

Women at Brockport in the 1960s

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Synopsis

Women in the 1960's were required to be professionally dressed, and limited on campus as well as in their dormitories, but they accepted that way of life. Women were required to dress professionally everyday, whether they were attending class or if they were going to dinner with friends. The only time women were allowed to dress down was in their dormitory rooms, Saturday night dinner or if it was unbearably cold outside. If women were going out of their rooms to the recreation room they were expected to wear the required dress, because men might have been present. Having a required dress was not to controlling women it was to preparing them for the "real world".

Women's hours in the 1960's was not a way of control, but a way of security for their parents. Parents wanted their daughters safe in college, therefore SUNY Brockport practice "loco parentis" in the dormitories. "Loco Parentis" is when the residential director is the substitute parent while the daughter is way at college. Women's curfew at SUNY Brockport was earlier than all other colleges in the SUNY system. In 1965-1968 there was a debate over women's hours being banned. Students on campus believed if men didn't need hours neither did women.

Enrollment of women at SUNY Brockport always out weighed the men throughout the 1960's. From 1964-1969, senior women out weighed senior men by at least 100 students. Although there were more women attending Brockport than men in the 1960's, that was not the case nationally.

Women's athletics were not highly looked upon in the 1960's. Women got what they could and accepted it. They were not intercollegiate and they were not considered sport teams. Women were organizations and clubs and they played against each other on "play days".

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I. Introduction

“Little boys are supposed to be mischievous, to be covered with dirt, and to take after their fathers when little girls are supposed to stay neat, play house, and help their mommy.”¹ This paper examines how the life of women at SUNY Brockport in the 1960’s was highly regulated and, their athletics informal, despite their enrollment out numbering men. Women in the 1960’s were regulated in their dormitories, as well as their social lives outside of their residences. Women’s athletics were not prominent in the university. Women’s athletics were kept informal because colleges were not required to have women’s sports. Even though men had few regulations and women were strictly regulated in their residential life and social life, women still out numbered men most years during the 60’s.

This paper examines different parts of women’s lives in the 1960’s at SUNY Brockport. During the 1960’s, the Brockport Student Government was created which gave freedom to the students by breaking away from the Student/Faculty Association. This gave the students’ room for different opinions and an option to change the campus to fit their needs. In doing so, the Brockport Student Government wrote a proposal to ban women’s hours from residential life. This became an enormous debate in the Stylus and on the Brockport Campus.

Women were a majority of SUNY Brockport’s enrollment in the 1960’s. Many women came to Brockport to obtain a higher education, and also to experience life beyond their parents. They wanted to take on responsibility for their academics and social life, but

¹The Stylus, May 14, 1965

as shown throughout this paper, women were highly regulated on the Brockport campus in the early to mid-1960's.

II. Dress Code

In 1960, the women attending SUNY Brockport dressed to the code of the school, their parents, and society. They were not to leave their dormitories unless they were wearing what was required. Women were expected to dress professionally, whether they were attending class or student teaching at the elementary schools. Women were not allowed to wear slacks anywhere on campus, unless it was unbearably cold outside. According to the Women's Residential Handbook, women had a dress code for evening dinner of skirts or dresses with a nice shirt and shoes. When women attended cultural affairs (dances, special events, etc.) they were required to wear their "Sunday best." The only time they were not required to dress professionally was in their dormitories and at Saturday evening dinner.² Men also had a required dining dress. They were required to wear slacks, a button up shirt and a nice tie; a sports jacket was optional. If the men wore a sports jacket they were not required to wear a tie with their shirt. Therefore, even though men had fewer regulations on campus, when it came to dinner, they did have a required dress code.

As the 1960's progressed so did the dress of women attending Brockport. Women still wore the clothing required, but they started to weave slacks into their wardrobe. In Saga photos there were many women wearing slacks during recreation events. In the early to mid-1960, women wore shorts or slacks only if they were a physical education major. As the late 1960's progressed many more women were wearing shorts and slacks in everyday

² Women's Residential Handbook, 1967-1968

activities. Even though women were allowed to wear shorts, they had to wear them knee length. According to the Saga's photos, women's dress changed noticeably by the end of the 1960's.

III. Women's Residential Life on Campus

Women and men's dormitories were separate. There were no co-ed dormitories until 1967, when co-ed dormitories opened in which men were on one side of the dorm, a recreation room separated them in the middle, and the women were on the other side. It was not a "co-ed dormitory" in today's use of the word, but in the 1960's it was considered it to be co-ed. Most of the men's dormitories were located on one end of campus by Hartwell, and the women's dormitories were located on the other end of campus, by the "high rises". Women had more dormitories on campus than men throughout the 1960's. I did not come across any information on why that was, or if there any requirements for who had to reside on campus. Since men's dorms were at one side of campus and women's were on the other, it was hard for men and women to be in each other's dorm after hours. That changed when they opened the first "co-ed" dormitory.

Women had strict curfew while attending Brockport in the early to mid 1960's. SUNY Brockport had the earliest hours for women in the whole SUNY system. According to the Stylus, on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, Brockport women had to be in their dormitories by 10:00pm, while in other SUNY schools, the earliest time women had to be back to campus was 10:30pm. On Saturdays, women at Brockport had to be in by 1:30am, as did many other SUNY campuses.³

³ The Stylus, May 14, 1965

Dormitories had different hours for each class as did honor students. The higher the class, the longer women got to stay out. They were all allowed to stay out until 1:30am on Saturday, whether they were freshmen or seniors. Women had a half hour to get back to their dormitories after weeknight college sponsored activities. Women had penalties if they were not back to the dormitories by curfew. If they entered their dormitories more than 10 minutes late without calling or having a valid excuse, they were “grounded” to campus for one weekend.⁴ Women also were “grounded” if they received three warnings or did not sign out of their dormitory for an overnight stay when permission was granted.⁵ If women were more than 20 minutes late returning to the dormitories without calling or having a valid excuse, they were “grounded” for seven days. If women were late a half an hour or more they would be reported to the A.W.S court if they did not have a valid excuse or did not call.⁶

Women also had rules for having overnight guests staying in the dormitories. Women needed to have permission from their residential director before they could have overnight guests. Women also had to pay a fee in order for their guest to have sheets on a bed, because the guest was not allowed to stay in the room with the student. In order for guest to stay in the dorm, they needed to be introduced to the residential director. If guests were from another dormitory on campus and were staying overnight, they were required to sign in before 4:00pm.

Another part of dormitory life was women had phone limitations. On campus calling was allowed from 7-10:30pm every night. Women had limited times to call long distances, because the switchboard closed at 10:30pm. Women had study hours from 8-10,

⁴ Women's Residential Handbook, 1967-1968

⁵ Women's Residential Handbook, 1967-1968

when they had to be in their rooms doing homework or studying for test. Therefore, they had to take time out of their study time to use the phone. The only day that women did not have their regular study hours was on Saturday nights.

In the 1960's women had rules to be in their reception halls. Reception halls were located in the dormitories as a common room for all floors in the dorm. In order for women to enter the reception hall they were required to dress appropriately, because the reception hall was the only room where men were allowed. Men could be in the reception halls anytime from 10:00am until close, which was freshmen women's curfew at 10:00pm. Sundays were the only exceptions, on which men could wait in the reception halls at 8:00am to take their girlfriends to church.

One night a semester was called "Penny Night", when women in each class were given one hour longer to stay out past their curfew. The only agreement for this special night was each female student had to pay a penny for each minute late. For example, if a woman stayed out 30 minutes over time she would have to pay \$.30, if she stayed out the whole hour she would have to pay \$.60.

When interviewing Rosie Rich I asked her if she thought the women on Brockport's campus were controlled or if they were more prepared. Rosie Rich's explanation was interesting and made me think about my perspective of the past.

Women in the 1960's were not controlled on campus and their way of life was no better than today's way of life. Women did what they were told because they had to; they accepted the life they were living. The college did not control women they gave them limitations. If they were controlled they would not have been sneaking out their dorm windows. As far as their required dress, I believe it prepared them for life beyond college. I believe women were prepared for life and having hours helped them with learning responsibly.

I also asked her what she thought changed on campus drastically from 1960 to 1969.

⁶ Women's Residential Handbook, 1967-1968

A lot changed on campus, enrollment changed, attitude changed, dress changed. You know if we never had change life would be a boring place. I blame most of change on the influence drugs had on students. When the outrage of marijuana started, college campuses were never the same. Then again when I went to school it was different from the 1960's as well. I don't believe you are any worse off for life after college than the students in the 1960's, life has changed and society had changed. What restrictions were like in the 1960's would not be accepted now a days and that is the good thing about change, because every generation gets to see a new aspect on life.

IV. Women's Hours

In 1967 the Brockport Student Government proposed that women's hours be banned. It claimed that it was "not fair" to require women to have hours, but not men. Two articles were written in the Stylus debating why women needed hours and whether men need hours too. One aspect of the debate over women's hours dealt with *in loco parentis*, which was the residential director was the replacement parent until the daughter went home to her real parents. The debate argued that women needed hours because parents needed the security that their daughter would be in her room, and her work would be done, because she had limitations and restrictions.

One article in the Stylus claimed, men did not need hours because they were given more freedom in their childhood, therefore they know how to handle freedom in adulthood.⁷ Men have always been able to date freely, but women had to be given permission and they had to be in by their curfew. This article explains the idea of *Loco Parentis* and how the residential director is the daughter's substitute parent.⁸ Having limits helps women feel secure and helps them tell men that they need to be home by a specific time. The last point in this article was that women needed hours to feel secure and hours are unnecessary to men and their way of life. I asked Rosie Rich and Jeanette D'Agostino what they thought about women's hours in dormitories. They responded that

⁷ "Women Need Closing Hours But Men Don't", The Stylus, May 14, 1965

women needed hours because of in loco parentis. They said that women needed hours because it was the way of life. Rosie Rich said “having hours was a part of society during that time period, it was very unlikely to not give women hours.”

Another article proposed men’s hours. It argued that women on campus were being discriminated against because they had hours and men didn’t just because parents wanted their daughters to be safe and secure on campus. In the article, freshmen women felt that men should have hours as well as women, especially freshmen men because they were going through many changes both emotionally and socially.⁹ When I asked Rosie and Jeanette about men’s hours they had a completely different outlook than what they said about women’s hours. Jeanette said, “Men did not need hours because they were used to not having any limitations. Parents were not concerned with their sons leaving home and not having a curfew.” Rosie made the point saying, “Men did not need hours because they went home very soon after women left the bars.” She asked the question, “What would happen today if women had to be home by 11:00?” She then answered the question, “You know men would go home after about an hour of no women.” Rosie’s point was that women had curfews, which in turn led men home early. She made the point that men did not need hours because men were only going to stay out just so long without women. Therefore, through women having hours, men also had hours however, they were just not set in stone.

Freshmen women were the most restricted in dormitories. Their curfew of 10:00pm meant they were not able to go out to the movies or even go to campus activities without being late. Therefore in 1965, a proposal was organized to raise freshmen women’s hours

⁸ “Men Need Hours Too”, The Stylus, May 14, 1965

⁹ “Men Need Hours Too”, The Stylus, May 14, 1965

to 11:00pm. The Dean of Women, Margaret Bergen, also suggested the idea of extending freshmen women's hours to 12:30 on Fridays and Saturdays.¹⁰ The proposal passed for the year of 1965-1966, when freshmen women's curfew changed to 11:30pm.¹¹ The Dean of Women made the point that college is supposed to treat students at a higher maturity above the high school level.

After freshmen women got their hours pushed back to 11:30pm the Brockport Student Government proposed to ban all women's hours. The proposal was on November 17, 1967;

“1. The women of the SUNY College at Brockport shall have no hours and no sign out procedures. 2. The senior women only, shall have no hours. 3. The junior and senior women only, shall have no hours. 4. The sophomore, junior and senior women only, shall have no hours. 5. The second semester freshmen, and all sophomores, junior, and senior women only, shall have no hours. 6. Sign out procedures shall remain as they are. 7. Mandatory sign out, voluntary destination. 8. There shall be no sign out procedure.”¹²

These eight proposals are a little different in each way, but they all cut back on women's hours in some way. Freshmen women were not mentioned in all of the proposals; but their hours had recently been extended. The Stylus was supposed to post the results in the December edition, but it was never mentioned, even though it was a huge topic in the middle 1960's. Rosie Rich and Jeanette D'Agostino both told me that they did not hear anything about hours, but all of a sudden the women did not have curfews and it has stayed that way ever since.

V. Women's Athletics

Women's athletics in the 1960's were not classified as intercollegiate teams; rather they were classified as organizations and clubs. Women's athletics were not significant

¹⁰ The Stylus, May 14, 1965

¹¹ The Stylus, May 14, 1965

¹² The Stylus, November 17, 1967

because women did not make them a big deal. As long as they could play games against each other they seemed to have been happy. They had “play days”, when women’s teams played against each other. Women never had a true intercollegiate team during the 1960’s. SUNY schools were not required to have intercollegiate women sport teams in the 1960’s. Women had “sport” teams for field hockey, basketball, volleyball, gymnastics, and swim. In 1964, SUNY Brockport hosted the international field hockey demonstration game for pro-women athletics.¹³ This event was important for women sports in SUNY Brockport, because it gave women’s sports a place at the college.

As I looked through the Saga, Brockport’s yearbook, I compared the number of sport teams for each year. I found that throughout the 60’s consistently men had at least a quarter more sport teams than women. Women’s sports teams changed dramatically over the 60’s. Some teams stayed the same throughout the 60’s, and some sports were only played for one year during the 60’s. Women’s athletics during the 60’s was not the highlight of college life; it was more of a hobby for athletic women.

As I interviewed Rosie Rich, I started to understand why women’s sports were not essential on campus. As I talked with Rosie, I asked her why women did not push having intercollegiate sports, and why women only had half the amount of sports teams men had in the 1960’s. She had a lot of information to share. Rosie started by saying, “Women did not push getting intercollegiate sports because they settled with what they had and they dealt with it. Women were not supposed to complain about what they had, they just were content with what they got and that was the end of it.” Rosie also shared with me that when she was coaching, if her team was scheduled to practice in the gym and the men need

¹³ Former Student paper, 1999

it for the afternoon, her team was not able to practice for the day. She said, “That was just the way it was and we dealt with the way it was.”

After I interviewed Rosie Rich, I looked back at a past students paper who interviewed Irene Weirich.¹⁴ I could see the difference in the two women’s thinking, knowing that they were both faculty members, and that they were both coaches for women sports. Irene Weirich looked at women in sports as being the underdogs and they were never at the same level as men. She had the opinion that women did not fight for sports because they were not as involved in sports in the 60’s as they are today. On the other hand, Rosie Rich’s opinion, in my interview with her, on sports was women did not fight for equal ability because they simply dealt with the fact that men always came before them, and women understood and accepted the idea. Rosie told me it was the way society was and always had been, so women in the 60’s were use to the fact that men got the upper hand.

VI. Enrollment & Campus Life

In the 1960’s, enrollment dramatically increased. In the early 1960’s the enrollment of seniors was between 200-300 students compared to the late 1960’s when the enrollment of seniors was 600 to almost 1,000 seniors in 1969.¹⁵ After looking through the Saga, I noticed that not only the enrollment of seniors increased, but so did the enrollment of senior women. Through the 1960’s, senior women out numbered men’s enrollment by at least 100 students. SUNY Brockport was a State Teachers School; therefore women attended because they wanted a career in teaching.

¹⁴ Carpenter, Anthony. Birth Of Athletics, 1946-1970, Summer 2000

¹⁵ Former Student paper, 1999.

Although SUNY Brockport was a college where women outnumbered men that was not the norm around the country. Higher education had always had more men attending colleges and universities nationwide.¹⁶ The only time women were the dominant gender in higher education was in wartime when men went off to serve.

When I talked to Rosie Rich and Jeanette D'Agostino about the differences they saw in Brockport dealing with enrollment, it was interesting to hear what they had to say. After I told Rosie the ratio I had calculated of senior men to senior women on campus, she was surprised. She told me she would have never known there was that much of a gender gap. There was really no dominant gender on campus doing more than another. Of course as she had told me before, women did not always do the same as men because they accepted it, but with the ratio of women to men you have never noticed the gap being a faculty member or a student. Rosie went on to say, "Campus life was basically men and women working together as far as the Stylus, Student Government, and all of the other clubs and organizations on campus. You would have never known women outnumbered men by 100 in most cases."

When I asked Jeanette D'Agostino about the ratio of men to women on campus and if it was obvious she explained that, most of the time she was working with women in elementary education, therefore she cannot really tell me if she saw a difference. Women were very active on campus with different clubs and organizations. I also saw that in the Saga as I looked through them each year. The women either had their own clubs or they were very active in mixed gender clubs.

¹⁶ The National Gender Ratio Handout

Women were also active in the publication of the Stylus for many years. From 1961 to around 1965, the Stylus had a female editor.¹⁷ Students working for the Stylus were half female and half male for most years in the 1960's. Many of the reporters for the Stylus were women, but strangely enough, most of the articles were on men. When they were based on women, they were either for the homecoming queen, lovely women/Christmas Queen, or some kind of competition women were competing for at dances. Rarely, were women sport teams or women honor students reported in the Stylus. If there were any reports about women, they would be very small and in a bottom corner of the paper.¹⁸ The only time that women ever got recognized in the Stylus in the 1960's was in the debate over banning women's hours.

There was one article in the Stylus that was negative about the men of SUNY Brockport. The article talked about what classifies a college boy. The article was entitled "What is a College Boy". The article made fun of the way college boys' acted in general and around women. There was another article in the mid 60's entitled "The Ugly Man Contest". This article talked about the campus event where men would come out and who ever could make the worst face would win. The Stylus was a ample part of campus life as well as the Brockport Student Government. Women were the vast majority of enrollment; therefore they were a big part of campus life as well as the publication of the Stylus.

VII. Conclusion

This paper shows that women in the 1960's had many limitations on campus, but it prepared them for life beyond college. Women had restrictions to help them learn responsibility of schoolwork, and class preparation for after college life. Even though there

¹⁷ The Stylus, 1961-1965

was a lot of concern about women's hours due to *in loco parentis*, it also taught women how to be responsible. Women also accepted their life in the 1960's; they were content with their college and they accepted what they had. The dress code prepared them for the outside world. Women of the 1960's knew what to wear to interviews or how to dress professionally, because of the way they were prepared in college life.

This paper also showed how women at SUNY Brockport were a large part of campus life and a large part of the population. Women had many clubs and organizations on campus and were part of many social events throughout the 60's. SUNY Brockport would not have evolved the way it did if it were not for women wanting to obtain a higher education.

¹⁸ The Stylus, 1961-1965

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

I found many of my resources at the SUNY Brockport archives in Drake Memorial Library. Many of my resources lead me to find more informational resources such as, the college catalog that lead me to the Women's Residential Hall Handbook. The handbook had an enormous amount of information dealing with women's hours, required dress, and rules and regulations in the dormitories.

Much of my research pertained to looking through old articles in the Stylus and reading through past student papers. It is amazing how much information collected from past students papers. Using Anthony Carpenters paper, I found helpful information to use on women's sports. I used Robin Bossard's paper on women in the 1950, to help me with format and how to go about my research. I also used Michael Herlan's paper on Residential Life from 1965-1980 to help me with format as well. I also gathered an extensive amount of information on residential life for women in his paper. Michael Herlan's paper helped me find some helpful resources as well. The Stylus had many articles debating women's hours and it also had pictures of women showing what they wore, and what they participated in throughout the 1960's on campus.

The major part of my research dealt with using the Saga and interviewing faculty members from the 1960's, to get a first hand look at what women's life was like on campus in the 1960's. The Saga had countless pictures showing what women's dress was in the 1960's. The Saga showed the participation of women on campus through pictures, sport, organizations and club. The Saga enabled me to judge enrollment information. I was trying to figure out a way to collect the statistics of seniors attending Brockport in the 1960's. I first used the alumni directory, but it was too hard trying to count the seniors accurately. Therefore, I used the Saga to count the men and women, since I could see them in pictures.

My second major resource was my interviews with Rosie Rich and Jeanette D'Agostino. Both ladies were a delight to interview and gave me extremely accurate information pertaining to women in general and their students personally. Rosie Rich gave me a great deal of information about women in physical education and the changed between the early and late 1960's. Jeanette D'Agostino gave me a lot of information about student teachers she had and what life was like on campus for women. This research paper provides an understanding of Women of the 1960's at SUNY Brockport, through analyzing and researching many different resources on and off SUNY Brockport's campus.