

could have strengthened his argument, however, had he used his documentary evidence to draw clearer contrasts between the beginning and end of the time period. Still, this is a book well worth the attention of scholars who study the Right.

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African American Fraternities and Sororities

The Legacy and the Vision

Edited by Tamara L. Brown, Gregory S. Parks, and Clarenda M. Phillips

(Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010. Pp. viii, 496. Charts, notes, illustrations, bibliography, index. Paperbound, \$29.95.)

The Company He Keeps

A History of White College Fraternities

By Nicholas L. Syrett

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. Pp. xvi, 412. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.00.)

What is manliness? How do elite definitions of manliness influence the nature and character of campus culture? What impact, in turn, does this culture have on the college experiences of non-elite students and how do they respond? Considering both *The Company He Keeps* and *African American Fraternities and Sororities* allows the interested reader to entertain these and other questions.

Nicholas Syrett's work, as its title implies, focuses on an organizational type characterized by particular race and class restrictions. Nonetheless, the historical scope of the work, and the sheer number of organizations to be considered, leaves him with a lot of ground to cover. The book is organized around the chang-

ing definitions of manliness revealed in the fraternities' historical records. Within that broad central theme, readers will find less emphasis on some concerns—voluntary association, organizational culture, or social capital among them—than they will on others, in particular the emergence of sexuality as a categorical identity. Syrett argues that over the course of time, the increased encroachment of non-elite “others” (women, the working class, students of color) into the sphere of higher education, combined with the emergence of a category of others marked as “homosexual,” contributed to a shrinking of the range of acceptable masculine practices in homosocial spaces. This process has culminated in a white fraternal mas-

culinity that heavily emphasizes sport, violence, misogyny, and group boundary maintenance to the exclusion of matters academic, intellectual, and intimate.

The author frames this argument with the contrast between the election of a "Bachelor of the Year" at Indiana University in the 1950s and a 1982 case of fraternity gang rape at Duke. He writes that "the forms fraternal masculinity takes at the beginning of the twenty-first century would be unrecognizable to those brothers of Kappa Alpha who founded their fraternity in 1825 at Union College. While those founders emphasized intellectual rigor, oratorical skill, forthrightness, and independence, many of today's fraternity men place value upon athletic achievement, a high tolerance for alcohol, and sexual success with women" (p. 302). To be sure, Syrett does not romanticize the past; he notes clearly the presence of these dominant strains in early fraternal history but argues that they coexisted with a somewhat broader range of normatively acceptable male behavior across the human spectrum of emotion, interaction, and behavior. This argument is consistent with Barbara J. Risman and Elizabeth Seale's ("Betwixt and Between: Gender Contradictions in Middle School," *Families as They Really Are*, 2011) findings regarding the rigidity of pre-teen masculinity and boundary maintenance.

Unlike Syrett, who is at his strongest in historical analysis and

whose contemporary case studies include less original material and less detailed analysis, the readings collected by Tamara Brown, Gregory Parks, and Clarendia Phillips are at their best in examining contemporary collegiate experiences. The lives of today's black Greek students receive admirable treatment in Tyra Black, Joanne Belknap, and Jennifer Ginsburg's "Racism, Sexism, and Aggression," as well as in Shaun R. Harper, Laretta F. Byars, and Thomas B. Jelke's essay, "How Black Greek-Letter Organization Membership Affects College Adjustment and Undergraduate Outcomes." *African American Fraternities and Sororities* does include some worthy historical work: Craig L. Torbenson's "The Origin and Evolution of College Fraternities and Sororities" covers similar ground and makes arguments consistent with the overall trends Syrett identifies; Michael H. Washington and Cheryl L. Nuñez's "Education, Racial Uplift, and the Rise of the Greek-Letter Tradition," casts a broad net early on but effectively bears down on the emergence and function of Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs). The latter chapter would work well as stand-alone reading for instructors looking to engage students in issues of college life, black history, and intersections of race, class, and gender.

Readers interested in particular African American organizations or groups (the Grand Boulé, the American Council on Human Rights, for example) will find that the chapters

on these topics provide good historical and documentary information. Several chapters illuminate the work, thought, and life of W.E.B. DuBois; others engage questions of gender within and across the BGLOs, including a comparative chapter on black and white “sweetheart” or “little sister” organizations, and a study of the American Council on Human Rights that indicates this umbrella organization broke up over gender issues, but does not elaborate. The chapter on “Racism, Sexism, and Aggression” substantively engages questions similar to those considered by Syrett, explicitly comparing white Greek men with their black Greek counterparts. Black, Belknap, and Ginsburg’s review of contemporary literature and their data indicate that alcohol is a larger part of white fraternity culture, as are levels of sexism and aggression (causality between these two variables is likely significant). Overall, the two books share a concern with the levels of violence that take place within

college fraternities, but they diverge in their optimism about the future of the organizations. Brown, Parks, and Phillips believe BGLOs show evidence of a willingness to address violence; Syrett concludes by noting how much white fraternities continue to focus on maintaining their members’ hegemonic power on campus through domination and exclusion. The two books allow for a thoughtful consideration of the future of raced and gendered Greek organizations in a higher educational environment increasingly intolerant of essentialist definitions of these two categories.

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Perfectly Average

The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America

By Anna G. Creadick

(Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010. Pp. xii, 191. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth-bound, \$80.00; paperbound, \$26.95.)

It was once commonplace for scholars to characterize the postwar United States as a “consensus” or “containment” culture, one obsessed with (and largely successful in) enforcing narrow behavioral, gender,

and psychological norms. Perhaps mistaking the products of the 1950s—television shows like *Ozzie and Harriet*, Hollywood movies such as *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, and blockbuster books like *The Lone-*