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# Women's Lib Comes to Augie: The Short and Long-Term Impact of The Women's Liberation Movement at Augustana College

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Women's Lib Comes to Augie: The Short and Long-Term Impact of The Women's Liberation  
Movement at Augustana College

**Abstract**

This project examines the growth of Women's Liberation as a political force in the United States from the mid-1960's into the early 1970's and the impact of this movement on the campus of Augustana College. The project uses a single event, a student organized symposium on Women's Liberation held in 1973, as the focal point for a discussion of short and long-term effects of the movement on gender equality at the institutional level. It will be shown that, while the student led action in the few years surrounding 1973 succeeded in fostering campus discourse and mobilizing support, long term institutional changes, often faculty led, can most accurately be understood as products of the Women's Liberation movement more generally. For this purpose, this project relies heavily on the college's student run newspaper as well as the organizational and institutional records of the college and the collected papers of faculty whose actions were central to this unfolding story.

It was at 8:30 a.m. on a foggy morning early in February of 1973 that some 800 people, most of whom were women<sup>1</sup>, packed into Augustana College's Centennial Hall in order to attend a symposium "designed to meet the broad range of interests of all women questioning the male's clamp on society."<sup>2</sup> The student-planned symposium, entitled "Women's Liberation: Who Needs It?", was first advertised in *The Observer*, Augustana's student run newspaper, on December 6, 1972.<sup>3</sup> Speakers at the event included such nationally renowned figures as Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* and founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW), Wilma Scott Heide, then president of NOW, as well as a number of academics both from Augustana and elsewhere in the country.<sup>4</sup> Other speakers, several of whom were Augustana professors discussed a variety of topics relevant to the Women's

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<sup>1</sup> "Sisterhood of all women is prime need, lib speaker says." *The Argus* (Rock Island, IL), February 3, 1973, Final ed., Latest News sec. Augustana College Vertical File: Women's Rights Symposium, 1973. Augustana College Special Collections.

<sup>2</sup> Deb Skromme and Lorraine Hess, "Heide, Freidan Key Sessions," *Observer*, (Rock Island, IL), January 31, 1973. Augustana Observer and Rocketry-I Database.

<sup>3</sup> "Symposium" *Observer*, December 6, 1973.

<sup>4</sup> Alice Schardon, "Taxation Without Representation", *Observer*, February 7, 1973.

Liberation movement. Dr. Ross Paulson of the History Department discussed the historical context of modern women's rights movements and Dr. John Hullett of the Psychology Department led a presentation entitled "Non-Sexist Child Raising."<sup>5</sup> The symposium ran all day, letting out well after sundown. It was sponsored and funded by Representative Assembly, Augustana's student government, and was planned by a steering committee of nine students, eight women and one man. The committee was co-chaired by students Lorraine Hess and Karen Pritz.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the following months, Augustana students engaged in what appears to have been a running battle over the importance of the symposium and of Women's Liberation in general. Less than two weeks after the February 3<sup>rd</sup> symposium, an article appeared in the February 14<sup>th</sup> issue of *The Observer* entitled *Man's Inability to Understand Women*, in which the author, an Augustana student named Mark McMillan asked, "How, I might ask, can a man understand a woman if she never makes sense?"<sup>7</sup> McMillan's article derided the movement, calling it "another ladies' social club with women getting together to discuss arcane topics and concoct ideas that no man could ever make sense of."<sup>8</sup> He also specifically satirized some of the goals of the movement. Of the attempt of many women's rights activists to create gender neutral versions of words such as 'chairman', McMillan commented that "instead of hurrying to work we'll himmy, the mandoline will become the persondoline [sic], the weather bureau will refer to Himmicane Ralph and ... the official language of Israel will become Shebrew."<sup>9</sup> The response to Mr. McMillan's article came in the form of a pair of 'letters to the editor'

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<sup>5</sup> "Lib Symposium Schedule Set" *Observer*, January 31, 1973.

<sup>6</sup> "Symposium Pamphlet", 1973. Augustana College Vertical File: Women's Rights Symposium, 1973. Augustana College Special Collections.

<sup>7</sup> Mark McMillan, "Man's Inability to Understand Women," *Observer*, February 14, 1973.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

published in the *Observer* a month later.<sup>9</sup> One such letter was penned by Karen Pritz, co-chair of the event. Incensed by McMillan's article, Pritz wrote, "How anyone can venture an opinion on such an event without attending it is beyond my credulity."<sup>10</sup> (McMillan had admitted to not attending the event in his original article, saying that the price was "greater than (his) curiosity."<sup>11</sup>) In another letter printed on the same page Teresa Harris, another student, accused McMillan of hatred towards women, claiming that substituting the words 'women' and 'men' for 'blacks' and 'whites' in his letter would have created a "most interesting effect."<sup>12</sup> After a space of another month, we again find evidence of clashing student opinion in the April 11<sup>th</sup> issue of the paper. This time, student Tim Salman noted the extended coverage of the Women's Liberation movement and wondered why so much ink should be devoted to a single topic. Salman confessed himself a supporter of the movement but insisted that *The Observer* should move on to other topics of discussion.<sup>13</sup>

Before we continue, the historical moment in which this project is authored deserves consideration. Our society is in the midst of a conflict surrounding sex and gender-based violence, how that violence impacts the rights of women, and what the institutional response to that violence should be. A key site of that conflict is the university, just as it was for Women's Liberation a half-century ago. Once again American colleges and universities find themselves at the center of a women's political movement, and everywhere old conflicts emerge within new contexts. It is useful to remember that *Title*

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<sup>9</sup> During much of the intervening month Augustana students were on their spring break, meaning that the response to Mr. McMillan's article came much more immediately than the space of a month would imply. The two students who responded may very well have done so at the first opportunity.

<sup>10</sup> Karen Pritz, "Letter to the Editor," *Observer*, March 14, 1973.

<sup>11</sup> Mark McMillan, "Man's Inability to Understand Women," *Observer*, February 14, 1973. Admission to the symposium was priced at \$2 for general admission and \$1.50 for students.

<sup>12</sup> Teresa Harris, "Letter to the Editor," *Observer*, March 14, 1973.

<sup>13</sup> Tim Salman, "Letter to the Editor," *Observer*, April 11, 1973. It is important to note that none of these students appear to have been regular contributors to *The Observer*. They were motivated to speak by this issue and were not members of the newspaper staff.

*IX*, a piece legislation central to this present-day conflict, was first passed by Congress as a part of the *Education Amendments of 1972*. In many ways, the same questions which surfaced then have resurfaced now. What is the role of institutions of higher learning in countering sex-based discrimination? How expansive is that role? When should the law be applied and how? Drawing such parallels naturally risks the loss of historical analysis agnostic of present. Yet, adopting such a frame of mind brings with it the benefit of fruitful comparison. Therefore, it is with the present in mind that we must consider the past, and with the past in mind that we reinterpret the present. In so doing, we remind ourselves of the ways in which our contingent knowledge of each, past and present, aids in creation of the other.

### **The Context of the Women's Liberation Symposium**

The *Women's Liberation* symposium was held, not coincidentally, at a pivotal time for Women's Rights in the United States. Augustana's own conversation about the role of women in society coincided with the emergence of a nationwide movement which questioned the male dominance of most aspects of American social and political life. Previous feminist movements within the United States provided historical precedent for challenges to sex-based discrimination. Particularly important had been the movement for women's suffrage in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. More recently, social and economic changes after the Second World War reduced the dependence of many women on men. Though workforce participation for women temporarily dropped in the immediate aftermath of the war, by 1950 it had risen again to wartime levels.<sup>14</sup> By 1960, one third of all married women were employed, four times the prewar rate. As the prospect of economic independence increased so too did the divorce rate and the number of women choosing to remain unmarried.<sup>16</sup> Greater independence created the

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<sup>14</sup> Carol Giardina, *Freedom for Women: Forging the Women's Liberation Movement, 1953-1970* (University Press of Florida, 2010), 16. <sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

necessary preconditions for the challenging of sex-based discrimination, male chauvinism, and other social issues which broadly fall under the label of patriarchy as it existed at the onset of the Women's Liberation Movement.

These social changes provided the potential for a social movement for women, but the spark came from elsewhere. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's is considered to have been an important formative influence on women who would later influence the movement for Women's Liberation. Women, especially women of color such as Daisy Bates and Rosa Parks, were leaders in the Civil Rights Movement from its earliest days. These early trailblazers set the precedent for the next generation of women Civil Rights leaders who would cut their teeth in the trenches of the Deep South combating voter suppression and segregation in the Mid-1960's. Civil Rights organizations such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) played an important role in training students to become leaders of action against racial injustice, and many of the same women who were leaders in the Civil Rights Movement would later become leaders in the Women's Liberation Movement.<sup>15</sup> The Civil Rights Movement also provided the context for many early actions against sexism. In 1964, women Civil Rights activists staged a sit-in at SNCC's Atlanta headquarters in order to end unequal treatment. The strike was led by Ruby Doris Robinson who would become the leader of SNCC two years later.<sup>16</sup> In the summer of that same year, the young black feminist leader Zoharah Simmons established an anti-sexual harassment policy at the Laurel Project, a local effort of the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, believed to be the first policy of its kind within the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 32.

These activists were influenced and aided by a growing consciousness concerning the nature of male domination over Western social, economic, and political life. In 1953, the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir published her definitional feminist text, *The Second Sex*. The book, which highlighted the role of everyday male behavior in arbitrarily limiting what women could do and achieve, helped to create a consciousness of women's issues as products of social norms. Prior to Beauvoir, many women were aware of the problems which limited them from reaching their full potential, but most thought of these as personal failings, not as social problems. The book was influential for a number of Women's Liberation leaders including Betty Friedan who said, "When I first read *The Second Sex* in the early fifties, I was still writing 'housewife' on the census blanks."<sup>18</sup> Friedan of course would go on to publish her own foundational book, *The Feminine Mystique*. Beauvoir's influence on the development of radical feminism was so profound, she even gave the movement its name. The term 'women's liberation' was first popularized by the *The Second Sex*.<sup>19</sup>

The early 1970's saw many victories for the Women's Liberation Movement as activist efforts left the Civil Rights Movement and entered the social and political conversation of the nation. The effort to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment as a possible 27<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution was then in full swing. Section 1 of the Amendment read as follows: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."<sup>20</sup> The first state to ratify the amendment had done so in March of 1972, and by the time Augustana College hosted its symposium in February 1973, twenty-three states had ratified the amendment. Four more states, South

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>19</sup> Carol Giardina, *Freedom for Women: Forging the Women's Liberation Movement, 1953-1970* (University Press of Florida, 2010), see esp. chap. 5, "The Influence of Simone de Beauvoir"

<sup>20</sup> "Proposed Amendments Not Ratified By the States." Accessed February 14, 2017.

Dakota, Oregon, Minnesota, and New Mexico, would be added to that list before the month was out.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally Title IX, a seminal piece of anti-sex discrimination legislation, had been passed that summer.

Title IX was a part of the Education Amendments act of 1972 the critical section of which reads:

*No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.*<sup>22</sup>

Title IX, still in effect to this day, ended such practices as the refusal to admit women and girls to

institutions of higher learning and required that more equal resources be expended on educational

opportunities, such as women's athletics.<sup>23</sup> But perhaps the most enduringly controversial victory for

the Women's Liberation Movement came not from the legislature, but from the courts. On January 22,

1973, just two weeks prior to the symposium at Augustana, the Supreme Court handed down its historic

*Roe v. Wade* decision.<sup>24</sup> The opinion of the court, authored by Justice Harry Blackmun, held that the

states did not have a right to prevent access to abortions during the first trimester of pregnancy on the

basis that this invalidated a woman's right to medical privacy.<sup>25</sup> This decision effectively legalized

abortion nationwide, allowing women greater control over their reproduction, and further distancing

women from the dual social functions of childbearing and childrearing.

Like other social movements of historical import however, the Women's Liberation movement created a backlash against the change which it wrought. The greatest mobilization of opposition to the Women's Rights movement was in the form of successful opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment.

Social conservatives, most notably the political activist Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016), saw the amendment

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<sup>21</sup> Huckabee, David C. "Questions Pertaining to the Equal Rights Amendment." August 19, 2004. Accessed February 14, 2017. Illinois, the state which is home to Augustana College, Betty Friedan, and Phyllis Schlafly, would not be added to this list.

<sup>22</sup> "Title IX and Sex Discrimination." Office for Civil Rights. April 29, 2015. Accessed February 14, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> O'Dea, Suzanne, ed. "Roe v. Wade (1973)." From *Suffrage to the Senate: America's Political Women*. Vol. 2. Santa Barbara, CA: Grey House Publishing, 2006. 552-553.

<sup>24</sup> Parenthood, Planned. "Roe v. Wade." Planned Parenthood Action Fund. Accessed February 14, 2017.

<sup>25</sup> O'Dea, Suzanne, ed. "Feminist Movement." From *Suffrage to the Senate: America's Political Women*. Vol. 1. Santa Barbara, CA: Grey House Publishing, 2006. 552.



as an affront to the traditional family structure. Schlafly in particular waged something of a crusade against the amendment, claiming it would weaken American society by doing away with the role of fulltime homemaker.<sup>26</sup> The amendment, which had enjoyed early popularity, would lose momentum throughout the mid-1970's and would continue to be deliberated over for another 10 years in various state legislatures. It was eventually defeated in 1982, just three state ratifications short of the 38 necessary for addition to the Constitution. It has yet to be seriously discussed at the national level again. Many historians attribute the amendment's failure in part to the efforts of social conservatives under the banner of Phyllis Schlafly.

### **Liberation at Augustana: The Short-Term**

This contentious atmosphere on the subject of Women's Rights represents the status of the debate on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1973 when women's rights speakers from all over the country descended on Augustana College for their Women's Liberation symposium. But whatever was happening in the national debate, it was likely in the back of the minds of most Augustana students who, in early February of 1973, were gearing up for final exams and looking forward to their spring break. (At that time, Augustana divided its academic year into trimesters which meant that for its students, final exams for the second trimester fell in early to mid-February.) Augustana College in the 1970's was a small, private, liberal arts college in Rock Island, Illinois situated just a stone's throw from the Mississippi River. Of the 2166 full time undergraduates who attended Augustana College during the 1972-73 academic year, 1117 (51.6%) were male and 1049 (48.4%) were female, meaning that the gender ratio was relatively close to 1:1. A report on the Class of 1973 found it to be more than 95% European, mostly NorthCentral European, with a large number of Eastern European origin. Most of the remaining 5% was of African

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<sup>26</sup> Locke, Jillian L. "Schlafly, Phyllis." Encyclopedia of U.S. Political History. Edited by Thomas S. Langston. Vol. 6. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2010. 339-41.

descent.<sup>27</sup> About 40% of the student body reported as Lutheran, 20% as Catholic, and the remaining 40% of various other Christian Protestant denominations.<sup>28</sup> The student body was largely working class with the average household income of responding students being \$11,535. Two thirds of the fathers of students had not earned a bachelor's degree and many had not completed high school.<sup>29</sup>

Overall, the exceedingly homogeneous student body was described by the report as white, lower middle class, midwestern, and moderate-conservative. Within this context, it is clear that the 1973 Women's Liberation symposium represented the arrival of a national movement on the quiet and conservative Augustana campus. In the short term, that movement motivated a small core of faculty and students whose actions spurred public debate over the issues relevant to Women's Liberation. In the long term, that movement led to greater institutional equality for the women students and employees of the college in tangent with the development of the college's Women's Studies program in the late 1970's and early 1980's.<sup>30</sup>

The 1973 symposium was not the only campus event of the era to attract leaders of national political movements. A 1969 symposium on Black Power, *Confrontation '69*, was organized by members of the student group *Afro-American Society* in order to "express pride in blackness and tradition and history of [their] people."<sup>33</sup> The symposium featured the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the National Chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality, Roy Innis. This demonstrates that Augustana College was no stranger to student activism relating to social issues. It remains to be seen, however, whether such activism was characteristic of Augustana students during the period. Students like Karen Pritz clearly had become

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<sup>27</sup> K.W. Johnson, *The Augustana College Student: A Research Report, Class of 1973*, (Central States College Association, 1970), 10. Augustana College Special Collections.

<sup>28</sup> *Institutional Self-Study: Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois*, (Augustana College, 1975), 9. Augustana College Special Collections.

<sup>29</sup> K.W. Johnson, 12.

<sup>30</sup> The academic discipline of Women's and Gender Studies was, in its early years, simply called Women's Studies.

<sup>33</sup> Connor L Brown, "The Day George Wallace Came to Town", (unpublished manuscript, 2018), 22.

supportive of the goals and methods of the movement. Some like Mark McMillan reacted negatively to the movement, finding the entire enterprise comedic and unnecessary. Still others, such as Tim Salman, agreed that Women's Liberation was a good thing, but felt too much attention was being paid to it on campus. It is, on the face of it, difficult to discern how representative each of these different reactions were of the student body as a whole. If the tone and posture towards Women's Liberation displayed by the school's newspaper is any sort of barometer, it would seem that the student body were almost universally in favor of the movement.

For the entirety of the academic school year in which the symposium took place (1972-1973), the editor of the paper was senior Linda Gesling, at times an outspoken supporter of Women's Liberation. Gesling, in addition to her editorial duties, also wrote frequently on the various political issues of the day, everything from pollution to geopolitics. The paper's content that year was heavily influenced by her editorial acumen. This becomes apparent when examining that content more closely. Throughout that year, the topic of Women's Liberation was more regularly discussed than any other school year before or since. This is partly due to symposium coverage in the paper. Numerous articles in the late months of 1972 and the early months of 1973 covered the planning process and provided an analysis of the events that day. The tone of these articles towards the symposium was overwhelmingly positive, a fact which was due to Gesling's influence. Mark McMillan's article seems to have been the only real piece of negative press given to the event which was well publicized ahead of time with a full itinerary of the day's events printed in the January 31<sup>st</sup> issue. A thorough and favorable analysis of the symposium and its content was provided in the following issue by student journalist, Alice Schardon. She would later become editor of the paper and continue its favorable view on Women's Liberation.

Nonetheless, the posture of *Observer* staff towards Women's Liberation does not capture in totality the feelings of Augustana students and faculty as a whole. In an interview in 2017, Richard

Priggie, an alumnus of Augustana (class of '74) and current pastor at the college, shared that he “always had the impression of the overall student body as kind of trending conservative.”<sup>31</sup> Regarding the *Observer* article by Mark McMillan, Priggie commented, “I would imagine that that perspective had a hearing.”<sup>35</sup> His sentiment is echoed in a number of places. Earlier that school year, the 1972 presidential election (during which Republican Richard Nixon would be reelected) consumed several pages in more than one issue of the Augustana Observer. In October, Gesling wrote of an encounter she had with volunteers working for the campaign of Nixon’s opponent, George McGovern:

Two McGovern volunteers stopped by my room this week; they were polling the dorm to find out Presidential preferences (sic). They became excited when both my roommate and I indicated McGovern as our choice, we practically doubled their total. I was surprised — wasn't the youth vote, theoretically going primarily to McGovern, supposed to be a factor in the election? To start with, hardly anyone was pro-McGovern. I knew this was a Republican campus. But I hadn't realized how very Republican.<sup>32</sup>

Gesling’s perception of the strong Republican leanings of the campus matched a survey conducted of the freshman class in that year by students of Dr. Ross Paulson, history professor and prominent Liberation supporter. The survey found that only 30% of the class identified with the Democratic Party, whereas 70% identified with the Republican Party.<sup>33</sup> Such high levels of identification with the Republican Party among students are significant for our purposes because the Republican Party of 1972 ran at the national level explicitly as the party of social conservatism.

Another angle from which student opinion on Women’s Liberation may be examined is the nature of discourse on specific issues related to Women’s Liberation, in particular the subject of abortion. Abortion was a hotly debated topic throughout the United States in the early 1970’s, the

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<sup>31</sup> Priggie, Richard. "Interview with Pastor Richard Priggie." Interview by author. January 30, 2017. <sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Gesling, Linda, “OBServations,” *Observer*, October 5, 1972.

<sup>33</sup> Meyer, Douglas “Augie Still GOP But Trends Change” *Observer*, (Rock Island, IL), November 1, 1972. Though it is not stated, it must be assumed that these figures refer only to students who identify with one of the major parties as it is unlikely that all Augustana students identified with a party.

critical year of course being 1973 when abortion was legalized as a medical practice by court order. Because establishing access to safe and legal abortions was a key concern of many women's groups at the time, the favorability or unfavorability of abortion on campus provides us with a bellwether for student opinion on Women's Liberation.

Not surprisingly, abortion was something of a hot-button issue on campus, in particular during the '72-'73 academic year during which the *Roe v. Wade* case was decided. Since 1970, *The Observer* had carried advertisements for abortion services and counselling. The first such ad was placed in the October 29<sup>th</sup> issue of that year by a New York based group which claimed to provide "abortion counselling, information and referral services"<sup>34</sup> to clinics and hospitals in the state of New York, where abortions had just recently been made legal. Only three of these ads were run that school year, but those numbers would increase. The '71-'72 school year would see six, and in the '72-'73 school year nineteen such advertisements would appear.<sup>35</sup> Newspaper staff in 1977 stated that the presence of these ads should not be taken to imply a "moral judgment on such an issue as abortion"<sup>36</sup> claiming that, on the basis that abortion was legal, it was "no less legitimate than any other social service."<sup>37</sup> Even if this were true of *Observer* staff of 1977, it was certainly not true of *Observer* staff of 1970-73. As previously discussed the paper at that time leaned heavily in favor of issues relating to Women's Liberation such as abortion. The decision of the editorial staff to allow advertisement for abortion counselling services immediately after abortion was legalized in New York and well before it was legalized in the state of Illinois certainly implies a moral judgement on the issue. Furthermore, the *Observer's* staff did more than imply a moral judgement on the issue of abortion; they outright stated one in their February 11, 1971 issue. An article penned by the Associate Editor, one Tom Appleton,

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<sup>34</sup> *Observer*, Rock Island, Illinois. October 29, 1970.

<sup>35</sup> See *Observer* articles spanning 1970-73 in Augustana Observer and Rockety-I Database.

<sup>36</sup> "Abortion Ad a Social Service," *Observer*, February 10, 1977.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

wrote for the entire editorial staff saying, "The Observer would like to voice its support of the new availability of abortions... we have had enough deaths from quackery."<sup>38</sup> Soon-to-be-editor of the paper, Linda Gesling, then a sophomore, was a member of the *Observer* staff at the time of Appleton's article. Gesling's tenure as editor would coincide with the largest quantity of abortion counselling and services advertisements.

Yet as we have seen, the views of *Observer* staff are not necessarily representative of Augustana as a whole. In 1976, a student named Walter Droeske referred to the presence of these ads as "abusive and detestable"<sup>39</sup>, citing moral as well religious objections to abortion. Soon afterwards, another letter to the editor penned by Bob Sibert "and assorted members of the Horseshoe Club" retorted with a satirical letter which poked fun at Droeske's moral objections and conclude by saying that, "Mr. Droeske's moral position may be right or it may be wrong. Either way, Mr. Droeske, and others who share his views, should not be allowed to banish all trace of the opposing view from this college."<sup>40</sup> Significantly, the Horseshoe Club satirized Droeske's view without explicitly declaring a favorable opinion on the abortion issue. Yet, despite the position of the 1977 editorial staff that providing information on abortion services was a public good, it would seem that Droeske's views won out. The 1976-77 academic year marks the last time the *Observer* ran any advertisements for abortion services. We have no stated reason from the staff of the *Observer* on why this change was made, but the timing is significant by itself. One advertisement was run in the fall of 1976, the one which caused Mr. Droeske's objection, and never again. This suggests that the advertisements may have been discontinued due to pressure from students.

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<sup>38</sup> Tom Appleton, "Abortion Laws Liberalized," *Observer*, February 11, 1971.

<sup>39</sup> Walter Droeske, "Letter to the Editor," *Observer*, November 10, 1976.

<sup>40</sup> Bob Siebert and Associated Members of the horseshoe Club, "Letter to the Editor", *Observer*, (Rock Island, IL,) December 15, 1976.

Along with the information we have on the political affiliations of students in the 1970's, the lack of robust support for abortion, a key Women's Liberation issue, suggests lackluster support for Liberation more generally as well as an abiding social conservatism among the student body. The few years immediately surrounding the symposium saw an organized and motivated core group of individuals who supported Women's Liberation. It also caused a great deal of discussion around women's issues on campus and the significance of the movement. But, this influence was limited to those few years. There is limited evidence to suggest that the symposium had any significant long-term impact on the political culture of the student body with regard to women's issues and feminism.

### **Liberation at Augustana: The Long-Term**

It is clear that in the years following the Women's Liberation symposium conversation surrounding issues pertinent to that movement was pervasive among the students of Augustana College. The atmosphere of impassioned discussion brought on first by the 1973 Women's Liberation Symposium exercised a profound short-term impact on campus culture during the 1970's. Public forums such as the *Observer* were turned over to heated arguments on current issues, and it became commonplace for a student to declare their opinion on a matter to the whole campus. It is difficult to imagine that many students were not affected by this. Having these issues discussed regularly by one's peers must certainly have had a formative effect, even if one was not directly involved in the debate. Unfortunately, it is difficult to say what long term effects all of this contentious debating might have had; these students filtered out of Augustana within a few years and whatever their opinions on these topics may be now, there is little practical way of knowing.

Alternatively, the actions of faculty, who in many cases are a part of the Augustana community for decades, provide a more long-term view of the change which took place on the campus of Augustana in relation to women's issues and the relationship of this change to the symposium. In terms of faculty

opinion on the subject of Liberation, Richard Priggie recalls Augustana faculty as being liberal leaning. Priggie remarks that he “was quite conservative at that time” and that he had the impression of being “a little bit on the outs with (what was) certainly the main faculty opinion, which was more liberal.”<sup>41</sup> There is, as it turns out, a basis for the suggestion that Augustana faculty were, on the whole, more politically liberal and therefore more likely to support issues of importance to the Women’s Liberation movement. For one, faculty were generally supportive of numerous actions designed to counteract sex based discrimination on campus.

On October 10, 1974, a year and a half after the Women’s Liberation symposium, the first meeting of the Committee on the Status of Women was held. The committee was comprised entirely of women faculty and staff and tasked itself with “unifying women” at Augustana in “common concerns and interests.”<sup>42</sup> In its first report dated November, 1974, the committee recommended a number of actions be taken by the administration including the recommendation that women employees be included in the college’s pension fund, that women employees be given expanded health benefits to match those of men, that greater priority be placed on the hiring of women faculty and staff, and that an administrator be given the title of Affirmative Action Officer and tasked with overseeing affirmative action programs at Augustana.<sup>47</sup> The committee was reformed in 1981 after it had “lapsed into inactivity for several seasons.”<sup>43</sup> This new iteration of the committee would be focused on hearing allegations from students and faculty of sexual discrimination and harassment. Little information exists on the impact of these reforms as the Committee’s own records do not appear to have been well kept.

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<sup>41</sup> Priggie, Richard. "Interview with Pastor Richard Priggie." Interview by author. January 30, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Memo, November 1974, Committee on the Status of Women, Box 1, in MSS 383 Nancy Huse Papers, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois <sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Memo, November 2, 1982, Status of Women Committee, in MSS 243 Augustana College Faculty and Committee Records – Short-term committees 1980’s and 1990’s, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. It is unclear when the committee had “lapsed into inactivity”, or even whether “several seasons” refers to seasons of *the year* or seasons *as in years*. However, the most likely date for this lapse into inactivity might be 1976 owing to a lack of information on the committee’s activities in the late 1970’s.



What, if any, was the causal link between the creation and subsequent activity of this committee and the Women's Liberation symposium? In their initial report, the committee referenced the symposium directly, referring specifically to the presence of the women's rights leader, Betty Friedan, as an "inspiring precedent."<sup>44</sup> However, efforts to establish the Committee on the Status of Women dated to April 11, 1972, the academic year prior to the Women's Liberation symposium. It was on that date that members of the Faculty Welfare Committee met to draft a proposal for the creation of a task force on the status of women. The task force's first goal, according to the proposal, would be to create a statement for the college on sexual discrimination. It is clear that there was an interest among Augustana faculty in addressing concerns, such as sexual discrimination in employment and benefits, prior to the February 1973 symposium, these being important to the Women's Liberation goal of economic independence for women. Thus, we find evidence to suggest that the symposium was a sign of the influence of Women's Liberation rather than a catalyst. Despite this it is likely that, with the committee later making specific reference to Betty Friedan's presence on campus, the Women's Liberation symposium helped to focus and sustain efforts to counter sexual discrimination on campus by providing a means of inspiration to faculty, staff, and students engaged in this issue.

A less direct way of gauging the long ranging effects of the '73 symposium is to consider the regulations placed on the conduct of women students and how these changed with time. Having been created by college administrators, these regulations are a valuable means of determining faculty and administrative views on the social role of women in higher education. In the immediate postwar period, students at America's colleges and universities, both women and men, were subject to stringent rules regimes. Some rules were shared in common; students at Augustana shared similar responsibilities for cleanliness of their rooms and for damages, but these were comparatively few. The reality was an

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<sup>44</sup> Memo, November 1974, Committee on the Status of Women, Box 1, in MSS 383 Nancy Huse Papers.

entirely different regime for women as compared to men. So much was this the case that Augustana employed both a Dean of Men and a Dean of Women to govern their respective parts of the student body. For men, the list of rules was relatively brief. Men could not host “female callers” except with the permission of the Head Resident. Rooms had to be kept clean and were potentially subject to morning inspections. Men also had to leave their names at the front desk of their dormitory if they were to stay out overnight. While many of these would seem draconian to modern university students, they were gentle compared to those governing the behavior of women. Women were not permitted to smoke in the dorms (at a time when smoking in one’s residence would have been commonplace). They were not permitted to wear pajamas outside of their private rooms. No “male callers” were allowed in private rooms under any circumstance and could only be hosted at certain hours of the day. Phone conversations were limited to 5 minutes and had to conclude before 11pm. Female students were required to formally inform dormitory staff if they were leaving campus after 7pm and had to obtain permission from the Dean of Women’s office to stay out at night. The most striking set of rules however are those governing when the dormitories “closed” i.e. the time by which female students had to be inside their dorms. For Freshmen women, this time was 8pm on weeknights, and for other students 10pm.<sup>45</sup>

By 1960, these rules had been altered significantly and shortened by several paragraphs. Still retained were rules forbidding male callers outside specified hours, rules forbidding male callers from entering private rooms, and rules which required female students be in their dorms as specified times. Though all of these times had been adjusted in favor of students. The rules regime for women students

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<sup>45</sup> Student Handbook, 1946-1947, (Augustana College, 1946). From the Augustana Institution Book Collection, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. <sup>51</sup> Student Handbooks, 1960-1967, (Augustana College).

remained unaltered from 1960 to 1967.<sup>51</sup> In that year, the Augustana student handbook contained the following telling passage.

“Senior women’s hours underwent a revision last spring. With parental permission only, senior women have 12 o’clocks Sunday through Thursday and no hours Friday and Saturday nights. This revision expresses the belief that added responsibility for the college woman is an important part of education.”<sup>46</sup>

This change must have been a relief for the women of the class of ’68. But more than this it was a sign that attitudes were changing towards women at Augustana, changing in advance of the main thrust of Women’s Liberation and the 1973 symposium. The fact that these rules were significantly loosened already in 1960 demonstrates that changing attitudes towards women were already impacting the treatment of women on campus far in advance of the 1973 symposium. This further demonstrates that the Symposium took place in the context of a several decades long change toward greater sex equality at the institutional level. This further points to the explanation that the symposium was a product of this change rather than a catalyst for change.

A final area of interest in looking at the long-term effects of Women’s Liberation at Augustana is the development of Women’s Studies throughout the 1970’s and 80’s. The first course at Augustana with a focus on women was offered in 1975. It was an English class taught by Dr. Nancy Huse who was a leading member of the Committee on the Status of Women and a consistent advocate for the more serious treatment of women’s issues in academia. The course focused on the role of women in literature and was still being taught, in a significantly altered form, through at least the mid-1990’s.<sup>47</sup> More importantly, the course signaled the arrival of the serious academic study of women and women’s issues on the campus of Augustana College. Throughout the late 1970’s and into the early 1980’s, Augustana slowly expanded its course offerings on the subject with classes taught on history, philosophy, and

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<sup>46</sup> Student Handbook, 1967, (Augustana College, 1967), 37.

<sup>47</sup> Report, 1996, Box 2, in MSS 69 Women’s and Gender Studies Records, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. <sup>54</sup> Ibid.

religion, all of which “focused on women’s experience and the rapidly developing interdisciplinary field of women’s studies.”<sup>54</sup> At the same time, new scholarship on women was being incorporated by many professors into regular courses not specifically focused on women.

Women’s Studies was also receiving attention outside of the classroom with the creation of the campus group *Feminist Forum* in 1978. Huse, again at the center of events, outlined the purpose of the group as a discussion forum on Women’s Studies in an interview in 1982. “Since we don’t have the prospect for (a formal program in) women’s studies, we wanted to do something else. So a group of (us) got the idea that we wanted some sort of framework to share ideas.”<sup>48</sup> Topics of discussion were highly academic in nature and related primarily to the developing field of Women’s Studies. Ross Paulson, the same Dr. Paulson who had given a presentation at the Women’s Liberation symposium, presented to the forum on at least one occasion in 1981<sup>56</sup>, and various other professors, especially women faculty, also presented. Despite the group’s focus on academia, Huse acknowledged that there was pressure for the group to take on a more activist role saying, “Sometimes students tell the faculty that there’s too much discussion. The faculty feels that this is our activism.”<sup>49</sup> Many sessions of the Feminist Forum accordingly focused on more activist and less academic topics such as meetings with public office seekers and discussions of gender discrimination on campus.<sup>50</sup> Though the group was predominantly led by faculty, it welcomed all students, faculty, and community members, both men and women to attend and usually drew 20-30 attendees, though over 100 might show for high interest sessions.<sup>51</sup> The continued academic focus of the group helped to build awareness for Women’s Studies as a serious

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<sup>48</sup> Susan Lewis “Feminism is the talk of Augustana College,” *Dispatch*, (Rock Island, IL,) September 26, 1982.

<sup>56</sup> “Women’s History vs The History of Women”, December 17, 1981, Box 42, in MSS 144 Ross Paulson Papers, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

<sup>49</sup> Susan Lewis “Feminism is the talk of Augustana College,” *Dispatch*, September 26, 1982.

<sup>50</sup> A flier advertising Feminist Forum meeting schedules, date not listed. Augustana College Vertical File: Feminist Forum. Augustana College Special Collections.

<sup>51</sup> Susan Lewis “Feminism is the talk of Augustana College,” *Dispatch*, September 26, 1982.

academic field, and led directly to the creation of Women's Studies at Augustana. Many sessions concerned themselves specially with planning for the future Women's Studies Program which first appeared in the Fall of 1985.<sup>52</sup>

The program offered a concentration in Women's Studies and followed the interdisciplinary model laid out by previous courses taught on the subject and by the men and women academics of Feminist Forum.<sup>53</sup> The program was once again spearheaded by Dr. Huse. It has expanded over the years into the modern Women's and Gender Studies Department now firmly in place at Augustana which offers both a major and a minor.<sup>54</sup> It is difficult to say whether the formation and development of the Women's and Gender Studies department at Augustana was a result, direct or indirect, of the February 3, 1973 Women's Liberation symposium. The remoteness of the creation of the Women's Studies Program in 1985 would seem to rule out a direct causal link. On top of that, there is nothing particularly remarkable about the timing or pacing of the development of Women's Studies at Augustana which would indicate that the symposium had such long reaching and drastic effects. The first Women's Studies program created in the United States can be found at San Diego State University which first offered its 11 course program in 1970, predating the establishment of Augustana's own Women's Studies program by 15 years.<sup>55</sup> *Feminist Studies*, the first academic journal with a focus on Women's Studies, began publication in 1972, 3 years before Augustana offered its first course in the subject.<sup>56</sup> Augustana was not, therefore, a trailblazer in the area of Women's Studies. Rather, it is most probable that Augustana's Women's Studies Program was established as a part of the move within the

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<sup>52</sup> A flier advertising Feminist Forum meeting schedules, date not listed. Augustana College Vertical File: Feminist Forum. Augustana College Special Collections.

<sup>53</sup> Rich West "Feminist Forum: Women's Studies Program Anticipated," *Observer*, (Rock Island, IL,) September 26, 1984.

<sup>54</sup> "Women's and Gender Studies." Augustana College. Accessed February 14, 2017.

<sup>55</sup> "History." San Diego State University. November 10, 2016. Accessed February 14, 2017.

<sup>56</sup> "About Feminist Studies." FS: About the journal Feminist Studies: History. Accessed February 14, 2017.

wider community of higher education to legitimize the study of women's issues. Given that this move within the academic community was largely due to the increased interest in women's issues on the part of Americans and American academia as a whole, the most accurate statement concerning Augustana's Women's Studies program is that its growth can be attributed to the broader social forces responsible for the Women's Liberation movement itself.

### **Conclusion**

In the immediate weeks, months, and years following the 1973 Women's Liberation Symposium at Augustana College, opinions and discussions flowed thick from the tongues, pens, and fingertips of Augustana students. That event and its aftermaths generated an atmosphere of spirited discourse which impacted campus culture for several years. Widened out to a scale of years and decades however, the direct import of the events of 1973 becomes less clear. Active support from students was limited to a core group of individuals who were active in a relatively narrow span of years. Otherwise, students appear to have been unmotivated by the issue. The most robust support for Women's Liberation came from faculty, whose actions brought ideas inspired by Women's Liberation into employment and benefits via the Committee on the Status of Women as well as into the curriculum through *Feminist Forum* and the Women's Studies Program. Thus, social change on the campus of Augustana after 1973 was led primarily by faculty and staff.

In light of the evidence, it is not accurate to claim that the 1973 Women's Liberation symposium was indicative of the political leanings of Augustana College students. There is also little evidence to suggest that the event impacted the political culture of the campus outside of the short-term. In the long-term, a causal relationship between the symposium and later institutional developments at Augustana, inasmuch as one exists, is not immediately obvious. All events here discussed, from the symposium and student discourses, to the Committee on the Status of Women, and the establishment

of the Women's Studies department, can be understood as being causally linked to the Women's Liberation movement as a whole. It is difficult in this case to separate overlapping and intertwining webs of causality which weave between these different events. While the symposium was responsible for significant discussion and debate among both students and faculty, the most specific claim that can be definitively made about the social and institutional changes that took place in the decades to follow is that they were brought on by the same forces which created similar changes at campuses across the country. Despite the lack of a direct causal link, the Women's Liberation symposium represented the arrival of a national movement on the campus of Augustana College, one which would have a profound impact on the way the women and men, students and staff, of the college community worked and lived with one another.