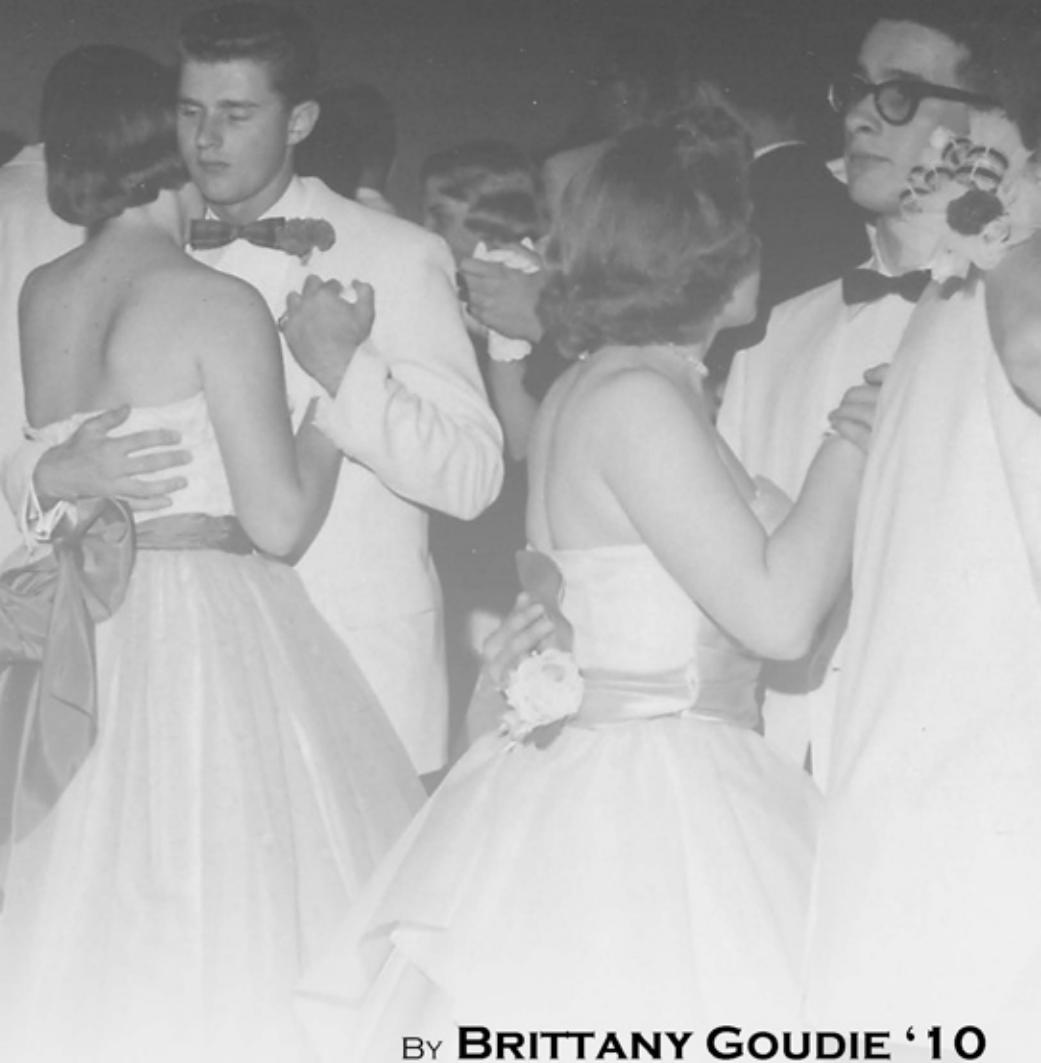


SINFUL STRIDES

THE DANCING BAN AT NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE
AS AN EXAMPLE OF TENSION BETWEEN
RELIGION AND WAR CULTURE



BY **BRITTANY GOUDIE '10**

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Introduction

The mid-twentieth century, wrought with the complexities of war, seduces inquiring minds. Depictions of flag-yielding, stars and strife American masses flip like a picture book in flash-forward motion; American recollection romanticizes the effects of multiple world wars. Big band jazz, distant lovers penning the pangs of separation and star-spangled rally cries for war support pervade public perception of World War II. As historians comb through the intricacies of World War II, however, questions arise regarding the validity of such perceptions. How did World War II affect American masses? What can the effects of war tell historians about transformations in American culture? Answers to these questions demand in-depth, narrowed research. Microcosmic focus and historical analysis keep the pages of the flip-book from progressing too quickly, allowing for a more accurate understanding of the past.

North Central College, situated approximately thirty miles west-southwest of Chicago in Naperville, Illinois, stands today a quaint, quiet college subtly developing just as it has for the past century and a half. Founded as Plainfield College in 1861, North Central has witnessed the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War and all wars scattered in between or occurring thereafter. Because of North Central's longstanding history, tracing trends and interpreting transformations at North Central provides the microcosmic example necessary to uncovering information about past events--information that, when coupled with other small independent research, indicates what typical or atypical behavior looks like. North Central's reaction to World War II illustrates the possible effects of war on small liberal arts colleges and, when juxtaposed with similar

colleges, suggests the level of behavioral commonality. Uncovering the complexities of questions like, “what was World War II’s impact on collegiate culture?” must be handled one issue at a time. The dancing ban at North Central College is one window through which to explore possible effects of World War II on small liberal arts colleges in America, specifically on the development and transformation of social provisions on campus.

Research firmly establishes that the post-World War II struggle for the removal of the pre-war dancing ban at North Central College exemplifies a battle within collegiate culture between traditional religious constraints on student social life and the newly introduced war culture brought with the return to campus of students who served. At North Central College, World War II seems to have had a generally liberal effect on on-campus student social life. Support for this assertion comes in several detailed subcategories that, together, comprise the argument. Consider first the religious affiliation of North Central College and a century of Evangelical affiliation--how did this translate to on-campus student affairs? Work to understand those influences exerted by the governing body at North Central and explore possible motivations for their behavioral codes and disciplinary action. Think about the logistics of the dancing ban; what concrete knowledge about the dancing ban at North Central stands unchallenged as fact? Contemplate World War II’s impact at North Central in terms of enrollment and student life. What social transformations were witnessed at North Central after World War I; what religious trends can be traced at North Central spanning its first century? *Explore* each element in search for the deepest understanding so, when the time comes to relate North Central’s experience to the larger picture, the essence of the matter isn’t lost in translation.

While exploration of the dancing ban and of social and religious trends at North Central inherently revolves around explanation of legislation, rules, regulations and sanctions, it is important to remember that this story is

one primarily revolving around human experience. To detach the human element from this story would be to misrepresent the movement. Keep in mind that the dancing ban at North Central and the impact of war had very real, emotional influences on students. War is wrought with confusion, dissatisfaction, and question. Analyzing the impact of war, therefore, is a complex task. An understanding of the impact of war cannot fully encompass or capture the emotional aspect of the matter or its effect on student behavior. Instead, conclusions are drawn from evidence which is often bureaucratic in nature. The following analysis attempts to understand student reaction to an inadequate student social life so, while the content of the paper is factual and administrative, the movement's inherently emotional nature cannot be ignored.

In order to structure a fluent argument, the following subcategories, provided in chronological order, will act as the foundation of discussion:

- Religion at North Central College, 1861-1960
- Government at North Central College, 1861-1960
- Social Life at North Central College, 1861-1945
- World War II and Student Life at North Central College, 1941-1945
- After World War II at North Central College:
 - The Chapel Program, 1933-1960
- After World War II at North Central College:
 - The Dancing Ban, 1941-1945
- Beyond North Central College, 1945-1960.

Taken as separate pieces, these subcategories discuss only what their subheadings declare; taken together as a whole, they paint a comprehensive picture of a struggle for adequate student social life at North Central College and World War II's catalytic role in that critical movement.

Religion at North Central College, 1861-1960

In order to constitute an argument regarding the religious movements of the College, it is imperative to first establish what church bodies were influential in college history. North Central College, while

remaining an Evangelical institution for the periods concerning the dancing ban, was subject to many changes and mergers over the course of its first century. Clarification of these religious moves is clearly noted in Clarence Roberts' *A Clear and Steady Light*:

It was noted that the College was founded by the Evangelical Association in 1861. In 1890 there came a division in the Association with the Evangelical group winning control of the college. The opposition group became known as the United Evangelicals. Fortunately, this dispute was healed in 1927 with the organization of the Evangelical Church. In [1946] the Union between Evangelicals and United Brethren was consummated to form the Evangelical United Brethren church. North Central remained affiliated with this denomination until the merger with Methodists in 1968. From this date it became a United Methodist institution.¹

While it is undoubtedly important to note the transformations in denominational devotion at North Central, for purposes of this discussion, it is only imperative to note that the institution had an historic relationship with the Evangelical denomination since its founding. Research involving the dancing ban at North Central spans only until circa 1960. Also, because debate about the impact of World War II and the dancing ban centers heavily on identifying religious beliefs, it is important to note: "the dispute [resulting in divisions within the Evangelical Church] seemed to be a conflict of personalities . . . rather than any deep-seated doctrinal differences."² Consistent theological beliefs based in the Evangelical faith were observed at North Central despite changes within the Evangelical Church itself. Throughout the early twentieth century, North Central College continued to consider itself primarily a religious institution. "While some private colleges relinquished religious bonds[,] North Central continued its traditional church

¹ Clarence N. Roberts, *A Clear and Steady Light* (Naperville: North Central College, 1981), 31.

² Clarence N. Roberts, *A Century of Liberal Education* (Naperville: North Central College, 1960), 111.

relationships.”³ North Central operated on deep, foundational religious suppositions belonging to the Evangelical Church.

Students knew of the College’s religious affiliation in a very personal way. Many students chose North Central because of its strong “moral” character based on the Evangelical denomination. Each student’s day, at the founding of North Central (then “Plainfield College” and later “North-Western College” until the adoption of “North Central College” in 1926), was designed to serve the provisions of Christian life as prescribed by the Evangelicals: “While source material on the daily routine of students is meager, sufficient information is available to demonstrate the fact that the life of the student was thoroughly supervised by a system of detailed by-laws and regulations. The absence of rules or even self-regulation would have opened the institution to severe criticism, not only by the church, but also by parents, local friends, and patrons.”⁴ Upon arrival at North Central, most students expected strict regulation and disciplinary codes. North Central was often sought out by those anticipating such stipulations. Many students who attended were actively religious, in fact, “the high percentage of Evangelicals contributed to a collective homogeneity lacking in later years [after the Rall Administration 1916-1946].”⁵ As a result of the immediate post World War I economic boom in the U.S. with more individuals able to afford higher education, the College’s enrollment grew, expanding beyond the traditional student religious affiliation, and the number of Evangelical students waned. “Until 1923 the percentage of students affiliated with the Evangelical Church remained high, with some eighty-nine percent of the student-body representing the denomination.”⁶ Even with a decline in Evangelical students, reported Evangelicals did not dip below forty-five

³ Roberts, *A Clear and Steady Light*, 31.

⁴ Roberts, *A Century of Liberal Education*, 28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁶ *Ibid.*

percent until after World War II.⁷ Conclusively, North Central College was an Evangelical institution that thoroughly embraced its role as such throughout almost its entire first century of livelihood which completely covers the expanse of time that the college enforced a dancing ban against social dancing on (and off) campus.

To paint a more vivid picture of the role of religion on campus at North Central, consider the weekly routine of students as outlined by the College Catalog of 1862-63: “The exercises of each day begin with the reading of the Scripture and prayer, which exercise all are required to attend. All students are required to attend public worship on the Sabbath, at such churches as they may choose, or as their parent or guardians may direct.”⁸ The by-laws of the College included in the 1862-63 catalog also clearly state, “punctual and regular attendance at Prayers in the Chapel, at Church on the Sabbath, and at every recitation or other exercise enjoined by the Faculty are requested of all students.”⁹ The College came down heavy-handed on habitual absence often resulting in honor point deductions (a system that kept record of student conduct) or through suspension.

As worship services became less frequent, a matter for later discussion, the College instituted a service referred to as “chapel.” “The modern chapel exercises remained as the direct descendent of the ‘prayers’ that were once observed daily on the campus. The chapel service represented the entire college community at worship. Although extended prayers and lengthy sermons were no longer the custom, the chapel program became the central core of spiritual exercises.”¹⁰ Beginning around 1932, required worship known as “chapel,” would gradually shift focus from religion to academics used primarily for guest speakers and lecturers until, officially,

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ 1862-63 College Catalogue, 12. NCC Publications Collection. North Central College’s *College Catalogues*, 1862-Present. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

⁹ Ibid.

authorities recognized its primary purpose as an exercise for intellectual expansion. It wasn't until 1932 that chapel services were first reduced from daily offerings to 4 days of devotion. The gradual lessening of strict religious requirements slowly began to develop after this point. Again, the general decline of religion's role at North Central as it relates to the dancing ban and World War II will find further discussion. Research firmly establishes, however, that North Central College was deeply devoted to its Evangelical affiliation throughout the nineteenth century and spanning well into the mid-twentieth century.

Government at North Central College, 1861-1960

After establishing North Central's inherently Evangelical connection, it is important to note the composition of the governing body and the motivations behind its asserted control. Through satisfying these two inquiries, the role of religion in government at North Central is further cemented.

Research suggests that two bodies, the Faculty and the Board of Trustees, were responsible for government and discipline at North Central during the nineteenth century, continuing until 1919 when a third party, the Student Council, was introduced. "The private and scholastic life of all students continued under the rigorous supervision of the faculty . . . The problem of discipline was one of the most important issues before the faculty . . . The enforcement of all rules was the principal responsibility of the faculty, but occasionally the Board of Trustees passed decrees concerning student morals and discipline."¹¹ Until 1919, these two bodies worked in tandem to provide students with the government and discipline outlined in the College Catalogs and Student Handbooks. It wasn't until 1919, directly following World War I, that the Student Council was formed to provide

¹⁰ Roberts, *A Century of Liberal Education*, 266.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

North Central's students with a form of self-government. In the 1919-20 College Catalog, the administration introduced a Student Council as a student-run form of government:

The College believes in student self-government. It has accorded to the student-body the largest measure of student-government compatible with the Faculty's responsibility for the administration of the college and the capacity of the students for such self-government. A thoroughly representative *Student Council* has been created to co-operate with the Faculty.¹²

This system of self-governance continued for the remaining period of exploration, through 1960 and beyond. That is not to say that the Board of Trustees and Faculty did not hold the primary position of power in matters of government and discipline. Even in 1957, the Student Council acknowledged



the Board of Trustees as the authority on the issue of social dancing: “In answer to many questions voiced by students on the specific problems of dancing, smoking, and drinking and gambling on campus, the following statements have been compiled to clarify the official stand of the college . . . The board of trustees is the ruling body on this matter of dancing.”¹³

However, student opinion began to take a heftier role in matters of discipline beginning in 1919 with the creation of the Student Council.

¹² 1919-20 College Catalog, 33.

¹³ March 4, 1957, Student Council Meeting Minutes. Student Life Collection. Campus Organizations, North Central College's Student Council Meeting Minutes, 1919-1970. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

In addition to identifying the Board of Trustees and Faculty as the governing bodies of North Central College, it is important to note that both bodies were religious in nature, which, in turn, emphasized religious standards of conduct at the College. As the Reverend George St. Angelo, first Chaplain at North Central, stated in an oral history recorded July 20, 2004: “I think the college served the role of the Chaplain through their faculty. When I was a student here--see, I was a student here ‘39-‘43--a lot of them had theological training.”¹⁴ Richard Eastman, a former professor at North Central College, echoed this belief, “when I arrived in 1946, we pretty much had a church-related faculty. That is, the faculty went to the Evangelical church and they often spoke at chapel. They were committed really to a church campus.”¹⁵ The Board of Trustees membership was also based on religious affiliation. The 1862-63 College Catalog shows that the Board of Trustees, comprised of 24 members, explicitly name 18 as clergy and the remainder as laity designated by specific Conferences of the Evangelical Association.¹⁶ The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, responsible for important decisions in between board meetings, had six members, five of which explicitly stated their religious affiliation or position.¹⁷ This Board composition continued well into the mid-twentieth century.

Briefly stated, the goals of the Faculty and Board of Trustees were to instill not only intellectual growth among students, but also to foster moral growth. “In short, it is the aim of the faculty to make the government strictly

¹⁴ George St. Angelo Oral History, July 20, 2004. Historical Collection. North Central College’s Oral History Program, Recordings and Transcripts, 1990-2005. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

¹⁵ Richard Eastman Oral History, January 24, 1992. Historical Collection. North Central College’s Oral History Program, Recordings and Transcripts, 1990-2005. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

¹⁶ 1862-63 College Catalog, 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

parental.”¹⁸ Both governing bodies saw college education as a continuation of Christian teaching:

Encouragement and persuasion, so far as they shall prove efficient, will be used to induce studious habits, a judicious division of time and a proper course of conduct. Laudable motives are presented and enforced upon the mind of each student, to institute that government so eminently useful in after life.¹⁹

There was no hidden motivation. The Board of Trustees and the Faculty were interested in producing upstanding, morally-sound graduates based on standards prescribed by the Evangelical faith and both entities used government and discipline as the means to that end.

Social Life at North Central College, 1861-1945

Thus far it has been established that North Central College was undoubtedly committed to Evangelical ideals; the role of religion was a cornerstone to education at North Central College; the governing bodies at North Central College (the Board of Trustees and the Faculty, followed by the Student Council after 1919) were inherently dedicated to a religious agenda that was aimed at forming morally sound graduates. Now, a general recount of social transformations at North Central before World War II helps to further synchronize these discoveries for the purposes of tracing social trends at North Central College after World War II. In order to show the exceptional nature of the impact of World War II on North Central student life, a map of social trends needs to discuss social movements *before* and *after* World War II.

Before the introduction of a social program at North Central characterized by recreation and specialized interests, the predominant form of extra-curricular activities are summarized by the two predominant organizations on campus prior to the birth of the Student Council in 1919.

¹⁸ Ibid., 12.

The Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association) and the Y.W.C.A. (Young Women's Christian Association, earlier called the Young Ladies'



Christian Association), and the literary societies on campus marked a time when extra-curriculars were focused on service and gentility. "Two organizations, the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.L.C.A., dating from the

1870s, reflected the Christian character of the institution, its leaders and students."²⁰ The Christian Associations on campus engaged a majority of the student body in Christian commitment to service:

The work of the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.L.C.A. received special praise and commendation from the faculty reports of the Board of Trustees which indicated that more than one-half of the students were members of these Christian organizations. The Associations must have been responsible in part for teaching and demonstrating to fellow students the principles of Christian living and service in the environment of a college campus.²¹

The Y.M- and Y.W.C.A. were predominant forms of extra-curricular commitment at North Central College among the student body from the mid-1870s until the mid-twentieth century, and even after their influence waned, each continued to contribute to the College as a traditional organization.

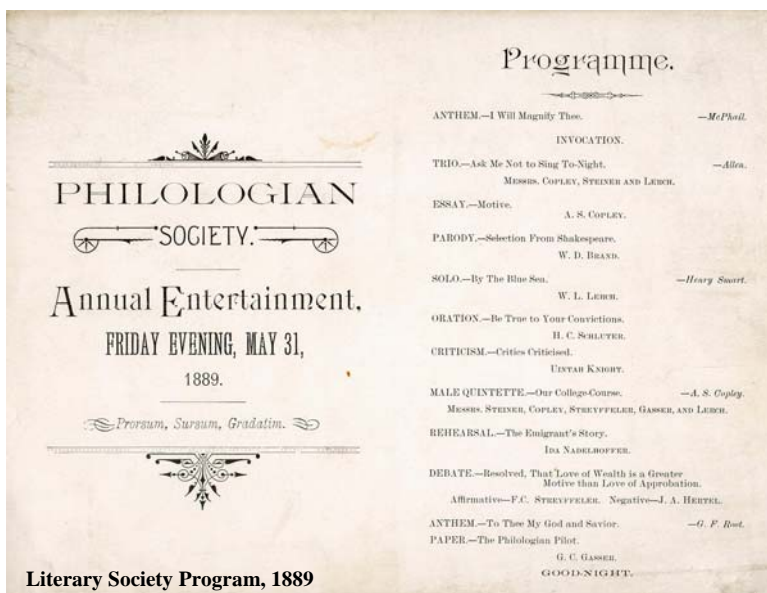
From 1866-1930, literary societies were one of the largest outlets for extra-curricular activity on campus but were an example of genteel culture--a culture which began to diminish near the conclusion of World War

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 80.

²¹ Ibid., 82.

I. For instance, refer to an October 6, 1899 meeting of one of the societies: “The society was called to order . . . And opened with a piano solo by Miss Rickert . . . The program was as follows: Heroes of the Arctic Expedition, Mr. Reik; Exercise; Peace Conference, Mr. J. Frauzke; Essay, Miss Waidelich; Orchestra Music; Intermission; Music by the Orchestra; Address.”²² In 1920, one year after the Student Council’s formation, the



Student Council meeting minutes note that the student body was aware of the decline of the literary societies and this distinct form of social outlet: “The question of whether or not the Literary Societies were filling a real need in students’ life was discussed. It was moved and seconded that the chair appoint a committee to investigate the society situation and report at the next meeting.”²³ The predominance of these two forms of organizations, the Y.M- and Y.W.C.A. and literary societies, mark a time in the social history

²² Oct. 6, 1899, Debate Society. Student Life Collection. Campus Organizations, North Central College’s Literary Societies Files, 1866-1930. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

²³ Feb. 22, 1920, Student Council meeting minutes.

of North Central that was pre-occupied with academically edifying extra-curricular, directly contrasted with the athletic and recreational extra-curricular focus of the decades following the decline of the Literary Societies.

The clear turning point for the social program, or lack thereof, at North Central College came with the creation of the Student Council in 1919. “The system of individual or collective responsibility of students discussed by the president was to bear fruit in the creation of a system of student government in 1919. A representative student council was originated.”²⁴ It was at this point that student autonomy became a driving force for social change on campus. Students were given the tools necessary to affect their social program at North Central. The Student Council still fell under the jurisdiction of the Board of Trustees and administration, but students were consulted regarding college policies. “Standards of conduct for students and faculty were drawn up by a joint committee of faculty members and students in 1924. These standards were approved by the Board of Trustees and were printed in the college catalog for many years.”²⁵ Student input was viewed as an asset. This system of student self-government authorized by the Board of Trustees and Faculty continued for the next several decades. Student life was influenced by a blend of student opinion and administrative desires.

World War II and Student Life at North Central College, 1941-1945

World War II affected North Central College in multiple ways. The war permeated most levels of the atmosphere on campus. “Discussion was held concerning the moving up of Christmas vacation to aid the war effort,”²⁶ “the possibility of a living memorial for North Central students

²⁴ Roberts, *A Century of Liberal Education*, 211.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Oct. 22, 1942, Student Council Meeting Minutes.

killed in World War II was discussed,”²⁷ “Several ideas for a chapel program were discussed in which we would honor the North Central men killed in World War II,”²⁸ the Student Council even developed a War Council charged with organizing memorials and tributes on campus.²⁹ Just as in World War I, the College adopted a curriculum that allowed for training units to operate within the College to provide basic instruction for students comparable to an ROTC program. “The college along with many similar



ASTP Classroom
Smith Hall, Old Main

institutions throughout the nation was assigned an Army Specialized Training Unit . . . The authorities entered in contract with the war department to provide instruction, subsistence, housing and medical services

for the men . . . Kaufman and Bolton halls [*sic*] and Merner Field House were approved as barracks for the trainees.”³⁰ Even for those students who did not enlist in the military, the war became an ever-present issue on campus.

While the war years themselves greatly changed the student experience at North Central, perhaps most importantly, the passage of the G.I. Bill of Rights (a law which provided an entitlement to free or reduced-cost higher education to all veterans) sent an enormous number of veterans onto college campuses after the war. “The passage of the G.I. Bill of Rights providing for the educations of the ex-serviceman brought an unprecedented

²⁷ Sept. 19, 1946, Student Council Meeting Minutes.

²⁸ Nov. 7, 1946, Student Council Meeting Minutes.

²⁹ March 4, 1943, Student Council Meeting Minutes.

³⁰ Roberts, *A Century of Liberal Education*, 219.

expansion in college enrollments in the immediate post-war period.”³¹ As is noted by the *Chronicle*, the College Catalogs and the Board of Trustee meeting minutes, enrollment doubled between 1944 and 1946. Student enrollment was as follows: 1936, 592; 1938, 600; 1940, 595; 1942, 561; 1944, 410; 1946, 929.³² Not only did the war cause a decline in student enrollment at North Central during the years of service, but it also caused a sharp increase in student enrollment at North Central after its conclusion as servicemen returned home to finish or start their degrees.

The Board of Trustees acknowledged the issue of increased student enrollment in response to the Report of the President of the Student Body to the Board of Trustees which cited “insurmountable obstacles” such as student enrollment which “swelled to an extent never before approached” and the student body was described as “representing as heterogeneous a group as ever assembled to receive instruction at one institution.”³³ The student body president notes, “practically a third of the group is composed of veterans, now familiar with parts of the world heretofore mentioned only in geographies, and almost one in six members of the student body has assumed family responsibilities in addition to those of procuring higher education.”³⁴ World War II changed the actual composition of the student body through its involvement in the war. Expectations of the College, and the College’s social program specifically, changed among the student population. “A very sensitive problem that confronted the college administration after 1946 was the task of providing a satisfactory social program to meet the demands of the entire student body. Changing social standards and convention seemed to render traditional activities obsolete . . . The close of World War II and the return of the G.I. again found the issue of

³¹ Roberts, *A Century of Liberal Education*, 251.

³² *Ibid.*, 254.

³³ “Report of the Student Body President to the Board of Trustees” April 16, 1947, 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

a more adequate social program before the college authorities.”³⁵ Not only the influx of student servicemen affected the College, but also the change in the overall personality of the student body. A March 10, 1967 *Chronicle* article reflecting on student experiences beyond the classroom noted: “Experience with the G.I.’s after World War II shows that after several years in the service, they returned to school more mature.”³⁶ The author wrote that Dr. Richard Thurston, head of the Sociology and Anthropology Department at North Central in 1967, thought “that student [*sic*] romanticize the world outside of the classroom” and G.I.’s show maturity after having been exposed to the world for themselves.³⁷

In an editorial published in the *Chronicle* October 2, 1946, it was noted: “social life seemed so morally ideal and quiet at school. Roller skating, parlor dates, coke dates, sporting events, lectures, and concerts were the recreation highlights; and then the army! Some men seemed so unprepared for the reality of boisterous recreation. Somehow it made college life appear a little too artificial.”³⁸ This realization rests at the heart of the argument for it shows that students were changed by World War II: students were left dissatisfied with social life on campus upon return. Students experienced other parts of the world, rich in different customs and traditions but were forced to return to traditions that no longer matched their experiences as they settled back home. The same editorial published on October 2, 1946 also states, “Prayer leadership in chapel is changed in spirit. To pray for good grades, victory of our teams, help in our petty college problems does not have the weight and significance of prayers with death in your heart.”³⁹ World War II inescapably changed the composition of the student body in which once accepted traditional provisions of the College

³⁵ Roberts, *A Century of Liberal Education*, 264.

³⁶ Cathy Dunn, “The New Left Out” *Chronicle*, 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Chuck Evert, “On Second Thought” *Chronicle*, 3.

became a cause of discontent.

The Student Council meeting minutes continuously indicated discussion of the social program on campus beginning in December of 1945 as the minutes state, “Vic Thornton read a letter which was received from Monmouth College, and also one received from Muskingum College concerning the introduction of dancing in the college social program. It was decided to give out a questionnaire to the students in Chapel, to get their views on the subject.”⁴⁰ Later, right before the protest on campus in 1946, the Student Council decided to confront the Board of Trustees about the issue. “A report on the questionnaire concerning dancing was given by the chairman. It was decided to take a poll of the new students also. A letter, which is to be given to the trustees concerning the matter, was read.”⁴¹ The creation of the Student Council ultimately led to the student body’s ability to articulate the dissatisfaction with the College’s social program at the end of World War II.

Growing discontent with social programs on campus at North Central College continued to occupy the Student Council’s attention after the failure of the dancing ban protest in 1946. In 1951 the Student Council minutes show, “The planning committee of the conference asked for suggestions of Student Government problems: . . . social program control by students.”⁴² Students had been given the autonomy to enter war, but could not control their own social program at school: this fact was hard to reconcile. Richard Eastman who started at the College in 1946 spoke to student autonomy and the control chapel sought to assert over the student body: “One of the dismal spectacles of the old required chapel was the sight of the proctors going up and down the aisles checking off attendance. You

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Dec. 13, 1945, Student Council Meeting Minutes.

⁴¹ March 14, 1946, Student Council Meeting Minutes.

⁴² Feb. 15, 1951, Student Council Meeting Minutes.

felt that this was more appropriate, perhaps, to a correctional institution. I



Richard Eastman

think that with the increased stress on student rights, student autonomy, that became an unpopular concept, the required chapel.”⁴³ Despite the dim outlook of ever reaching student and administrative contentment, 1957 saw a commitment on behalf of the Board of Trustees to reform the social program at North Central beginning with the lifting of the dancing ban on campus. By 1960, the Accreditation Team that visited campus

witnessed an established social system at North Central that they referred to as an “extensive extra-curricular program.”⁴⁴ Student demands had been satisfied.

After World War II at North Central College: The Chapel Program, 1933-1960

A component essential to the central argument of this discussion centers on the religious trends at North Central in comparison with World War II-inspired social patterns previously described. Research shows that as the social desires of students were met at North Central during the twentieth century, the emphasis placed on religious instruction and worship lessened. In the 1870-71 College Catalog, the rules clearly stated, “All are required to attend prayers daily in the College chapel and public worship on the Sabbath at such churches as they may choose or their parents or guardians may direct.”⁴⁵ And the 1889 College Catalog stated:

The superior Christian influence of this College is well

⁴³ Richard Eastman Oral History, February 18, 1992.

⁴⁴ May 16, 1960, Student Council Meeting Minutes.

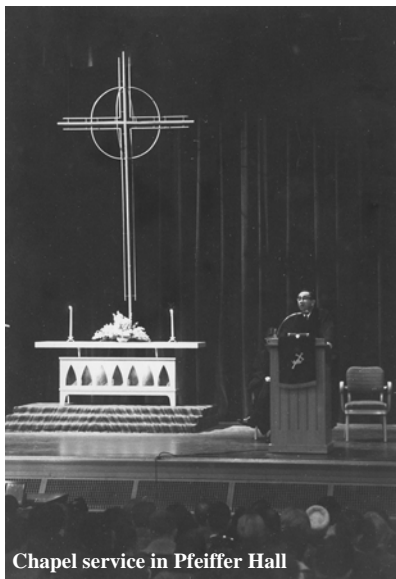
⁴⁵ 1870-71 College Catalog, 15.

known to its patrons, and is attracting general attention. A large number of students are professed Christians. This prevalence of religious principle and practice averts, to a great degree, that rowdyism which is exhibited in many of the educational institutions of the country. Daily prayer-meetings are sustained by the Young Men's Association, and semi-weekly prayer-meetings by the Young Women's Christian Association. All the students are required to attend worship, daily, in the College Chapel, and public worship and Sunday-school on the Sabbath, at such places as they, or their parents, or their guardians may select.⁴⁶

The College saw academics and religion as mutually inclusive at this point.

From the College's standpoint, one could not exist without the other.

Historically, the College wanted to keep all students in a "moral" light: "The



Chapel service in Pfeiffer Hall

Faculty aims to exercise a parental and moral supervision over the conduct and character of the students."⁴⁷ By 1955, however, the Student Council had started to recognize the changing role of religion on campus: "A discussion of religious life on campus followed. A distinction was made between formal expressions of religion and personal religion. Some members of the council felt that there is a division on campus between those who take part

in the religious services and those who do not."⁴⁸ Ironically, this statement was released the same year that the College Chaplaincy began. By 1955, though, there was a definite change in the role of religion at the College.

⁴⁶ 1889 College Catalog, 27.

⁴⁷ 1893-94 College Catalog, 4.

⁴⁸ Oct. 25, 1955, Student Council Meeting Minutes.

The Revered George St. Angelo stated, “Well, we had required Chapel, we called it. And that was in Pfeiffer Hall and that was, I think in those days, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays but it was not just worship. They had lecturers come in and so on and so forth.”⁴⁹ In the 1949-1950 Student Handbook, North Central seems to try to reaffirm the College’s commitment to Christian motives in response to shifting emphasis,

Student pledge to North Central . . . I will not disgrace the college from which I am receiving my education by an act of disloyalty or cowardice. I will fight for its highest ideals . . . I will not feel ashamed in the time of testing to stand unflinchingly true to Jesus Christ and His principles, and in doing so honor my institution . . . Every North Central Student LIVES this pledge.”⁵⁰

Students were to sign at the bottom of the page that stated this commitment in the Student Handbook.

The College Catalogs from 1861 through 1955 demonstrate religious trends and outline chapel provisions. Between 1919 and the end of World War I through 1960, chapel was gradually reduced from daily, to four days a week (reduced in 1933-34), then to three days (reduced in 1937-38), and finally to two days (reduced in 1960-61). Along the way, the number of chapels a student was allowed to miss gradually increased as well: in 1948-49, each student was allowed eight excused absences each semester when previously it was three absences each half-semester for a total of six absences. The rules and regulations of the College became less strict.

Richard Eastman commented in an interview that:

[T]he flood of veterans for one, meant that we had to expand the faculty. We were bringing in teachers who had other [religious] backgrounds. You might say we got more ecumenical or more secular, depends on your point of view. But there were around the 50s, we had a group of

⁴⁹ George St. Angelo Oral History, July 20, 2004.

⁵⁰ 1949-1950 Student Handbook, 4. NCC Publications Collection. North Central College’s *Student Handbooks*, 1950-2004. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

young faculty who really wanted to move the college to more academic directions and less churchy . . . From that time on, the religious character of a faculty candidate was not the most important thing.⁵¹

After social dancing was allowed on campus, chapel became a focal point of discussion. During President Schilling's term as President of North Central College, the Board of Trustees also became less focused on denominational heritage of members. General movements regarding religion and the College's administrative preoccupation with upholding religious values diminished well into the 1950s, but especially after 1946 with the flood of students returning to North Central and with a changed character at the core of the student body.

After World War II at North Central College: The Dancing Ban, 1941-1945

Now that the essentials of North Central's religious history, governmental history and social history have been uncovered in relation to the dancing ban, the crux of the issue, the dancing ban itself, can be examined. From 1861 until 1924, "social dancing" at North Central wasn't explicitly forbidden but was instead forbidden by implication. At this time, social dancing would not have been considered acceptable by any Evangelical institution and, therefore, official legislation barring social dancing was not necessary. Distinctively, the College had been a coed institution since its founding--a policy atypical of American colleges and universities in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet, despite the opportunity for social interactions presented by a coeducational student body, the issue of social dancing remained an unspoken, unchallenged guiding principle well into the twentieth century. The 1862-63 College Catalog addresses social life restrictions whereby the ban on social dancing is implied, but it is clear that the issue was not pressing. "Students are required to refrain entirely from the

⁵¹ Richard Eastman Oral History, January 24, 1992.

use of profane language, from the violation of the Sabbath, from card playing and other games of chance, and in general, to observe all the laws of common social morality.”⁵² Social dancing would have clearly violated “laws of common social morality” according to the Evangelical faith. A student, Robert Ladley, in the May 15, 1946 issue of the *Chronicle*, summarizes the basic Evangelical concern with social dancing:

While dancing may not influence any one of us to go further into sin, under this principle it may be wrong if it should bring anyone into believing that it may be right, and from there continue on a downward path. Sin is a trend, a gradual lessening of resistance to temptation . . . That is the reason why the church fathers have decided that certain practices are evil, or sins.⁵³

The first time that social dancing is expressly stated as a forbidden activity occurs in the 1924-25 College Catalog which reads, “Through long years of experience, North-Western has evolved the following standards of conduct for her students and faculty . . . The choice of wholesome and profitable recreation to the exclusion of objectionable and worthless pleasures, as social dancing, both public and private, excessive automobile, too frequent absences from town, etc.”⁵⁴ Again, social dancing is referred to as a “worthless pleasure,” an evaluative conclusion drawn on the basis of religious assumptions regarding morals and ethical behavior.

From 1924-1933, the dancing ban was noted continuously, yet is only referred to through implication as unwholesome activity from 1934-1937, but returned explicitly under the “Social Life” section in the College Catalogs from 1937-1957.⁵⁵ Consider again the main objection to the introduction of social dancing at North Central as expressed by student

⁵² *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵³ “What is Sin?” *Chronicle*, May 15, 1946, 2. NCC Publications Collection. *Chronicle*, 1873-Present. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

⁵⁴ 1924-25 College Catalog, 23.

⁵⁵ NCC Publications Collection. North Central College’s *College Catalogues*, 1862-Present. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

Marvin Pickering in a letter to the editor printed in the November 19, 1954 issue of the *Chronicle*:

It did not say that smoking, dancing and a 'glass of wine' were sins but that they were standards below the teaching of the Bible and our denomination . . . Altogether, what is wrong with the so called 'ancient Puritanism?' Do we not still have the same God, the same Bible, and the same human life to live? People have always revolted in order to secure their own interests. Must the loyal EUB's leave this college to an affiliated group? If we are so low we cannot pay due respect to the denomination supporting the college, it is self evident that we are trying to take advantage of that denomination.⁵⁶

Reasons for the dancing ban at North Central College were understood as inherently religious, even by students of the time. Social dancing was often viewed as the gateway to sin, as innately immoral. "Another troublesome issue before the faculty was the question of school sociables. In 1876 news of some 'noisy sociables' reached the Board of Trustees, whereupon that body expressed its disapproval of all such gatherings 'where dancing, or loose and un-Christian-like conduct is carried on.' As at Plainfield, all college sociables were required to meet faculty consent and have faculty supervision."⁵⁷ The dancing ban was upheld at North Central College precisely for the religious concerns articulated.

Students increasingly sought social change on campus to allow social dancing as part of a newly refined social program at North Central. In a June 3, 1946 article, the *Chronicle* reads, "Pardon . . . FLASH--just came in! Bishop leaves North Central as dancing lurks around the corner--whoops! . . . Just when all those men are coming back."⁵⁸ Social dancing continuously gained greater attention among the student body until the student body president approached the issue in a report to the Board of Trustees which

⁵⁶ "Letter to the Editor" *Chronicle*, Nov. 19, 1954, 2.

⁵⁷ Roberts, *A Century of Liberal Education*, 76.

⁵⁸ "Class of 1946 Leaves All to Undergraduates" *Chronicle*, June 3, 1946, 1.

stated, “The most common recommendation voiced this year, as in the past years, is for a more extensive social program--one that will include dancing as an integral part of the program . . . a more complete and detailed report prepared by the Student Council will be placed in your hands.”⁵⁹ In response to the student body’s call for change, the Board of Trustees released the following statement:

Be it Resolved: . . . That the matter of the future social program of North Central College, together with the documents above referred to are hereby referred to a Committee of Eleven to be constituted as follows: a. Three members of the Board of Trustees to be appointed by the Board of Trustess [sic] b. Three members of the Faculty to be appointed by the Faculty c. And five representatives of the Student body to be appointed by the Student Council . . . That this Committee is charged with the responsibility of making a study looking toward the formulation of a social program that shall be conducive to the best interest of the Student Body, of North Central College, and its constituency . . . That this Committee shall explore the possibility of meeting the social needs of all the students of the college, within the framework of the present regulations governing the social program,[a phrase which effectively upheld the ban of on-campus social dancing] until such time when such study of the total question shall have been completed and proper action taken.⁶⁰

It should be noted that 1946 marked the merger of the Evangelical Church with the United Brethren Church, which may have caused a reaction within the Trustees that contributed to their persistence to traditional ideals. After the Board of Trustees upheld the dancing ban in 1946, the student body held its largest formal protest against the ban in April 1946 when even the *Chicago Tribune* was called to cover the event. Students danced on the lawn

⁵⁹ “Student Body President Report to the Board of Trustees” April 3, 1946, 3. Community Involvement/Outreach Faculty Collection. North Central College’s Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes, 1872-Present. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

⁶⁰ Board of Trustees Minutes Supplements, April 3, 4, 1946, 6. Community Involvement/Outreach Faculty Collection. North Central College’s Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes, 1872-Present. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

of Old Main to demonstrate their opinions about the lacking social program offered at North Central. The *Chicago Tribune* article reads, “the stately walls of Old Main Hall on the campus of North Central college [sic] at Naperville rocked to the tunes of jitterbug jive yesterday as 400 students sought to break an 85-year-old tradition and establish social dancing at the Evangelical school. Starting at 1p.m., the students left classes and held mass meetings on the lawn in front of Old Main, accompanied by the jive tunes of an instrumental trio to enforce their demand.”⁶¹ North Central administration dismissed the event and thought the demonstration to be lesser than the *Chicago Tribune* established. President Rall wrote in a letter on June 9, 1946, “About the picture of street dance & ‘strike’ at NCC we’ll say reports were grossly exaggerated. Really no strike.”⁶² April 1946 marked the culmination of student protest on the issue of social dancing on campus, but the pressure for social change did not stop until the ban’s removal in 1957.

The desire for social dancing on campus was best articulated by the Student Council in an address to the Board of Trustees recorded in the Student Council meeting minutes of March 18, 1957:

1) We feel that it [social dancing] would be a definite improvement in the social program of the school, providing a means of social mixing which is not otherwise found to a large extent on campus. 2) At present, those who wish to dance are forced to go off campus; we feel that the campus atmosphere would prove a more wholesome setting, with the added advantage from the administrative standpoint of effective control through faculty chaperonage. 3) Actually, there are very few people on the campus who actively oppose the social dance, even students coming from conferences whose attitude toward social dance is extremely negative. 4) We feel that a definite stand on this problem taken by those in

⁶¹ “Student Jive to End College Dancing Ban,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 5, 1946, 1. ProQuest Historical Newspapers Chicago Tribune (1849 - 1986). North Central College, Naperville.

⁶² June 9, 1946. Letter. Rall, E. E. President, c.1840-1973. “Round Robin” Letters. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

authority, would give a much-needed boost to student morale -- nothing can make a student more restless than indecision in the ranks of the leaders.⁶³

Finally, after over a decade of explicit urging and many more years of oblique student desire for the implementation of social dancing on North Central's campus, the Board of Trustees approved a new social program that



no longer banned social dancing on campus. "The program went into operation in the fall of 1957. Because social dancing on campus was an innovation in the history of the college there was some fear that it might tend to overshadow all other

student affairs. The College Activities Board (C.A.B.) was careful to emphasize that dancing was only one phase of the overall plan."⁶⁴ The first College Catalog to include the introduction of social dancing was the 1959-60 Catalog: "the Activities Board, conscious of the many fine cultural and social activities available in the metropolitan Chicago area, sponsors regular trips to musical, theatrical, and sporting events in Chicago. On-campus activities include . . . receptions, teas, roller skating and swimming parties, and dances."⁶⁵ Impromptu dancing was still forbidden--"because there is such a fine line between informal and scheduled dancing, C.A.B. decided that they would still be opposed to impromptu dancing"⁶⁶ --but social dancing became a marketing tool for the College in future College Catalogs. In all, the spark that ignited vocalized student discontent with social

⁶³ March 18, 1957, Student Council Meeting Minutes, 1.

⁶⁴ Roberts, *A Century of Liberal Education*, 265.

⁶⁵ 1959-60 College Catalog, 23.

provisions, World War II, saw a ten-year struggle that eventually ended with student victory; on-campus social dancing at North Central College was integrated into a new social program.

Beyond North Central College, 1945-1960

An exploration of several subcategories has worked to illustrate the underlying support for the major premise of this research. Research firmly establishes that the pre-World War II dancing ban at North Central College and the struggle for its removal directly following the end of the war exemplifies a battle within collegiate culture between traditional religious constraints on student social life and the newly introduced war culture brought with the return to campus of students who had served. At North Central College, World War II proves to have a generally liberal effect on student social life in comparison with its more traditional pre-war form. Support for this assertion saw several detailed subcategories that, together, comprise the argument. Integral subcategories include discussion of: the religious affiliation of North Central College, the composition of the governing body at North Central, the description of the dancing ban at North Central, World War II's impact at North Central in terms of enrollment and student life, social trends at North Central that highlight World War II's exceptional impact on campus, and religious trends at North Central spanning its first century as they map general decline in importance after World War II.

Exploration of the North Central College dancing ban has illuminated deep and embedded ideological shifts in the College's focus during its first century. Research has shown a direct relationship of war with social change on North Central's campus as a small liberal arts college. World War II fostered the reconstruction of student life on campus at North Central. The dancing ban embodied this movement.

⁶⁶ Jan. 13, 1958, Student Council Meeting Minutes.

Was the behavior exhibited on North Central's campus a typical response to World War II and the introduction of war culture to campus? Research suggests that, yes, North Central College's experience was a typical, logical response to World War II and its impact on campus. Although, note, many literature reviews about the effects of World War II on social transformations readily acknowledge, even beg for more research on the issue. The field is not ready to deliver many--some, but not many--blanket generalizations about the impact of war on higher education. The information that has been made available, however, observes several consistencies between North Central College and the "norm." Exploration of these consistencies follow.

There is little to no doubt that the composition of student bodies across America was changing at the close of World War II. The G.I. Bill, as mentioned earlier, was a national political effort to encourage returning veterans to consider higher education, free of cost as repayment for service. The bill sent floods of veterans into colleges and universities across the country. Marcus Stanley wrote, "The midcentury GI Bills were the largest direct scholarship program for higher education in American history."⁶⁷ Naturally, the surge challenged the traditional composition of student bodies as veterans who had not considered higher education realized that the option existed. "[T]he combination of the Korean War and WWII GI bills probably increased total postsecondary attainment among all men born between 1921 and 1933 by about 15 to 20 percent, with smaller effects for surrounding cohorts."⁶⁸ As experienced at North Central, veterans had been exposed to a world much different than those students who had not served: the experience often fostered restlessness with traditional social programs upon a return

⁶⁷ Stanley, Marcus. "College Education and the Midcentury GI Bills." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118 (2003), 671.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

home. Soldiers returned having participated in a war culture starkly different than that of traditional college social culture.

Wars and their effects are a continuing, permanent part of the personal and political landscapes that paradoxically demand incorporation and defy ready integration into an acceptable world view. The warrior's image, his wounds, and the world he comes home to are a story that has been retold in Western culture at least from the time of Homer. The lessons of the *Odyssey* are the same as those of late-twentieth-century social science--wars may end, but they continue to reverberate in the lives of those who fought them and within the soldiers' societies.⁶⁹

Higher education began a long process of change starting with the implementation of the G. I. Bill following World War II: an impact on student social life was inevitable with the shift in student body composition.

It was at this point, the time directly following World War II, that higher education also began to look beyond traditional constraints placed on student life. An argument exists that the 1950s witnessed a recall to religious purposes, a direct juxtaposition to social protests and verbalized dissatisfaction of the late-1940s. North Central College aligns with this argument. The college instituted the chaplaincy position in 1955, appointing the Reverend George St. Angelo as Chaplain, and supported the program with a monetary fund substantially greater than those given to other departments. Richard Eastman speculated:



Well, if I didn't already say so, he [the Rev. George St. Angelo] came as our first chaplain, I think, around 1955. And he felt it was his duty to reclaim this rather secular

⁶⁹ Modell, John and Timothy Haggerty. "The Social Impact of War." *Annual Review of Sociology* 17 (1991): 205.

campus for the church. I remember, one of his early Chapel speeches, he said ‘the church owns this college lock, stock and barrel,’ which sent shivers through a great many of us. We didn’t want to be owned lock, stock and barrel. He did his best, as I said before, in the crisis of 1958 in making chapel universally required as well as the religion courses. He eventually had to back, or recede from that position.⁷⁰

Research suggests that the 1950s were a time of restrained student reaction to traditional social structures. Protests and verbalized dissatisfaction decreased as campuses settled; the disruption World War II posed started to pass. “At that time [1952-55] protest movements were absent from college campuses.”⁷¹ But student dissatisfaction couldn’t be silenced forever. “By the end of the 1950s identity diffusion seemed to exist on college campuses. It was at this time that Erik Erikson’s diagnosis of ‘identity crisis’ among youth (1959) had its greatest persuasiveness.”⁷² Not surprisingly, the dancing ban was lifted in parallel with this identity change.

Changes in Christian conservatism have been analyzed to understand how Evangelism has changed over time. Interestingly, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed Protestant activism as “a reaction to the further disestablishment of so-called traditional Christian values in American society.”⁷³ Roots of a changing Evangelical conduct code arguably existed just before World War II at North Central. A study was conducted on North Central’s campus in 1941 by sociology major and student body president, Gordon Streib. A randomized, controlled experiment showed 60% of students claimed the regulation on social dancing had no effect on their decision to attend North Central and 53% of students who identified

⁷⁰ Richard Eastman Oral History, February 18, 1992.

⁷¹ Hoge, Dean R., et al. “Trends in College Students’ Values Between 1952 and 1979: A Return to the Fifties?” *Sociology of Education* 54 (1981): 263.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Shibley, Mark A. “Contemporary Evangelicals: Born-Again and World Affirming.” *Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science* 558 (1998): 67.

themselves as Evangelicals were interested in introducing social dancing on campus (88% of non-Evangelicals were interested).⁷⁴ The study showed that, even though the student body had not yet reached boiling point on the issue, more than half of the Evangelical student body was ready to dispose of the negativity associated with social dancing--a definite change in religious ontology than expressed in early College Catalogs. World War II and the change in student body contributed to a further decline in Christian conservatism at the college.

Largely, North Central's behavior and reaction to World War II aligned well with available wider research. College campuses were forced to adapt to a shifting student body as less traditional students were introduced to campuses nationwide. The college student "identity" was forced to reform; the composition of the student body was more difficult to define, especially in ways comparable to those printed in early College Catalogs which loudly refer to the Christian nature of North Central students. Although the exact transition in college social life across the nation cannot yet be mapped, trends identify World War II as a liberating force. The North Central experience is indicative of many more universal phenomena such as increased enrollment, social protest during the 1940s, a recall to religious emphasis in the 1950s and a final realization that religion would not regain position as the ultimate authority on campuses during the late-1950s, early-1960s.

The significance of understanding movements on American college campuses and, perhaps, more importantly, understanding the effects of war on college social life rest on the inherent connection to the larger population. Hoge, Luna and Miller highlight the importance of the issue:

Sociologists gain some knowledge of social change in

⁷⁴ Streib, Gordon. Sociology Paper. "A Study of the Attitudes and Behavior of a Representative Group of North Central College Students with Particular Reference to Social Dancing," 1941. North Central College Archives, North Central College, Naperville.

America, since college students are one of the population groups introducing much cultural change. Yankelovich (1974) argues that college students are a kind of forerunner group for innovation, and that the basic pattern of cultural change in America is diffusion from college students to other young people and then to the total population.⁷⁵

Understanding America's young people and the motivations for their behavior can tell historians a lot about the population at large. "What is less readily apparent, perhaps, is how profoundly the war changed America--it's society, its politics, and (as Archibald MacLeish hoped) its image of itself."⁷⁶ Curiosity about the ramifications of war transcends generations yet little conclusive research exists regarding the topic. Too many variables exist to concretely establish overarching generalizations *but* as small, independent research continues to contribute to an understanding of the issue, historians inch closer to understanding the whole picture. An analysis of North Central College's dancing ban might seem interesting but unimportant at surface level. Extensive research, however, establishes a precedent demanding more research similar to that provided within this very analysis.

Research has firmly established that the pre-World War II dancing ban at North Central College and the struggle for its removal directly following the end of the war exemplifies a battle within collegiate culture between traditional religious constraints on student social life and the newly introduced war culture brought with the return to campus of students who served. Wider research confirms that North Central's reaction to World War II is not an isolated experience and has occurred on other college campuses in America ultimately suggesting the potential of war to foster a liberal social shift.

⁷⁵ Hoge, Dean R., et al. "Trends in College Students' Values Between 1952 and 1979: A Return to the Fifties?" 263.

⁷⁶ Erenberg, Lewis and Susan E. Hirsch, eds. *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 314.

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