay on campus," thus their existence played a huge role in the social lives of the entire Lafayette community, including the first women. "every home game was a party weekend, and you would have your date for the whole weekend which was horrible. If you didn't like your date."[157] With there being no student center, and only one women's dorm, many of the first class of women found going to fraternity parties the only option for a social weekend: "without fraternities I'm not sure how much social life there would have been"[158]

The prevalence of alcohol on campus was staggering, with one individual recalling Lafayette College as having the reputation of being the "wettest campus in the country."[159] Fraternity parties were notorious for their open-case parties, where alcohol flowed freely and excessively. This heavy alcohol consumption created an environment where students, especially women, felt pressure to engage in sexual activity. One respondent noted that the abundance of alcohol on campus led to situations where individuals found themselves in compromising positions, they did not want to be in.[160] The combination of alcohol-fueled social events and societal expectations surrounding sexual activity placed undue pressure on women, potentially leading to experiences of coercion or assault. Moreover, while alcohol was the predominant intoxicant on campus, drug use was also prevalent, albeit less socially accepted. The campus community was divided between those who indulged in alcohol and those who engaged in drug use, with the former being viewed as the greater social ill: "There were kids who would get really, really drunk and really sick. There were alcoholics in our class…also there were kids who were smoking a lot of dope, and, and taking a lot of acid."[161] However, both alcohol and

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[157] Karen Komolos, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,
[158] Liza Lucy, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 12.
[159] Alma Scott-Buczak 19
[160] Liza Lucy, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 37.
[161] Liza Lucy, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 37.

drug use had detrimental effects on students, with some individuals suffering from alcoholism and others regularly using substances like marijuana and LSD.[162] Fraternity houses facilitated underage drinking with "bars in their basements equipped with spickets."[163] This normalization of underage drinking perpetuates a culture where excessive alcohol consumption was not only condoned but also expected. This environment posed risks for women, who may have felt pressured to participate in drinking games or binge drinking to fit in socially, further exposing them to potential dangers. From feeling pressured to engage in sexual activity due to the influence of alcohol to navigating the risks associated with substance use, women faced unique challenges in this environment. Moreover, Karen Komolos reflects on the lack of spaces for women, remarking that "I could live on campus freshman and sophomore year, but then your junior year, they had no place for girls so you… And there were no sororities. There was just no place to go."[164]

Once again, for any new ventures or issues for these first women there was no support or care if they needed help or advice. In fact, Diane Elliot expressed, ""I wasn't sexually active when I first got here. I was not involved in drugs. All this stuff was coming up and there was not really anyone to turn to talk about this stuff" indicating she wanted and needed someone to confide in about these newfound experiences, yet the school did not provide it.[165]

Sexuality, Women's Rights and Roe V. Wade

When we explore how the first group of pioneering women experienced the intersection of sexuality, sexual harassment, and the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision, it's important to understand their experiences within the broader context of the sexual revolution in the United

[162] Liza Lucy, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 37.
[163] Liza Lucy, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 37.
[164] Karen Komolos, *Association for Lafayette Women* Panel, March 2002,
[165] Elliot, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 35.

States during that time.: "As the sexual revolution caught fire during the late 1960s and early 1970s, premarital sex among young women became increasingly open," reflecting a significant shift in societal norms and attitudes towards sexuality.[166] Statistically, college students are highly likely to engage in sexual relations, and from the 1970 through 1979, women increasingly engaged in these behaviors: for sophomore and junior sample of college women 41-44 percent range engaged in sex which was more than 10% higher than the previous decade.[167] Similarly, the 1960s and 70s were "watershed decades" for women, as early baby boomers fueled activism for female rights initiated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, access to the pill and eventually legalized abortions.[168]

As societal norms evolved and traditional values were challenged, popular culture, including widespread magazines and literature, served as both a reflection and a catalyst for these changing attitudes. This era saw a departure from the conservative sexual mores of the past, with themes of liberation, exploration, and sexual revolution permeating various forms of media.[169] The 1970s marked a distinct shift in tone, audience, and content from the literature of earlier decades, particularly in the realm of sex and dating advice literature.[170] This era saw a solidification of "self-help and therapeutic approaches to sex and sexuality, emphasizing self-exploration and personal transformation."[171] Additionally, the 1970s witnessed a focus on women's self-determination and self-exploration in feminist writing and activism, leading to a reevaluation of female embodiment and sexual pleasure.[172] Furthermore, the 1970s literature

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[166] Daphne Spain, Suzanne Bianchi "Balancing Act: Motherhood, Marriage, and Employment Among American Women," Russell Sage Foundation, 1996. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7758/9781610445115.
[167] Gilbert Kaats and Keith Davis, "The Dynamics of the sexual behaviors of college students"
[168] Spain and Bianchi "Balancing Act: Motherhood, Marriage, and Employment Among American Women,"
[169] Anna E Ward, "Sex and The Me Decade: Sex and Dating Advice Literature of the 1970s," Women's Studies Quarterly, 43, 4, 2015, 120-136.
[170] Anna E. Ward,"Sex and The Me Decade: Sex and Dating Advice Literature of the 1970s," 121.
[171]Anna E. Ward, "Sex and The Me Decade: Sex and Dating Advice Literature of the 1970s," 120.
[172] Anna E. Ward, "Sex and The Me Decade: Sex and Dating Advice Literature of the 1970s,"124.

recognized a broader segment of the population and diversity in sexual desires and needs, including the emergence of a sex advice market for gay men and lesbians.[173] This shift in focus reflected the changing social landscape and a growing recognition of the diversity of human experiences and relationships. Taking a deep dive in circulating 'advice' literature of the 1970s, there was a "distinct shift in tone, audience, and content from the literature of earlier decades" with more works being published by women, for women.[174] Therefore, at the same time that there is pressure for women to commit to monogamous relationships and find a husband, there is also this sense that being a liberated woman in this era meant having more sexual freedom. Moreover, the impact of feminist debates regarding women's sexuality and pleasure, as well as power relations between the sexes, was evident in the sex and relationship advice literature of the 1970s, leading to explicit acknowledgment of feminist activism: "No longer was it possible to ignore feminist challenges to normative prescriptions regarding sex and sexuality."[175] This framing of sex and sexuality as inherently political resonated with many women on college campuses, who were actively engaged in feminist movements and advocating for greater sexual autonomy and agency. In fact, Liza Lucy suggested that many female students like herself became more "feminist" throughout their time at Lafayette, reflecting the global changes in popular culture.[176] Similarly, Diane Elliot also saw herself as a feminist: "I was a woman who did what she wanted."[177]

The 1970s was a decade of "profound shifts in the terrain of sexual and gender politics," as illustrated by the landmark decision of Roe v. Wade.[178] This first class of women were on

[173] Ward, "Sex and The Me Decade: Sex and Dating Advice Literature of the 1970s,"131.
[174] Ward, "Sex and The Me Decade: Sex and Dating Advice Literature of the 1970s,"124.
[175] Ward, "Sex and The Me Decade: Sex and Dating Advice Literature of the 1970s," 124.
[176] Lucy, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 35.
[177] Elliot, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 32.
[178] Ward, "Sex and The Me Decade: Sex and Dating Advice Literature of the 1970s," 120.

campus when Roe v. Wade was passed, on January 22, 1973 making access to an abortion a constitutional right.[179] It is crucial to acknowledge its profound impact on women's rights and access to reproductive healthcare, particularly within the context of the experiences shared by pioneering women at Lafayette Colleges. Linda Dietz's perspective encapsulates the sense of empowerment and liberation that accompanied the Supreme Court decision: "we were thrilled…that was the ultimate freedom for women to have control over their bodies."[180] This sentiment underscores the significance of Roe v. Wade in granting women the autonomy to make reproductive choices. Additionally, Christine Adams Kauffman's observation sheds light on the challenges faced by women seeking reproductive healthcare on campus, as there was "inadequate female health care - No health building, Easton planned parenthood."[181] These quotes underscore the intersection of legal, societal, and institutional factors shaping women's experiences regarding reproductive rights and healthcare access during this pivotal era.

The support for abortion on Lafayette's campus pre-Roe v. Wade was reflected in various forms, from the provision of information on women's clinic resources to the publication of advertisements advocating for reproductive healthcare. *The Lafayette* newspaper played a significant role in disseminating information about these resources, as evidenced by its advertisements. One such advertisement from January 1970 read, "PREGNANT? NEED HELP? YOUR QUESTIONS ON ABORTION CAN ONLY BE FULLY ANSWERED BY PROFESSIONALS" this advertisement is seen from this publication onwards until the 1980s.[182] This advertisement exemplifies the newspaper's efforts to provide crucial information and

[179]"Roe v. Wade." Center for Reproductive Rights, April 2024. https://reproductiverights.org/roe-v-wade/#:~:text=The%20Roe%20v.,Wade%20Ruling%2C%201973&text=In%20its%201973%20decision%20Roe,whether%20to%20continue%20a%20pregnancy.
[180] Dietz, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*
[181] Kauffman, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*
[182] *The Lafayette Newspaper,* Jan 1970

support for individuals facing unplanned pregnancies. However, not all members of the Lafayette community supported the newspaper's decision to run these advertisements. In a letter to the editor dated April 20, 1971, Raymond Green, class of '72, called out the newspaper for featuring abortion-related ads.[183] Green states that he did not want to "debate" whether it was "morally justifiable," but that he was opposed to the newspaper including an advertisement that in his opinion read like a "hamburger hang out."[184] Likewise, an article published on November 10, 1971, reported that *The Lafayette* came under considerable criticism for publishing similar abortion ads, indicating ongoing debate and scrutiny surrounding the issue of reproductive rights and access to healthcare on campus. It seems that the health center on campus even lacked proper support for any woman's issue: "I know that freshman year the doctor on campus was very unfamiliar with females and female problems… one of my friends went there with very, very, very severe menstrual cramps, and I mean, he gave her an aspirin and went home… So, the campus was not prepared for us medically, that's for certain."[185] Despite criticism, support for alternatives to abortion was also voiced on Lafayette's campus. In a letter to the editor dated April 23, 1971, James E. Rumsey discussed alternatives to abortion, suggesting that there were differing perspectives on how to address unplanned pregnancies within the campus community.[186] Interestingly, in all these instances, all the opinions expressed come from male members of the student body, despite abortion being the choice made by someone with a uterus. Michele Vedus Deeney was one of the few women on *the Lafayette* Newspaper and she used her journalism to highlight the lack of support for women:

> I signed up to be in the newspaper and it was decided that there should be a story about how birth control was not being offered by the student health center. So, I thought,

[183] Raymond Green, in "Letters to the Editor," *The Lafayette Newspaper,* April 20, 1971.
[184] Green, "Letters to the Editor," *The Lafayette Newspaper,* April 20, 1971.
[185] Liza Lucy, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 27.
[186] *The Lafayette* April 1971

> "Okay, I can write that article," not thinking through the possible ramifications of my name being associated with the topic. And so, I wrote the article in a tongue in cheek tone ending with, "Don't they realize that a hundred and twenty-seven coeds ten months from now could have a hundred twenty-seven children who might require…". And I went down and interviewed staff at Easton Planned Parenthood and put all that information in the article. I got hate letters from anonymous people in Easton."[187]

One can see that even this attempt to shed light on an extremely important issue, written by a woman, was also extremely contested by members of the community. Vedas-Deeney's article is extremely important in terms of highlighting female voices especially in the newspaper, given there are very limited stories from *The Lafayette* on the direct subject of Roe v. Wade.

According to a search for keywords such as "Roe V. Wade," and "abortion," *The Lafayette* archives demonstrated that the latter is discussed in an April edition of the student paper; the former does not appear until September 25, 1987 in an op-ed not about the case itself, but about Judge Robert H. Bork.[188] The limited mentions of Roe v. Wade in the oral histories and *The Lafayette* newspaper from the early 1970s suggest a nuanced perspective regarding its significance among some students at the time. While Roe v. Wade undeniably marked a monumental victory for female rights by legalizing abortion nationwide, its relatively sparse coverage in these sources invites speculation about its perceived importance within the Lafayette College community during that era. One possible interpretation is that, despite its groundbreaking implications for women's autonomy, Roe v. Wade may not have been a primary focal point of discussion or activism for all students at Lafayette during the early 1970s. This observation underscores the diverse array of interests, priorities, and perspectives within any given community, even in the wake of landmark legal victories for gender equality. Likewise, it also suggests that without the oral histories to point to specific stories like that of Michelle

[187] Michelle Vedus-Deeney, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 8.
[188] *The Lafayette Archives*

Vedus-Deeney, you essentially lose the historical, political voices of the first class of women. Moreover, the limited coverage of Roe v. Wade in these sources prompts a deeper exploration of the various social, cultural, and political factors that shaped the attitudes and engagement of individuals within the Lafayette College community towards reproductive rights and broader feminist issues during this period.

Sexual Assault on College Campuses

Alongside the liberalization of sexual behavior, this era also saw a rise in sexual harassment and assaults on college campuses, shedding light on the darker side of the evolving attitudes towards sexuality during this time. Though there are a few examples from the oral histories about sexual assault on campus, there is little data from this exact time of 1970-1974 and this could be for several reasons. Firstly, societal attitudes towards sexual assault were vastly different during this era, with victim-blaming and stigma often discouraging survivors from reporting incidents. In her oral history Patricia Haines even states, she "didn't know of anyone who was assaulted, but it definitely happened, we just didn't talk about it."[189] Liza Lucy also provided a firsthand account of the pervasive culture of silence and victim-blaming surrounding sexual assaults on college campuses during the 1970s:

> One of my best friends was raped freshman year, and by the same guy who had raped another girl on a date. And at the time not only did you not report this sort of thing, you hung out with your girlfriends, you cried about it perhaps, but there was, there was a feeling of there was no place to go to report it. And the feeling also was that in some way that you deserved it for going out and getting drunk with this guy. But it became very clear that women knew not to go out with him. And I remember to this day who he is, and, and who he did this to, and, and what happened. But it was nothing anybody became vocal about. And it did seem to be rather isolated.[190]

[189] Haines, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*
[190] Lucy, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*

This highlights the pervasive culture of silence and victim-blaming surrounding sexual assault, where survivors often feel they have nowhere to turn for support or justice. It underscores the importance of creating safe spaces for survivors to come forward, breaking the cycle of silence, and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Additionally, colleges may not have had established protocols or resources for handling sexual assault cases, leading to underreporting and insufficient data collection, such as Title IX. Title IX, which enforces "legal obligations to protect students from gender-based violence and harassment – including sexual assault,"[191] was not enacted until 1971, and Lafayette did not evaluate Title IX on campus until 1976.[192] Furthermore, laws and regulations regarding privacy and reporting requirements were not as stringent as they are today, potentially resulting in incomplete or undocumented records. Lastly, the lack of technological advancements in data collection and storage during the 1970s may have contributed to a dearth of comprehensive data on sexual assault incidents occurring on college campuses. In fact, rape kits, "a package of items used by medical personnel for gathering and preserving physical evidence following an allegation of sexual assault," were not created until the mid 70s, with its first official usage in 1978.[193]

Despite the lack of information from the time period we do know that sexual assault did occur and affect students on the campus- though maybe not always accepted as rape, as people were "quiet about it or they didn't view it as date rape at the time."[194] However, in order to

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[191] ACLU (2011) Title IX And Sexual Violence in Schools Schoolshttps://www.aclu.org/documents/title-ix-and-sexual-violence-schools#:~:text=Under%20the%20requirements%20of%20Title,Title%20IX%20and%20students'%20rights.

[192] Self-Evaluation Committee 1976 October 7th

[193] Deborah Parnis & Janice Du Mont "Examining the Standardized Application of Rape Kits: An Exploratory Study of Post-Sexual Assault Professional Practices," *Health Care for Women Internationa*l, 23:8, 2002, 846-853, DOI: 10.1080/07399330290112362

[194] Haines, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project.*

examine this there will be a discussion of more contemporary sources, such as a 2000s article from the US Department of Justice, "Sexual Victimization of College Women."[195] While contemporary information about assaults on college campuses may seem disconnected from the 1970s, it remains a valuable resource for examining historical trends and understanding the broader context of sexual violence during that era. Despite the passage of time, certain underlying factors contributing to sexual assault on college campuses persist across decades, such as power dynamics, gender norms, and institutional responses. By analyzing contemporary data, we can identify patterns, recurring themes, and systemic issues that may have also been present in the 1970s but perhaps not as well-documented or acknowledged. Moreover, contemporary research methodologies and frameworks for studying sexual violence have evolved, allowing for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding this issue. Therefore, while direct comparisons between contemporary data and historical records should be approached with caution due to differences in reporting, social attitudes, and legal frameworks, contemporary information can still provide valuable insights and perspectives for examining and contextualizing sexual assault on college campuses in the 1970s.

Within The Department of Justice's three studies taken from undergraduate women across college campuses in the United States in the 90s, there were an average of "27.7 rapes per 1,000 female students" but also "66.4 attempted sexual contacts per 1000 female students."[196] Given the perceived threat of reporting sexual victimization, the actual number of incidents may very well be higher. Similarly, were this study done in the 70s, it is likely that the "reported" number would be much lower given the accounts of the oral histories that suggest many were

[195] Fisher Bonnie; Francis T Cullen, and Michael G Turner. "Sexual Victimization of College Women." *National Institute of Justice*, December 2000.
[196] Fisher, Cullen, and Turner,'Sexual Victimization of College Women.'

"quiet about instances."[197] However, because of this very lack of awareness of what constitutes sexual victimization, the "actual" number of these instances could be higher than that of the reports from the Department of Justice in 1996. Within these reports, it was also found that "9 out of 10 offenders were known to the victim," which includes "classmates" and even "professors."[198] Of the reported rapes, these were most likely to occur "after dark" defined as "6pm" with "60 percent in the victim's residence," and "10.3 percent in a fraternity."[199] Considering, when asked about women's safety on campus as it related to sexual assault, Patricia Haines noted she "personally did not feel that it was safe for women to be walking at night without another woman or without somebody else or security," not to mention the influence of Fraternities as locations of social events, there is a high likelihood that occurrences did occur on Lafayette's campus similar to those reported by the Department of Justice.[200] Perhaps the most harrowing part of the report is the final section, quoting that "during any given academic year, 2.8 percent of women will experience a completed and/or attempted rape."[201] This underscores the sobering reality of sexual assault on college campuses. This statistic highlights the prevalence and urgency of the issue, emphasizing the importance of ongoing efforts to protect women on campuses and raise awareness about sexual assault.

In conclusion, the experiences of the inaugural class of women at Lafayette College highlight the intricate balance they had to strike between academic pursuits and social navigation in a predominantly male environment. Their oral histories and primary sources offer insight into the complexities of their campus lives, revealing both the excitement and empowerment of

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[197] Fisher, Cullen, and Turner,'Sexual Victimization of College Women.'
[198] Fisher, Cullen, and Turner,'Sexual Victimization of College Women.'
[199] Fisher, Cullen, and Turner,'Sexual Victimization of College Women,'17.
[200] Haines, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 30.
[201] Fisher, Cullen, and Turner,'Sexual Victimization of College Women,' 33.

breaking new ground and the stark realities of sexism, societal pressures, and challenging norms. It's clear that sexual violence was and remains a significant threat to the safety and well-being of female students and underscores the pressing need to prioritize the protection of women on campuses and continue the dialogue on sexual assault awareness. It serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing challenges and responsibilities in addressing this critical issue within higher education institutions This examination of their experience sheds light on the broader cultural landscape of the time and the unique challenges faced by these trailblazing women as they carved out their own paths in a changing world.

Conclusion

The move to co-education in the early 1970s was a watershed moment in the history of Lafayette College. The decision to admit women marked a departure from tradition, with earlier opposition giving way to later support as the benefits of academic improvement, and women's access to higher education became apparent. It reflected the broader societal shifts of the era, where the call for inclusivity and gender equality resonated even within the hallowed halls of academia. Lafayette College's embrace of co-education would ultimately shape its future and leave an indelible mark on its legacy.

The experiences of the first classes of women are multifaceted. On the one hand, the admission of women was huge for a college that was entrenched in over 100 years of tradition as a male college, and on the other we see overwhelmingly difficult experiences for the women on campus, ranging from institutionalized sexism to outright sexual harassment. The college's lack of preparedness absolutely ties into these negative experiences but knowing the context of the late 1960s and early 1970s United States also plays a role in the difficulty found by the first cohort. This is not to say that Lafayette College in 2024 does not have lingering issues of gender equality but knowing that this time places the first women in a position of inevitable discrimination cannot be understated.

I have been concerned with both the personal and institutional experiences from the first cohort of women from 1968-1970, but it is also important to conclude on how the school developed from 1970 onward. When alumni Linda Dietz was interviewed in 2002, she was asked

if she thought that Lafayette College had developed into a more inclusive environment.[202] Rather than saying yes, she concluded that women are "still fighting the fight" of equal rights "today" and "there's still more to be done."[203] So what has been or is being done?

Though Title IX of the Education Amendments was enacted in June 1972, Lafayette College did not officially investigate and report the practices that would fall under Title IX until a faculty meeting in 1976. Though this report was presented, the suggested changes to fix the discrimination was not worked on until the spring semester of the 1976-77 academic year. This evaluation is extremely telling and outright embarrassing. The most discriminatory section on campus was the division of male and female sport offerings: from D1 to the intramural/club level, there were not equal opportunities for women's sports teams as compared to the men's teams. Furthermore, it presented other areas like that of the gender breakdown of the faculty-reflecting a quantitative presentation of what Susan Blake presented in her oral history. The more "female" represented academic courses still only had 15% female professors, and programs underrepresented with women students (STEM classes) had 3% female faculty.[204] This shows the lack of initiative that the college took to prepare for the entry of women, primarily in the lack of adequate female representation in the institution, ultimately making a decision that did not present a holistic approach to co-education.

Another major concern in the social experiences of these first women was assault. As explored in chapter three, there were no resources or rights such as Title IX to protect a Lafayette student faced with witnessing or surviving assault. The evaluation committee's report does not comment on any procedures related to sexual harassment, despite section D stating that "Title IX

[202] Dietz, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 36.
[203] Dietz, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 36.
[204] Self-Evaluation Committee 1976 October 7th, 3.

protects students from sexual harassment in educational programs or activities."[205] While Title IX has played a significant role in addressing gender-based discrimination and inequality in education, the issue of sexual assault did not gain widespread attention in the United States until the rise of the #MeToo movement in 2017, which brought these concerns to the forefront of national consciousness.[206] In more recent history of the college, students have rallied for more support in combating sexual harassment, reproductive justice and menstrual equity to name a few. In fact, in direct contrast with the 1970s, The *Lafayette Newspaper* almost constantly publishes articles in support of these movements.[207] While substantial progress has been made regarding promoting gender equality, it is almost shocking to reflect on the very different picture of Lafayette's lack of support for women's issues in those early years of the 1970s. This discrepancy is exemplified by the lack of support for crucial services, as described by Deborah Everett-Holley when she brought these issues to the then college president: "Bergathon turned blood red in our meeting with him. Because there were things he never considered—we need Planned Parenthood, we need sex education. We need things guys just take for granted… We don't have this, we are not prepared for this, we don't have that available in the infirmary."[208] This stark contrast between past and present highlights how essential continued advocacy and education are in ensuring that future generations of students have access to the necessary resources and support to navigate these complex issues safely and effectively.

Historical Significance of the First Class of Female Students

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[205] US Department of Justice. "Title IX." Civil Rights Division, September 14, 2023. https://www.justice.gov/crt/title-ix#D.%C2%A0%20Sexual%20Harassment.

[206] Anna E Jaffe, Ian Cero, and David DiLillo. "The #MeToo Movement and Perceptions of Sexual Assault: College Students' Recognition of Sexual Assault Experiences Over Time." *Psychological Violence*, 11, 2, (2021), 209-218. doi: 10.1037/vio0000363.

[207] Trebor Maitin and Madeline Marriott, "L-RAJE, dozens of students protest lack of menstrual product funding," *The Lafayette,* March 2024. https://lafayettestudentnews.com/162393/news/l-raje-dozens-of-students-protest-lack-of-menstrual-product-funding/

[208] Deborah Everet-Holley, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 7.

The integration of the first class of women into a formerly all-male school stands as a watershed moment of historical significance. Breaking through long standing barriers, these women shattered gender norms and paved the way for future generations. Remarkably, many of these pioneering women, when initially enrolled, did not perceive themselves as trailblazers. It was only upon reflection, when interviewed later, that they grasped the magnitude of their impact. A reflection that demonstrates the nuance of these perceptions is Linda Dietz's response to why she chose Lafayette, and what repercussions came from that decision:

> "When I came to Lafayette it was not with any intention of being any kind of pioneer or, you know, blazing the trail for my sisters to follow. It was a good school. I thought I'd get an excellent education here. It seemed like a terrific opportunity, and it was only secondary that I would be among the first class of women who would be here for four years. We weren't out there to say, "Okay. We're women. Hear us roar. We're gonna take over. We're strong. We're gonna be the best." You know, our attitude more, "We're the same as you. We're just women. We want to be a part of this just like you." And I think it helped us. I think it helped us smooth the way.[209]

When many of the interviewed women were first asked why they chose Lafayette, many of the first women did not say that it was for reasons of equality, or feminism, but for the excitement of change. "There was something about being in the first class that was coed at Lafayette that seemed really appealing," said June Tooley, "It was just a big change and I was aware of it."[210] Linda Arra remarked that "it was kind of exciting being part of something new…something historic," describing the anticipation of being in the first class as "really fun."[211] Likewise, Liza Lucy also thought it would be "exciting," with "no downsides."[212] Though there were arguably many "downsides" in both academic and social experiences, these

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[209] Dietz, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 7.
[210] June Tooley, Interviewed by Kamaka Martin, Lafayette College Special Collections, January 13, 2003, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 4.
[211] Linda Arra, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 4.
[212] Lucy, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project* , 4.

women nonetheless represented huge strides in gender equality on Lafayette's Campus, though there was and still is much progress to make.

Their presence challenged entrenched biases, expanded educational opportunities, and fostered a more inclusive academic environment. Their legacy is profound, inspiring subsequent cohorts of women to pursue education and careers without constraint. Linda Dietz, in her final moments of the interview said that she believed "being one of the first women is historically significant" only realizing "as time goes by" the profound impact she made.[213] Similarly, Michelle Vedus Deeney said it was a "wonderful opportunity to grow and change and be part of the first group of women here," and she feels "pride" every time she visits campus.[214] Their journey underscores the transformative power of inclusion and serves as a beacon of progress in the ongoing pursuit of gender equality.

Through the chapters of this thesis, one can see the transformative journey of Lafayette College towards becoming a co-educational institution, highlighting the societal, cultural, and institutional dynamics that both facilitated and resisted this fundamental change. Throughout, the historical significance of women pursuing higher education alongside men in contemporary times is underscored, contrasting it with the challenges and resistance faced before the 1960s. Moreover, it shed light on how financial considerations played a role in motivating the decision to embrace co-education. By examining the perspectives of various stakeholders, including faculty committees, trustees, administrators, alumni, and students, the chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the complexities involved in this pivotal shift towards gender inclusivity in higher education. The social experience sheds light on the more personal challenges of living on Lafayette's campus. Through oral histories, primary documentation, and

[213] Linda Dietz, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 36.
[214] Michelle Vedus Deeney, *Lafayette College Archives Oral History Project,* 20.

personal narratives, a vivid picture emerged of the complexities and nuances of their interactions within the campus community. These women faced societal pressures, sexism, and the daunting task of assimilating into a historically male-dominated environment. Despite the obstacles they encountered, their resilience and determination paved the way for greater equality and inclusion at Lafayette College, leaving an indelible mark on its evolving narrative. The chapter served as a testament to the strength and courage of these trailblazing women as they navigated uncharted territory and paved the way for future generations of female students. Likewise, the academic experience vividly illustrated the myriad challenges and barriers that shaped the educational journey of female students and professors. It highlighted the initial expectations imposed on female students upon admission, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes and limiting individuality. The narratives shared in the chapter underscored the struggles faced by female students in forming connections with a predominantly male faculty, hindering their academic and professional growth. Additionally, the difficulties encountered by female professors in gaining recognition and respect within the academic environment further emphasized the need for greater representation and support for women in academia. By acknowledging and addressing the historical gender disparities and biases depicted in this chapter, there was a call to action for fostering inclusive, diverse, and respectful environments in higher education to ensure a more equitable and empowering academic experience for all individuals.

Knowing Lafayette College's transition to co-education and the challenges faced by the first class of women is important because it provides insight into the broader historical context of gender equality in higher education. Understanding the experiences of these trailblazing women helps us appreciate their resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity, both academically

and socially. The co-educational oral histories are extremely rich and previously underutilized sources that shed light on important topics of gender inequality within the history of the college. This knowledge can inspire current and future generations to continue the fight for equity and inclusion in education. Additionally, learning about the obstacles they faced can inform institutional policies and practices today, ensuring that campuses become more supportive and inclusive environments for all students.

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