

## Do Clothes Make the Woman? : The Duke Dress Code

### *Introduction*

A dress code is a set of requirements as to how people should dress when attending a function or visiting a place. In most situations, a dress code is imposed on certain groups of people to obtain a goal such as; trying to assure safety of the involved parties, ensuring practicality of dress for certain situations, or restricting and discouraging certain types of behavior. In addition, dress has always been associated with fashion which regulates the way society dresses and the trends.

At Duke University, a dress code did exist at one point and by looking directly at the dress code it is possible to analyze the overall goals and control the university has exerted, the ways the dress code has changed, and the implications of those changes. It is interesting to look at the reasons why the rules existed and what they accomplished because information about perceptions and power struggles as well as age and gender relations can be discovered. It is most useful to look at different time periods in Duke's history and, in doing so, use the specific details to make general observations and compare them. The first time period that will be looked at is the years of The Woman's College, 1930-1963. The second time period, from 1963-1970, will be analyzed next. Breaking the time periods at 1963 is of particular importance because this is the last year that the Social Standards Committee produced their pamphlet documenting the dress code. This was a student-run branch of the Woman's Student Government Association that was specifically interested in promoting "good taste and gracious living on

campus.”<sup>1</sup> One of their specific tasks was to produce a pamphlet for each incoming class which was initially called “It’s not in the Handbook” and later changed to “Design for a Duchess”. In these guides, there are pages devoted to the wardrobe of a “duchess” describing the appropriate dress for different kinds of activities. Later on, after the Social Standards board no longer exists, there is an obvious break from a traditional dress code. The students’ behavior starts to change which is apparent when analyzing the lack of documented dress policy, the changing pictorial documentation, and mostly the documentation, through the Woman’s College records, of rebellion from the students.

The two time periods present many interesting, overall themes. First, the earlier time period can be characterized by formal regulation from the administration and the Social Standards Committee. The goal of the dress code was to control and manipulate the behavior of the women students so that they would be perceived as ladies. The attitude and perception of the students was, for the most part, aligned with that of the administration during this time. There was no rebellion because they did not feel that there was an injustice occurring. Also, the administration used the dress code as a way of controlling the social activities of the student and their sexual lives. Sexuality and sexual relations were highly discouraged and the way women dressed was carefully thought of with that in mind. Men controlled the university and the theme of male dominance and privilege can be seen. The dress code and other rules provide little room for promoting academic excellence, bettering women, or exercising their good judgment and education.

The second time, or transition period, has many of the same themes of sexuality, control, and freedom of thought, with differing perceptions or goals. For example, the students regulated their own dress by this point. There is a considerable amount of

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<sup>1</sup> The Chanticleer, 1953, p. 117

clashing between the students and the administration during this time that demonstrates the changing attitudes and differing opinions of the students versus the administration. The young women push for change and rebel. They find strength in their numbers and learn to find a voice. They change their views of what is appropriate and acceptable for them. They find new meaning in sexuality and their self-perception. Formerly a very taboo subject, sex became an open topic and the women expressed themselves with their clothing. They used clothing as a forum for expression and to show who they were becoming. So much of the change can be understood in looking at the opposition of the faculty and staff to the rebellion by the young women. Also, it is important to look at the national trends during both time periods. They shed light on the places and people from which the women drew inspiration and why they behaved the way they did during each time. Analyzing the policy, its adaptations, and the subsequent lack of policy can give a wealth of knowledge regarding the shifting perceptions and attitudes during the two aforementioned periods.

### *Methods*

To analyze how dress code policies manipulate behavior and ultimately are a means of exerting control, it is necessary to compare different time periods in Duke's history and also to look at Duke in conjunction with the changing trends in American society. It would also be interesting to compare the dress policies at Duke to those of other comparable universities. However, that exploration will not be discussed in this paper as a result of length constraints. There are many resources available, but some that are particularly conducive for exploring the period from 1930 to 1963; they include the "It's Not the in the Handbook" and "Design for a Duchess" pamphlets, and the

Chanticleer, Duke's yearbook. The pamphlets have good documentation of the dress policy contained on pages titled "Are you wardrobe wise?" and "Popularity Plus". I use this information to make inferences about the perceptions and authority at the time. Also, the yearbooks contain pictorial evidence from which similar conclusions can be drawn.

For the years following 1963, the sources I used heavily are files from the Woman's College. Specifically, the most useful files are those discussing "proper dress", "Bermuda Shorts", and "College Regulations: Judicial Code". These documents show that by the mid-1960's, there is a push to change the dress code by the students. In response, there is a protest from the faculty and administration against changing student attire, especially in places such as the chapel and Sunday dinners which were traditionally very formal. I use these documents to find the changing perceptions behind the documents; what they mean for the women, their rights, and goals.

It is difficult to look directly at control; it is also difficult sometimes to look at the dress code and to find pertinent information. Each source has various possibilities and limitations. The Chanticleers are very useful in that they provide a continuous snapshot of life at Duke. Inferences and clues can be drawn from this source through the pictures and brief articles. Also, there is a more pertinent section from the earlier books called "Beauties". This section is completely devoted to large spreads of women who have won beauty contests at Duke, based on appearance, such as Homecoming Queen, The Chanticleer Queen, and their courts. From deductions, it is possible to see if dress codes were followed and whether they were influential. The shortcomings from the yearbooks arise in that there is very little written word in the book that is useful. The dress code is

not specifically discussed nor is general dress. Thus, any information that is used must be carefully drawn from the clues that are there.

“Design for a Duchess” and “It’s not in the Handbook” contain plenty of useful information. They document exactly what was deemed acceptable for certain activities including class, social activities, formal occasions, and relaxation times. They do a comprehensive job of describing most situations in which an incoming freshman woman might find herself. The limitation of these sources is not in the pamphlets themselves, but simply that they are discontinued in the mid 1960’s. This lack of documentation does provide some insight into the nature of the time period. If the Social Standards board stopped producing the pamphlet, then an assumption can be made about the dress policy becoming more lenient and students pushing their boundaries.

The other sources from the Woman’s College files fill in the time from 1960 on. The files contain more specific information and first hand accounts which will need to be generalized. Also, the biographical files about Mary Grace Wilson are useful to find out how the authority related to the students. All of these documents prove to be very helpful towards the ultimate goal of exploring the role of authority and control on behavior through dress policy and the perceptions that drove the control and rebellion.

### *The Early Period: 1930-1963*

The history of Duke during the period from 1930 to 1963, in general, holds very strict rules for women by comparison to today’s standards. Most aspects of daily life were regulated; from the classes they could take to social contact with men to dress policies. Several different documents contain records of these rules: It’s Not in the Handbook, Design for a Duchess, and the Chanticleer for example. By utilizing these

sources, it is possible to see the dress code and the ways in which it regulated women's behavior. After addressing the dress code for women, it is interesting and informative to inspect the men's dress code, or lack thereof. The differences between rules for men and women are indicative of the conditions that were set for women. Finally, the overall culture of the time also sheds some light on the reasons why women behaved in the ways that will be discussed.

### *The Dress Code in Writing*

For most of the time that women lived separately on East Campus and were a part of the university under The Woman's College, the Social Standards Committee existed as a part of the Woman's Student Government Association. It is also important to know that they were likely advised by a faculty member. They were specifically designed to regulate the social life of the undergraduate women by means of dorm regulations, dress policy, and other rules for polite daily life of a lady. To alert the incoming class of the acceptable behavior for "popularity plus"<sup>2</sup>, they produced a pamphlet which was initially called "It's Not in the Handbook" and later, in the 1950's, called "Design for a Duchess". The latter title implies a certain type of behavior. The word "Duchess" connotes that these women should act with a certain majesty and appropriateness. This image is exactly the one that Social Standards hoped to convey to the incoming class.

Besides the title, nearly every issue of "It's Not in the Handbook" contains at least one full page describing the proper dress under the headings like "What You Need". This page usually looks something like this:

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<sup>2</sup> Pamphlet, Design for a Duchess

## CLOTHES

White dress	Blue Jeans
Sweaters	Plaid shirt
Skirts	Raincoat
Cottons	Boots
Evening dresses	Date dresses

### WE WEAR FOR:

Classes – Cottons, sweaters and skirts, casual dresses

Football games – suits and fall dresses

Dances – Formal: Sleeveless, but no bare midriffs

Informal: Afternoon dress

Dates – Dresses or suits

Cabin Parties – Blue Jeans or slacks with wool shirts <sup>3</sup>

The policy in the “Design for a Duchess” was fairly similar although it was more creative in the way the information is presented. The “Design for a Duchess” (1954) is in paragraph form:

Fran freshman is in a complete quandary! It’s August 1954, and she wonders just what clothes she should bring to Duke. Falling asleep, with dollar signs whirling in front of her eyes, she dreams...let’s follow what she sees!

She spies Dora Duchess, the typical Duke co-ed, on her way to classes or for week-night dates in a cotton and Capezzios or in a sweater, skirt, socks, and loafers. She follows Dora to a football game in a casual wool dress or suit. Fran takes a peek into the Duchess’s closet – there are basic dresses for weekend dates to the Saddle Club or to Hartman’s, a dressier one for parties and informal dances, and a formal or two for the big dance weekends. In the back are a white dress; a rainslicker, umbrella, and rubber boots, and a winter coat with a wool scarf and knee socks. Hung carelessly over a hook on the door are a tommy coat for lounging in the dorm at night and an indispensable man’s shirt. In Dora’s dresser drawer are Bermuda shorts and pedal pushers for spring cabin parties and the Joe College lawn concert.

Awakening, Fran Freshman realizes that Duke Life does not demand a new, expensive, or large wardrobe she can utilize her high school clothes...they’re new at Duke! With good taste, neatness, and simplicity – accented by her own individuality- she, too, will soon fill the shoes of Dora Duchess! <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Pamphlet, It’s Not in The Handbook, 1952-53, p. 13

<sup>4</sup> Pamphlet, Design for a Duchess, 1954, p. 14

### *Reading Between the Lines*

Over the years, the wording changes slightly, but overall, the dress code stays very similar. By closely reading the vocabulary used and the implications, it is possible to analyze the implications of the policy. First of all, the name of the character used is Fran freshman. Using the word freshman, qualifies this woman as a function of her male counterpart at the university. He is the first and primary focus of the university and she is allowed to be there, but only of inferior importance. She is not allowed to have her own identity, and inequality of the two genders is defined. Another subtle, but distinguishable attempt to control the female population is the use of the word “typical” in describing a Duke co-ed. This tells the reader that she is not expected to be unique or to try to stand out through something such as dress but also more important things like leadership or achievement. It shows that even though women were allowed to get an education, they were not really expected to do anything with it. They were all expected to find a husband (who was allowed to excel) and to be the typical housewife and mother.

Some of the dress suggestions that are made such as socks, raincoats, and boots are obvious for a weather appropriate wardrobe. Most people do not need to be reminded to put on socks while putting on shoes or to have the necessary attire for rain or cold weather. This part of the dress policy is condescending and implies that the incoming women are not smart enough or capable enough to figure those necessities out on their own. Also, many of the items are very specific like a plaid shirt or Cappelzios. This suggests that a certain item is necessary for a woman to obtain the status and image that was imperative for them to find a husband and to be a good friend or roommate. By implying that specific items are needed, it formulates the idea that what a woman wears is



more important for her social life than the way she interacts with people or her personality.

There is one specific item that is particularly gender charged: the indispensable man's shirt. The attitude towards this man's article of clothing mirrors the attitude towards men in general. For women, men were indispensable. Without men, women could not get very far towards reaching goals (or even having them). Without men, women could not support themselves because they needed their husband's money. Without men, women could not go to Duke since it was originally built for them. Calling the man's shirt "indispensable" tells this incoming woman that the men in her life will be essential and unavoidable. That the relationships she makes with men are inevitable and imperative for her college life and beyond.

The very last sentence of the paragraph from "Design for a Duchess" allows for some breathing room. Adding that the "good taste, neatness, and simplicity" can be supplemented with some personal touches does give the women some creativity. However, the boundaries for these accents are narrow. By using the word "accented", this indicates any personal touches should be small. An accent is some sort of contrasting detail, nothing broad, such as the freedom to choose an entire outfit. Thus, even though there is some indication in the later policy that clothing was allowed to be more personalized, the rules were still very rigid. The administration was wary of giving the women too much freedom because they may try to rebel. However, at this point in time the incoming women trusted the administration on the Social Standards Committee to make good decisions for them. If they had a desire to make their own decisions, they certainly did not feel that they had the ability to do so at this time.

Besides the language used and the implications of the dress code, there is control exerted over the types of activities that are acceptable. Dates, dances, football games, and cabin parties are the four social activities that are talked about in both excerpts. The administration, through the Social Standards committee, tells the incoming class what they are allowed to be doing with their free time by means of the dress code. The incoming women are mostly willing to listen to what the Social Standards Committee says because they are their peers. However, these are the activities that have been deemed safe and suitable for women by authority. None of these give much room for finding a niche, becoming a leader, or educational pursuit outside the classroom. Some of the policies are even ridiculous, like a wool dress for attending football games. In Durham in the fall, it is very hot and humid a heavy wool dress would be very uncomfortable not to mention putting the woman at risk of heat exhaustion. It was these types of rules that were most ridiculous and insulting to women. Unfortunately, at that point, the students were not ready or able to speak out. They generally had the same views as the administration and their perceptions of the way they should act were aligned with that of the administration. Also, they did not have many role models to look at that were dressing differently. Perhaps, these women could not have even fathomed changing the rules.

There is one other example of specific articles of clothing that designated for a certain activity. In the “Design for a Duchess”, a white dress is mentioned. In the example given, it is not apparent what activity the committee is referring to when suggesting the dress. However, in later years it is necessary for “several occasions during the year (pledging, initiation, house council induction, and honoraries).”<sup>5</sup> Sororities were definitely a major part of campus, but this statement implies that all women must join a

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<sup>5</sup> Pamphlet, Design for a Duchess, 1962, p. 12

sorority. The phrase is not worded in such a way that if a woman chooses to join a sorority, then they should bring a white dress. Again, individual choice is limited. While furthering the standard of compliance, this list of activities keeps the women under close scrutiny without their realization.

### *Enforcement and Submission*

Even though the overall power rested with the administration, the immediate, visible enforcement and creation of the pamphlets was student produced. Especially early in the period, it seems that the rules were accepted and students viewed things as “just the way it was”. Imagining things to be a different way was beyond the scope of their ideas. Also, the incoming women were hand-picked, in large part, because of their character coming into Duke. The women that were chosen displayed the characteristics of women who heeded authority and would dress appropriately. They wanted to be perceived as ladies so the administration would naturally choose them to be part of the incoming class. A traditional dress policy, during this time period, was not surprising. Duke University was still fairly strongly affiliated with religion as were its students. Most religions stressed modesty and appropriateness. The overall national social trends were conservative, and thus the dress code followed along those same standards. The women were content to be some part of the university and wanted to do well. However, doing well was defined as following the rules and listening to authority. It makes sense that the women on the Social Standards would want to enforce the rules and make the incoming class a pristine example of how picture perfect they could be. Thus, they exerted pressure over the other women and, unknowingly, added to the subjugation of the other women.

Many women on campus bought into the precedent of submission, even to each other, not just those on the student government in some sort of leadership role. For example, in the later part of the period a section in the “Design for a Duchess” appears called “Traditions of the Design”. There is a small paragraph here about freshman bows:

Frosh bows – The sophomores remind freshmen of their status by presenting them with class bows which must be worn for a period designated by the sophomore class in the fall. The bad freshman will be given a red bow.<sup>6</sup>

This paragraph is small but important because it helps show the attitude of superiority that was all around these women. They were rarely allowed to have any power or control over anything, including themselves and their choices of dress, activities, and behavior. They also had the power to designate when a particular woman had been “bad” and also to alert the entire campus of said girl’s poor choices. This form of public embarrassment could easily train a person to follow the rules. It is not surprising that the older women would take the opportunity to show some power through a tradition that was suppose to be in jest. However, the danger that was not obvious was the way in which the women were keeping each other down and teaching the incoming women to submit to those who were perceived to be above them. This cannot be blamed on these women because the lesson of submission they all had learned and it was common practice, however detrimental it may have been.

Following the dress code and certain other polite practices was linked to a level of coveted popularity and acceptance. Since women were expected to be more concerned with their social status than their academic progress, the Social Standards Committee involved themselves with helping incoming women with tips in addition to the suggested

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<sup>6</sup> Pamphlet, Design for a Duchess, 1962 p. 14

outfits. For example, “Design for a Duchess” presents “Popularity Plus” and “Frowns Unlimited” which were tips for good and against bad behavior.

#### POPULARITY PLUS

- ...always wear a skirt or coat over gym shorts when walking on campus.
- ...are always neat in appearance.
- ...wear hats and hose to church.
- ...go to the ‘beach’ behind the gym for springtime sunbathing – bathing suits or shorts and halters are the proper attire.
- ...take a peek in their compact mirrors before coming in at night
- ...save their bare sunback dresses until after five.

#### FROWNS UNLIMITED

- ...wear scarves over heads of curlers before making a ‘public appearance’ even in the house of fire.
- ...wear très bare sunback dresses to classes.
- ...wear socks to the Union for Sunday dinner.
- ...during exams wear blue jeans, pedal pushers, or Bermuda shorts on the campus after 10:30 am.<sup>7</sup>

Although this is just an example from one year, following pamphlets appear very similar. Some have condensed versions, but all tend to repeat the same information multiple times. Many of these rules conform to the typical vision of a “lady” who is prim and proper and always reserved. These tips further the idea that women effortlessly look lovely at all times and are always composed. In a later edition of the “Design for a Duchess” there is a tip that says, “smile and speak – you’re never in that big a hurry”.<sup>8</sup> This statement embodies thoughts about women. Nothing in a woman’s life was so important or more vital than her reputation which hinged on her appearance.

The dress policy helped directly apply this notion to campus. By providing a set of rules and policies to abide by, the women fell into stride with the proper dress of a lady. When they dressed in this conservative manner, they played the part of a lady or became ladies (not to say that this is wrong). Finally, by dressing and playing the part,

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<sup>7</sup> Pamphlet, Design for a Duchess, 1954, pp. 10-13

<sup>8</sup> Pamphlet, Design for a Duchess, 1962, p.20

the policy accomplished its goal of controlling behavior. However, this is not to say that the women were forced against their will to dress or act in a certain way. Mostly, the students wanted to act this way and be perceived as ladies. There was some secretive rule breaking, especially in the years leading up to the drastic change in the rules in the 1960's. Generally, though, they did not yet want to rebel against the authority of the administration because their ideas were aligned. Outside leadership and role models showed the same type of behavior so they were not compelled to change their standards and rules.

Besides the tips given by the Social Standards Committee, there are also some more formally given rules especially in regards to more revealing clothing. This section is usually called "Designs for Living" or "Remember this..." which implies a heightened level of attention to these particular "faux-pas".

Always use discretion as to the appropriate dress and behavior on each occasion. A Duchess is expected to be well groomed, neat, and a lady at all times. The following code applies to particular situations, but may serve further as a guide for dress and behavior.

#### SPORTS CLOTHES

##### SHORTS

When wearing shorts to the gym, the ark, to play tennis, or to sunbathe – it's better to slip on a skirt or a coat. Please wear shorts only for these activities.

##### BERMUDA SHORTS, BLUE JEANS, AND PEDAL PUSHERS

These are worn for active sports, cabin parties, and picnics. You need not wear anything over them as long as you go *directly* to and from: gym activities, sports such as tennis and bicycling, or cabin parties and picnics. If you plan to stop by the Dope Shop, library, or P.O., be sure you have on a skirt or coat. For the Union, it's always better to change clothes; at least cover them up. If the instructor approves, you may wear blue jeans without coats on botany and art field trips, and in science labs on East, but not on West.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Pamphlet, Design for a Duchess, 1954, p. 17

This information is presented multiple times in each pamphlet to emphasize the point that what is worn is very important. Also, because of the repetition, it implies that maybe the women need to hear the information more than once to understand it. The introductory paragraph says that women should use discretion, but with such comprehensive rules, when would they be able to use their own minds? In addition, the restrictions on shorts (when and where to wear them), control the behavior of women by making it inconvenient for them to participate. They are so discouraged to be wearing athletic clothing and shorts because they are deemed revealing and inappropriate that it is easier just to avoid that type of clothing and thus sports activities in general.

### *Gender Relationships*

In the previous quote, notice that shorts were never to be worn on west campus. It is not explicitly said, but the reason for this was because men lived on west campus. A lady should never let herself be exposed in front of a man. If she was, she would probably be considered promiscuous. Wearing more revealing clothing also brings up sexual relations between men and women. These relationships were strictly regulated. Talking about sex and sexual behavior was very taboo. Premarital sex was not conservative and it was considered immoral and impious by the church which had so long been the voice of reason. Strict dress code for dates, being on west, and being around men in general helped regulate potentially dangerous situations. These situations could be dangerous for men because they could be tempted by more revealing clothing. For women, they could do damage to their delicate reputations. A major reason for women's dress code was to protect them from sexual relationships. The university would not have wanted its women to be considered sexual. Male-female relationships and open

discussion about sexuality was discouraged. It was a closed subject for the culture at the time. Thus, one of the major reasons for imposing a dress code was to protect the women from portraying sexuality and from showing a certain image.

Also important to note is that men did not have a dress code. The men's handbook was called "The Duke Gentleman: A Handbook for Undergraduate Men". In this book there is practical information such as what you will need to furnish a dorm room, facilities, career counseling, and attendance rules. There is no dress code for men. There are some advertisements trying to lure men into buying the "Official Duke Blazer"<sup>10</sup>, but nothing implying that it is necessary or without it that a man might be less well liked. The lack of dress code cements the primary concerns for men versus women. Men were to be concerned with the sensible things in their lives such as their education and career. Clothing and wardrobe were trivial concerns for them. While, for women, clothing was one of their primary concerns because it was crucial for their reputation and appearance. This demonstrates perfectly the inequities and double standards between genders. Women were not thought of as academics on campus. They were not given the same freedoms and choices. They were not thought of as equals.

Another source, the University yearbook, the Chanticleer, documents that the women really did conform to their dress policy. The women depicted all look remarkably uniform. Many times, especially the sorority women wore their hair in a neat short hair style, pearls, and similar tops. In the less formal pictures they wore skirts and a blouse or sweater, just like the rules dictate. Even when the hair styles change over the years, the women tended to dress and look the same. There are slight variations, but the overall pattern is a standardized one.

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<sup>10</sup> Handbook, The Duke Gentleman



The lady-like image is also portrayed in the yearbook. An entire section of the yearbook from 1933 to the mid 1960's is called "Beauties". This section of the yearbook is completely devoted to full page spreads of women's faces. They are generally accompanied with a small caption including the woman's name and sorority affiliation. The women depicted are the winners of different titles such as homecoming queen or may queen and the women on the courts. All of these women are chosen by a man who is referred to as a "connoisseur" in the 1963 Chanticleer.<sup>11</sup> An entire page devoted to women who are exactly what the dress code imagines, perfect ladies, creates incentive to be one of these chosen women. They are rewarded for their beauty and ability to conform. There is no room for uniqueness or individuality.

#### *The Bigger Picture: 1930-1960's*

The trend of conservative dress, by today's standards, was not unique to Duke. The greater cultural trends and the fashion trends, to some extent, supported this way of dressing and the dress code itself. Early in the period, in the 1930's, the Great Depression took place and women were first admitted to Duke. This was considered liberal in itself, but the rules that were established seem standard. Women in America were granted suffrage rights in the 1920's, which was a huge victory. However, as a school with strong Methodist ties and a culture of conservative dress and conservative mannerisms, women were not expected to stand out in any way. Thus, when the Woman's College was established, the dress code followed for the specific type of lady that was admitted to Duke.

Socioeconomic status also plays a part in the dress code. It can be seen in the way women were supposed to dress throughout the 1930-1963 time period. The rules of dress

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<sup>11</sup> The Chanticleer, 1963, p. 110

described in the dress code is characteristic of sophisticated or, at least, genteel society. The push for Duke Women to appear as though they were ladies that a man would be proud to marry is very apparent from the preceding discussion.

As the Woman's College moved into the 1940's, World War II took over the national scene. Many men left the campus and the United States to help in combat, while the women stayed behind to try to fill the void. After the war was over, the 1950's saw a push to return to a state of normalcy, to try to regain what had been lost or missed. Women of the 1950's were expected to have the "perfect" family. They were to care for the entire family in whatever way possible and to present the perfect image. Although the fashion changed during this period, the dress code did not stretch much to accommodate the changes. It can be seen in McCall's, a magazine for women, the models in the magazine during the early 1960's depict the "housewife" and nearly all the advertisements are aimed at that type of woman. The clothing styles in the magazines progress and the skirts and dresses get a little shorter. Pants enter sporadically into the scene. Small changes can be seen on campus. For example, shorts became a part of the Social Standards concerns. However, revealing or inappropriate clothing was not, for the most part, being worn on campus outside the boundaries. The real changes to the university, another national push from feminists, and the strong campaign for racial equality began in the 1960's.

#### *The Later Years: 1963 to present*

After a period of such stringent control from authority and conformity by the hand-picked Duke Women students, the 1960's brought about a new era in Duke's history and also in the greater culture. In 1963, the Social Standards Committee ceased

to exist. The Woman's Student Government Association (WSGA) became the arm of the administration reaching the incoming and current classes. These women were expected to enforce the rules from the "It's Not in the Handbook" and "Design for a Duchess". However, the 1960's saw a rapid shift away from submitting to authority. These women started to rebel and to think for themselves. They wanted to create a campus that included their vision and opinions. They wanted to control their own clothing choices, behaviors, and futures. They wanted to choose.

There is evidence that the students wanted a more lenient dress code or no dress code at all. As a result of the lack of written policies, they might not know what all the rules were or be used to choosing their own dress. After 1963, the "Design for a Duchess" was no longer printed and the dress suggestions were not carried over into the handbook. The lack of written rules shows that there was room for the students to wear what they wanted. Also, this lack of written rules by the Social Standards committee, allows students to start self imposing standards for dress which will be discussed later.

#### *Waging War against the Dress Code*

There are, however, some records documenting the shift from structured rules to very few rules at all from the administration or students themselves. The best records are those kept from the Woman's College "Office of the Dean" files. The administration kept some documentation of correspondence describing the beginnings of student rebellion against dress policy and also the reaction of the administration and some faculty and staff members. An article about Barnard, the women's branch of Columbia University, is retained in records from Mary Grace Wilson. She saved an original article describing the battle that Barnard women were waging regarding a ban on Bermuda

shorts on campus. The women were trying to obtain permission to wear Bermuda shorts. Mary Grace Wilson also saved the follow up article detailing the victory of the Barnard women. Bermuda shorts were allowed to be worn as long as they were not “too short, too tight, or, ahem, too tight.”<sup>12</sup> The article has a note attached from Mary Grace Wilson that was intended for Miss Brinkley that says, “Here we go again! Please return to me for my ‘funny file’!”<sup>13</sup> From the way that Mary Grace Wilson refers to the issue as funny, she was not prepared for a similar rebellion to arise among the women at Duke.

However, a few short years after the women at Barnard pushed for the right to wear Bermuda shorts, the Duke women followed suit. On April 13, 1964 the Woman’s Student Government wrote a letter to the administration requesting a “Bermuda shorts day”. The purpose of the day was to raise money for the East Campus Student Center Building Fund by charging money to those who wanted to wear the shorts. They also wrote that students would not be allowed to wear the shorts to “the Chapel, the dining halls or the library on West Campus, or the library on East Campus”. They specified that there would be signs designating the rules about the shorts and that it was only a one day occurrence.<sup>14</sup> The students’ requests appear to be a reasonable compromise between no short and shorts whenever they want. This movement towards a middle ground for shorts demonstrates the overall feeling that the students wanted change.

However, the authority figures on campus still held most of the traditional control and were in opposition to changes to the dress code in the form of a Bermuda shorts day. This opposition is made apparent through a series of reactions to the letter from the WSGA. The first comes in the form of a memorandum from Mary Grace Wilson for

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<sup>12</sup> Memo, Mary Grace Wilson to Miss Brinkley, September 14, 1960

<sup>13</sup> Memo, Mary Grace Wilson to Miss Brinkley, September 14, 1960.

<sup>14</sup> Letter, The Woman’s Student Government Association to Mary Grace Wilson, April 13, 1964

Dean Ball on April 12, 1964 (which obviously was a day before the letter from the WSGA was written, but the meeting of the WSGA discussing this matter occurred prior to April 12<sup>th</sup> so it is therefore possible that this letter is a response to the situation.)

I listened to their discussion with amazement that they apparently honestly do not see that this costume is not appropriate in class, etc., and it is for that reason that principally that we object. Although I told them that, it just does not get through – their generation does not feel that way and I don't think they understand what it is that we are talking about!<sup>15</sup>

This part of the memorandum from Mary Grace Wilson displays well the sentiments of the administration regarding the current female student body. The use of certain words helps show that the students and the administration, in this case, are disconnected in their views and goals for the dress policy. For example, Mary Grace Wilson refers to the idea of Bermuda shorts as a “costume”. This particular word connotes ideas of pretending and dressing up in jest, like a clown, an actress, or an actor. It shows that the older women in authority positions thought that wearing Bermuda shorts was not suitable for ladies and made them appear to be comical or sloppy. In addition, Mary Grace Wilson believed that they must oppose this type of dress on “principle”. The principles of the students and those of the administrators involved are obviously very different. On one hand, the female students are trying to push forward with what they deem as fashion and greater freedom whereas the older women are trying to retain a sense of conservatism and class. Mary Grace Wilson recognizes that there are two very different generations that are clashing and that they have different ideas of appropriate. However, instead of trying to compromise, the authorities feel threatened and therefore try to impose their views on the young women. They are trying to control the behavior of the students in the way that they did during the period from 1930-1963.

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<sup>15</sup> Memorandum, Mary Grace Wilson to Dean Ball, April 12, 1964

Later on in the same memorandum, there is some evidence of conditional support for the Bermuda short day from the faculty. A list of opposed and supportive faculty is provided, along with some qualifications on their stances.

Opposed

Nancy Carroll – “they should be giving their attention to the improvement of dress in certain places, not relaxing standards.

In Favor

Joann Brabson – “It is a catchy, clever idea for money-making, but it seems to me that something should be done with regard to dress on our campus now – there seems to be no enforcement, or effort to enforce standards in this respect. There is slow deterioration – and it will likely get worse as warm weather comes. When one speaks to the girls who stream into the dining rooms in shorts and slacks, the girls say that the Legislature said we could do as we like – there is no longer a regulating body. WSGA has abdicated. We need a stand – yea or nay, clear-cut. So far as this proposal is concerned, I could accept one day – it would provide some release.<sup>16</sup>

Even though there is some support it is qualified and seems unenthusiastic at best.

Joann Brabson does acknowledge the ingenuity of these women which is a step in the right direction towards encouraging their academic excellence. However, her disapproval of the way the women are beginning to dress stands out more than her support of this idea. In fact, it appears that the only reason she agrees to it is to satiate some sort of hunger for Bermuda shorts, to “provide a release”. She points out the view of the WSGA and the shift that has occurred since the earlier period from 1930-1963. There is no longer any student group willing to enforce a dress policy. The Woman’s Student Government Association is no longer providing a template for incoming women. Thus, if the administration and faculty want to control the patterns of dress the enforcement needs to come from them. It is also worth noting that Nancy Carroll’s comment helps show the faculty sentiment. They think that to perfect the dress code that the standards should not

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<sup>16</sup> Memorandum, Mary Grace Wilson to Dean Ball, April 12, 1964

be loosened. They probably perceived that the young women on campus were becoming less ladylike, foolish, and wild. While the young women, held an attitude that the women in authority positions were stuffy, old-fashioned, and stubborn. It is clear that the goals of the young women on campus are contrary to those of the older women of the faculty, administration, and staff. However, the younger women had greater numbers and started to find a voice to stand up for what they wanted and to disagree with authority.

A final decision was made and the WSGA alerted on April 15, 1964 in a letter from Dean Ball to Phyllis Greenwood, the secretary of the WSGA. Dean Ball informed them that the request for a Bermuda short day was denied because wearing shorts to class was “distinctly inappropriate”.<sup>17</sup> She also added in post script that she would “prefer to use [her] time trying to find money for the Center rather than answering letters from those distressed by a spring influx of Bermudas!”<sup>18</sup> The administration would make a decision like this on the grounds that wearing Bermudas was somehow destructive to the women and would influence their behavior in negative ways. Shorts do not fit into the category of lady-like apparel. The shorts showed more skin than was deemed appropriate and thus, promoted sexual relations or at least sexual thoughts from men. Shorts and the idea of allowing the students to take make decisions were threatening to the administration. Responsibility and discretion had always been stressed as valuable characteristics, but there was never any opportunity to demonstrate these values with the dress code. Then, in the 1960’s, when the young women demanded a chance to have their own choices and tried to show that they could make responsible decisions, the administration disagreed and tried to regain control.

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<sup>17</sup> Letter, Dean Ball to Miss Phyllis Greenwood, April 15, 1964

<sup>18</sup> Letter, Dean Ball to Miss Phyllis Greenwood, April 15, 1964

The female students did not take no for an answer. Shortly after the request to wear Bermuda shorts, they decided they would no longer ask for permission. They would wear what they wanted without approval. This rebellion is documented in a letter to Dr. Taylor Cole, who was in charge of the student union on east campus, from Dean Ball on May 13, 1966.

Dear Taylor,

I should like to report to you that as a result of a recent problem in the Woman's College Union, there could be a demonstration next Sunday. The facts are as follows:

During last Sunday dinner (May 8), a group of students came into the Union in what appeared to be a somewhat carefully disheveled state and without shoes. Dress in the dining room has been consistently deteriorating over the past two years during which WSGA Legislature has been concerned about the development but unwilling to take action. If my memory serves me correctly the matter was presented to the House Presidents last year in an effort to see whether they could improve the tone of the dining room; no effective measures were taken.

Last Sunday the dining room staff – including men students working in the dining room – were very much incensed about the appearance of the particular group mentioned above.<sup>19</sup>

There are some interesting things that can be seen by analyzing this section of Dean Ball's letter. First, it is very informative to see that the women have gotten to a point where they are protesting (in some facet) against the dress code. They have gotten so tired of following the administrations' rules that they go so far as to not wear shoes! Also, this apparently was not a new trend as Dean Ball says the dress had become less formal for the past two years. The WSGA was no longer willing to enforce rules that it did not necessarily agree with, which bothered Dean Ball. The attitude of the students had changed. In the earlier period, the students wanted to get the approval of the administration because that signaled they were successful in some way. It showed that they could conform to social standards and thus, be good members of sophisticated

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<sup>19</sup> Letter, Dean Ball to Dr. Taylor Cole, May 13, 1966



society. Their behavior was standardized as a result of the rules. Then, in the late 1960's, the young women change their behavior as a result of the rules. They do not agree with them and so they behave in ways that display their dissent. They no longer see success only as approval from the administration. The rapid change of attitude and the rift between generations becomes so obvious when looking at the young women's rebellion against the rules and authority.

Finally, at the end of the letter is a comment that the men who were serving felt "incensed". This is particularly indicative of the way that men still objectified women and also shows that gender inequalities were still very evident. The women at the school should have worn things that were pleasing to look at for the men. They should not be allowed to wear what they want, especially if it is not classy and ladylike. When the men described feeling incensed at the inappropriate dress, it just shows that the female students were simply a sexual entity for the men. They were not viewed as peers, but as sexual objects. This view has broken down over the years to some extent. However, the male view of women, as primarily sexual beings, is one of the gender inequalities that are still a large problem today.

### *Small Victories*

Further on in the letter from Dean Ball to Taylor Cole, Dean Ball discussed that the students did not stage a strike in the dining hall as a result of the dining hall staff refusing to serve the students because of their dress. They left the dining hall "peacefully".<sup>20</sup> The president of the Woman's Student Government, Mary Earle, was notified and asked to take action against the inappropriate dress. She tried to find some compromise so that students would be allowed to wear shorts and hair curlers into the

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<sup>20</sup> Letter, Dean Ball to Dr. Taylor Cole, May 13, 1966

dining halls one or two days a week. The way Mary Earle tried to find a solution that would be acceptable shows great character. If the other women on campus were as willing to work things out so that everyone was satisfied, then it can be assumed that the women on campus were becoming more independent and strong. They were learning how to be good leaders and how to create change. It is also indicative of the way that the women on campus were trying to change so that they would be heard. Their attitude towards the dress code was that they should have input into decisions that were made that affected their lives.

The women did start to see some response from the administration after they started to push for change. For example, on May 14, 1966 Dean Ball received a memo from Mary Grace Wilson which said that the women would be able to wear what they wanted to the dining halls for the time being. The reasoning was that they were short-staffed and would not be able to handle any sort of uprising. However, the administration was still trying to enforce their rules. Mary Grace Wilson added that if women did enter the dining halls dressed inappropriately that Mary Earle and Paula Phillips (the chair of The Woman's College Judicial Board) would be notified so that they saw the problem in person. The goal was that if the WSGA saw the violations that they would "have to take action".<sup>21</sup> Still, the administration was trying to force the Legislature to take responsibility for enforcing rules with little success. The goals behind the rules, for example protection or a certain image, were no longer being accomplished.

#### *The Role of Mary Grace Wilson*

It is useful to note that Mary Grace Wilson was very active in the university from 1930 to the time of her death in 1992. She was not an academic, and was also close with

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<sup>21</sup> Memo, Mary Grace Wilson to Dean Ball, May 14, 1966

much of the faculty. She had a very close relationship to the students. It was often said that she was a “mentor, interpreter, friend, advisor, and confidante.”<sup>22</sup> In the documentation, the students liked and respected her. She was a well-respected individual. She began her time at Duke as a house counselor in 1930 and moved from there to social director, dean of residence and, finally, the dean of undergraduate women until her retirement. In all of these positions Dean Wilson had the same goal:

...to bring to the education of Duke Women both the strength and the responsibility of community. Though she administered the social rules for changing standards of conduct, she taught the timeless values of self-respect and concern for others. Her venue was broader than issues of propriety: her venue was human dignity and ethical conduct, civilized behavior measured by the day-to-day yardstick of simple decency and good will. She was an awe inspiring model for literally thousands of students: strict but fair in disciplinary actions, she was nonetheless slow to judge the person, responding with compassion to young people in distress.<sup>23</sup>

Dean Wilson, for many years, was the spokesperson telling the students yes or no on their proposed changes. Being at the university since its beginnings, she went through many decades of change. Her decisions about rules were not rash or unfair. According to Paula Burger Dean Wilson “had no slavish devotion to any particular more or custom simply because it was once the acceptable pattern...she confronted change by evaluating each situation according to enduring principles.”<sup>24</sup> These principles included responsibility, courtesy to others, and self-respectability. Because Dean Wilson sent and received many of the documents used here, a few things can be inferred. It appears that Dean Wilson was very willing to work with the students and hear their ideas. Therefore, Dean Wilson and the other administrators probably decided that the suggested changes to the rules were infringing on the rights of others and the students’ duty to respect and

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<sup>22</sup> Speech, Mary Duke Trent Semans, November 15, 1992

<sup>23</sup> Funeral Service Program, President Brodie (December 6, 1990), November 15, 1992

<sup>24</sup> Speech, Paula Burger, November 15, 1992

present themselves in a responsible manner. This further enforces the idea that the perceptions and values the students held and those of the administration were very different. It also shows that the at least Dean Wilson was not opposed to change and that the students' voices were not totally ignored. A forum for change was open.

### *Pushing for Change*

A few weeks after the memo from Dean Wilson allowing the students to wear what they wanted for a certain time, a letter from Dean Ball to Mr. Theodore Minah, the Duke University dining halls manager, shows that the female students were still pushing the limits of acceptable dress to try to get the administration to allow them freedom in that area of their lives permanently.

...In light of the appearance of a Bikini in the Union a day or two ago, and of constant deterioration of standards in our public dining rooms, I therefore request that you refuse to serve any student whose dress is such as to offend any normal person. I should be glad if you would take the names of any such students so that, if necessary, additional supporting action may be taken should it prove necessary. This request is valid for the remainder of this semester. I still hope that WSGA will see fit to address itself to the matter when it meets again in the autumn.<sup>25</sup>

A few things in this portion of the letter are indicative of the derogatory way in which the administration viewed the dissenting actions of the female students. Dean Ball capitalizes the word "Bikini" and does not give reference of the woman wearing it. Believing that a woman was a product of her appearance and by close relation, her clothing, was one main idea that was conveyed to the women of the earlier Woman's College. They believed that their reputations and the way they looked was their most important tool to bettering themselves and becoming part of high society. Thus, this woman who chose to revolt against the proper dress code for the Union was seen more

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<sup>25</sup> Letter, Dean Ball to Mr. Theodore Minah, May 27, 1966

for her bikini and less for the goal she was trying to obtain. Another interesting word choice is that Dean Ball specifies that the staff should refuse to serve girls who dress in a manner that would “offend any normal person”. What is the definition of a “normal” person? It is relative to the person making the statement which in this case is an administrator. Because it can be assumed that by the 1960’s the generation gap was fairly large, a normal person to Dean Ball and a normal person to one of the female students were very different. Finally, Dean Ball expresses her hope that WSGA will assume the responsibility towards alleviating the matter. She does not seem to want to fix it herself and wants the enforcement to come from the students. One possible reason for this might be that Dean Ball thought the female students would respond more readily to rules that were student imposed than administration imposed.

Overall, this letter shows that despite the administration’s attempts to quell demonstrations against the dress code, the young women students were not going heed the warnings. They made a decision that the dress code was not acceptable to them and they did not budge from their viewpoint. Collectively, the young women on campus had become strong enough to stand up for what they wanted and believed in. Some of this strength came from watching the feminist and racial campaigns for equality. With role models from outside Duke University, they were able to push to a new level of freedom.

Apparently the WSGA did take notice of the actions of its constituents and the requests from the administration to respond. Mary Earle and the other members of the WSGA wrote a letter to the Woman’s College students on May 28, 1966 defining some rules. They included a rule that “1. During the exam period (until Wednesday, June 1) slacks or shorts are allowed except for Sunday dinner when skirts are required for women

and coats and ties for men. After June 1, dresses or skirts are required for all meals.

2. Sanitation laws require that eating facility patrons wear shoes.<sup>26</sup> It is interesting that, here, the first reference to appropriate dress for men is made. Creating appropriate dress for both men and women shows that the inequalities between genders were deteriorating. Also, the WSGA decided that the women students might be pushing too hard for what they wanted and began the trend of self-imposed dress code. Even though it was at the prompt of the administration, the women can recognize when something is unsanitary or unsafe for the greater whole. The Woman's College Judicial Board issued a similar recommendation to the students in November that same year asking women to please "wear skirts to Sunday dinners", "not wear hair rollers in the Union", and instead of enforcing skirts at all dinners they ask for "neatness at all times".<sup>27</sup> Apparently, the rules were steadily becoming more flexible and the women were making strides.

### *Voicing Their Own Opinion*

The Woman's Student Government Association provided a report in January of 1967 called the Report of the WSGA Philosophy Committee which defines the ways in which they thought the university needed to revise its policies in order to shift to accommodate the more contemporary views of the students.

The Committee firmly believes that the students of the Woman's College are fully as mature as the students of other fine educational institutions. Certainly we suppose that they are no less responsible in their actions than others of the same age who happen not to attend college at all. The university should express confidence in the educational method, the maturity of its students and the dignity of personal decisions.

After carefully reviewing the structure and extent of the social regulations of The Woman's College, however, we were forced to conclude that a number of rules seem to assume that the students are lacking in judgment and personal responsibility and that they also assume

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<sup>26</sup> Announcement, Woman's Student Government Association to the student body, May 28, 1966

<sup>27</sup> Announcement, Judicial Board to the student body, November 16, 1966

that Duke students somehow require extraordinary supervision in terms of where they may go, whom they may see, and what they may do, as well as in terms of even finer details of personal life. That such assumptions do pervade the rules is a regrettable fact. The assumption of immaturity appears contrary to what we know of our students and what we expect of them in class, and suggests that the rules are in need of revision.<sup>28</sup>

The WSGA fully understands the need for responsibility and the way that it can give them power and voice. By deciding what they want for themselves, they can mold the university and their lives. They demanded that they be allowed to utilize the education they were getting to be responsible adults and equals. Proving that they could be accountable for themselves, was a right the women felt they deserved. They no longer wanted to conform to certain patterns of behavior or be perceived in a certain way.

The Chanticleer, a student produced publication, supports the idea that the female students were being treated more equally and that the university was changing. The section that depicted the women who won beauty titles, “Beauties”, was no longer being published in the yearbook by 1968. In the two years prior to that, the section actually talked about the women’s post-graduation plans and then became a box with just the names of the winning women. The 1970 yearbook showed a lot of variation in clothing and depicted women in bikinis on the quadrangle, outside the previously determined appropriate places to sunbathe. The 1973 yearbook has very little structure. The defined sections of the yearbook are not there and the whole yearbook is pictures. They were taken from different angles and use unconventional lighting. They were not the normal spreads. The structure was very loose. However, by 1983, the structure was present again. A shift from very structured to no structure, to some structure mirrored closely the movements on the dress code.

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<sup>28</sup> Report, The Woman’s Student Government Association Philosophy Committee, January 17, 1967

*The Big Picture: trends from 1960-present*

The enforcement of the dress code in the period from 1930 to present time went through three general phases. The early period from 1930-1963 was characterized by a carefully written set of rules and enforcement by the Social Standards Committee which was influenced by the administration. Incoming women were taught to present themselves in a certain lady-like fashion so as to attract a good husband. This attitude changed very rapidly in the period from 1963-1970. Most of the formal rules disappeared and the women of the student government no longer enforced most of the dress code rules. They saw responsibility as deciding for themselves what was appropriate instead of abiding by rules that were set for them. They wore clothes in protest of the war or in expression of their personalities. Their greatest asset was no longer the way they looked. Some semblance of dress standards entered back into women's lives by the 1980's and 1990's. However, it was a very different kind of dress code. It was not written but an unspoken set of rules. Women had to look a certain way to be taken seriously, especially in the workplace. Now, clothing has become so important that wearing a certain brand can help or hurt one's reputation. However, even though that extreme of the trend is more recent, appearance was important for the women of the 1960's and beyond because, in a male dominated world, women's sexuality was a tool that could be used to her advantage.

Trends of sexuality tend to have a similar pattern to dress code. Initially, the dress code was put into place largely to discourage sexual behaviors between men and women. Women needed protecting from men and the immoralities of the world. One of the ways that was seen to help accomplish this was to present a wholesome, ladylike front



and to give the women many restrictions so that they could not possibly be in harms' way. However, people always find ways to break the rules or bend them. The college women were no exception. They secretively engaged in sexual activity with the men on campus and they wore clothing under house coats that were unacceptable at the time.

The women of the 1960's decided to overtly break the rules about clothing and sexuality. The 1960's saw a much bigger push towards openness about sex and contraceptives. People talked about sexuality more openly and it slowly became less taboo. Since younger, unmarried people were engaging in sexual activity, instead of trying to hinder that behavior with rules about dress, it was necessary to educate them about sexual behaviors and the consequences.

Sexual trends were also part of the overall cultural trends of the time. The 1960's is known for the many changes that were taking place in political, social, and technological patterns. Duke was not left out of the changes and the students saw fit to pursue many of the same shifts. Racial integration was agreed upon at Duke in 1961 and was seen at the undergraduate level in 1963. Also in that year, the Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan was published and many women felt that a voice had been given to them. They saw that they were not alone in their feelings and decided to speak out. In 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King spoke at the Duke Chapel. Protests for women's rights and civil rights were exercised in 1968 and 1969. With all of these changes occurring, it was only natural that the rules changed with them. The old rules would not fit in with the new philosophies and attitudes. Therefore, the women of Duke University needed to decide their own rules, including dress, and wanted to find a voice to express their own individual needs, just as was being done in many other facets of American culture.

## *Conclusion*

The dress code is only one small issue in the grand scheme that has changed over Duke's history. From looking at this one piece, we can make inferences about the whole, the whole of Duke and the whole for women. While analyzing the dress code, I have made several observations.

First, while it is not bad to buy into certain activities or trends of dress, it is important that even with these trends and styles that women be seen, by each other and men, for what they are: women. Clothing for women has become a marker for what she is and what she is not. Men tend to always be men regardless of what they are wearing. However, women change with clothes. If they wear a suit, they are power business woman. If they are scantily dressed, they are prostitutes. If they wear a sweater and a long skirt, they are a prude or preppy. Women are still seen for their clothes and not their personalities or the causes for which they fight. They are labeled. The superficial is still very important for women even if we, as women, like to think those walls have been broken down. Young people especially can get caught up in name brands and labels because they can make or break one's reputation. Clothing can shape a person's life in certain situation such as a collegiate setting. The way that people dress for different situations changes their behavior. Especially women act differently according to what they wear; they play dress-up. Women wear what they think other people want to see them in, especially men. We need to think seriously about our perceptions of each other as women and the labels we give each other.

The second observation that I make is that there is a very delicate, blurry line between fighting against gender inequalities and fighting against gender differences

which should be embraced. Women are capable of many things, as are men. There are many inequalities in the world that are unacceptable and should be fought against like pay inequality or stereotypes that place women and not men as caregivers and working women. However, not all things that differentiate women and men are inequalities. Some of those things are the characteristics that make women and men unique. Being nurturers and giving birth are some of the things that allow women to identify with each other. Identifying with being a woman is very important and so many young women today do not see their belonging to this group as being crucial to their self perception. I think it has created the apathy that characterizes the current generation of young women. However, the line between gender inequality and gender differences must be looked at very carefully when deciding what things to change about our society and what to improve but keep separate.

Finally, as women, we must look at our surroundings and find the things that should be improved upon, even when one does not feel incensed. The women of the 1960's learned to become strong and to assert themselves to get what they wanted and deserved. They pushed for rights in their educational, social, and political lives. All these women saw something that needed to be changed, even though civil rights had already come so far. Today's generation has not yet found that fire and drive to change what is around them. I think we have fallen into a path of adapting to our environment instead of changing an unequal environment to fit our needs. We should find the values and standards that need to be upheld but change the policies around those values that may be hindering a new generation of forward movement. Stagnation and apathy should not hold back progress.

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