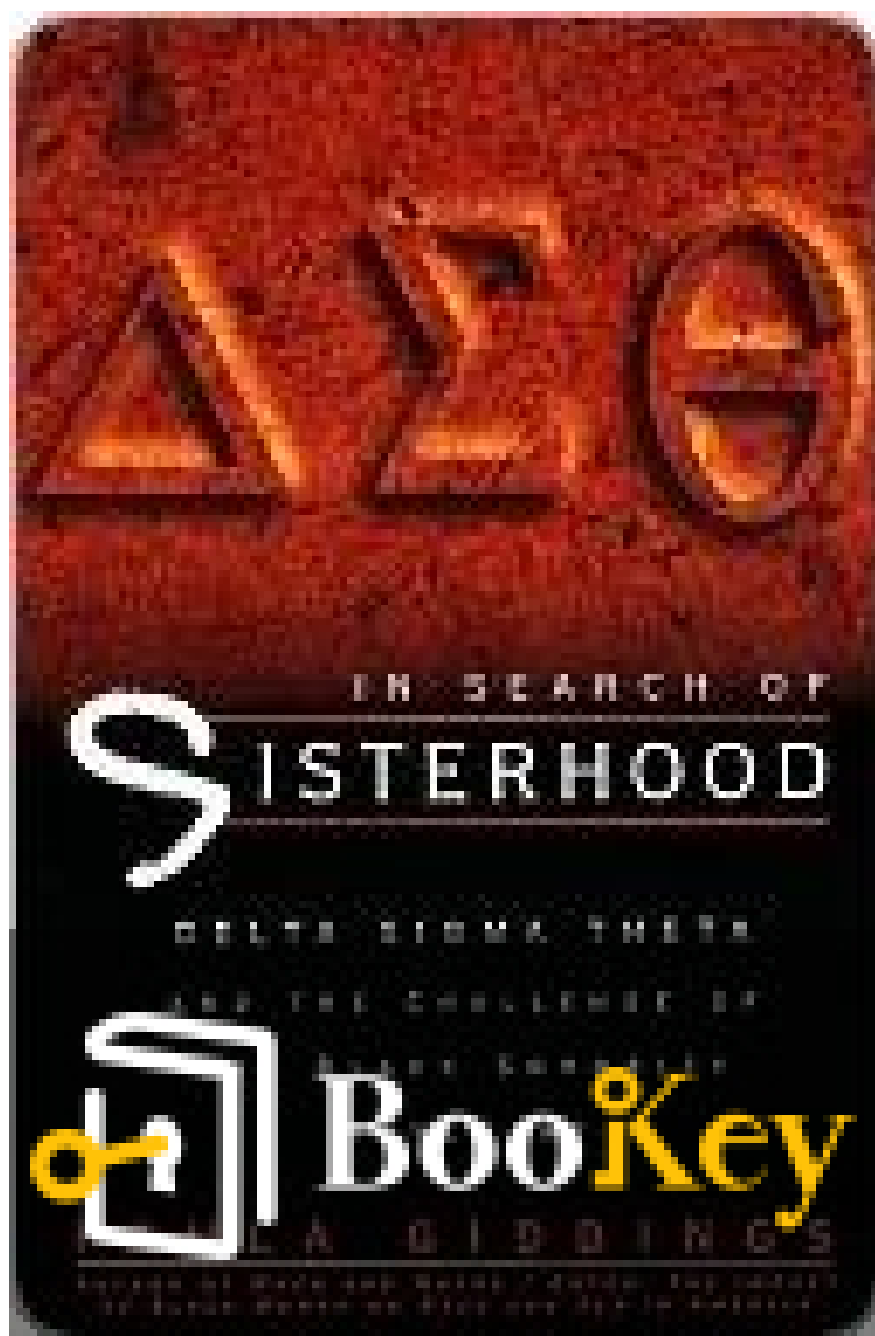


In Search Of Sisterhood PDF (Limited Copy)

Paula J. Giddings



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In Search Of Sisterhood Summary

"Empowering Black Women's Voices Through Delta Sigma Theta."

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About the book

In "In Search Of Sisterhood," Paula J. Giddings delivers a masterful exploration into the deep and storied past of one of America's most influential sororities, the Delta Sigma Theta. Navigating through a tapestry of milestones, challenges, and triumphs that have defined the course of this African American women's organization, Giddings offers readers an evocative insight into the relentless pursuit of equality and justice. The book delves into how Delta Sigma Theta, beyond its sisterhood, has stood as a resilient symbol of empowerment, shaping societal discourse and providing a voice for those often marginalized. With precision and warmth, Giddings invites readers to journey through the past century, unraveling how these visionary women collectively forged paths in the fight for civil rights, intellectual growth, and social change. Engrossing from the outset, "In Search Of Sisterhood" is more than just a historical account; it is a tribute to the unwavering spirit and enduring legacy of women who dared to dream, lead, and transform societies. Now a staple read for understanding the intertwining nature of race, gender, and socio-political movements, Giddings' work beckons readers to discover the indomitable spirit that continues to capture hearts and spark change.

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About the author

Paula J. Giddings is a distinguished historian, scholar, and author renowned for her profound contributions to the understanding of African American women's history and activism. Born on November 16, 1947, in Yonkers, New York, Giddings has carved a niche in the literary and academic world with her incisive analysis and dedication to unveiling the multilayered narratives of black women. She holds degrees from Howard University and received honorary degrees recognizing her scholarly achievements. Giddings has garnered attention and respect for her ability to intertwine rigorous research with compelling narratives, evidenced in her notable works, "When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America" and "Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching." A seasoned academic, Paula J. Giddings has held significant positions at various prestigious institutions like Smith College and Rutgers University, where she has continued to inspire countless students and researchers with her dedication to amplifying the voices of historically marginalized communities.

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Chapter 1 Summary:

Chapter 1: World of the Founders

On August 2, 1981, in the blistering summer heat, ten thousand members of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority gathered in Washington, D.C., to commemorate their involvement in the 1913 woman suffrage parade. The commemoration march was notable for the presence of Sadie T. M. Alexander and Bertha Pitts Campbell, two pioneering members who had joined the suffrage parade decades earlier. Campbell insisted on walking the parade rather than accepting a ride, highlighting her enduring spirit and commitment.

Bertha Campbell's journey began in Winfield, Kansas, but her family moved to the mining town of Montrose, Colorado, due to financial struggles. Here, her grandmother, Eliza Butler—a former slave who valued education as a path to freedom and prosperity—inspired Campbell. This conviction led Campbell, the only Black student, to graduate as valedictorian of her high school class in 1908. She received a scholarship to attend Howard University in Washington, D.C., a historically Black institution renowned for its progressive and liberating educational philosophy.

Howard University offered a profound and vibrant environment, fostering

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academic and personal growth. Campbell, along with her roommate Winona Lucile Cargile, became part of a pioneering group that included influential students like Zephyr Carter, Naomi Richardson, and others who would become the founding members of Delta Sigma Theta. This sorority symbolized a movement beyond academia, aiming to imbue Black women with leadership roles and empower them to fight social inequalities.

The women shared valuable experiences, participating in various extracurricular activities such as drama, music, and literary clubs, all while navigating the strict social codes of Miner Hall, where female students resided. The restrictive environment imposed by Howard was juxtaposed against the burgeoning voices for women's rights and racial equality, shaping the young women's understanding of their place in a changing world.

Howard was a hub of influential intellectuals, including Alain Locke, a philosopher and literary figure of the Harlem Renaissance; Ernest Just, a pioneering biologist; and Kelly Miller, an advocate for racial uplift through education. These mentors imbued students with the belief that educated Black individuals had not just the right but the responsibility to lead and serve their communities.

The founders of what would become Delta Sigma Theta were driven not only by academic ambitions but also by the urgent need to establish a

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supportive network amidst racial and gender-based challenges. Influenced by social movements and civil rights activism, these women were motivated to extend beyond personal advancement to broader societal contributions. Organizations like the NAACP and influential figures like W.E.B. Du Bois served as guiding lights, pushing them towards civic engagement and activism, particularly in the suffrage movement that argued for women's enfranchisement as a path to greater justice and equality.

The young women at Howard faced the dynamic confluence of racial, gender, and intellectual awakenings. Socially secluded yet politically charged, this environment was pivotal in stirring the ambition and activism that would characterize Delta Sigma Theta, setting the foundation for their future contributions to the African American community and the broader societal landscape.

In conclusion, the chapter paints a vivid picture of how the convergence of education, activism, and shared experiences at Howard University shaped a pioneering group of Black women. These women, motivated by the challenges and opportunities of their time, formed Delta Sigma Theta to advocate for education, social reform, and the empowerment of women, making strides towards racial and gender equality that still resonate today.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: Education as Empowerment

Critical Interpretation: In Chapter 1, you are introduced to the profound impact education has on one's life and the broader community. Bertha Pitts Campbell's story, inspired by her grandmother's emphasis on education as a path to freedom and empowerment, is a powerful testament to this key point. Picture yourself in a world where learning isn't merely about personal advancement. Instead, it's a transformative tool—capable of uplifting both individuals and the community. Education becomes a pivotal resource for breaking down barriers of inequality and for fostering leadership that can challenge social injustices. As you navigate your journey, let Campbell's experience inspire you to view education not just as an academic pursuit but as a means to empower yourself and effect meaningful change, emboldening others along the way. This pursuit of knowledge can illuminate pathways, bring about significant personal growth, and inspire collective action towards a more equitable society.

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Chapter 2 Summary:

Chapter 2 dives deep into the transformational period of 1912 at Howard University, exploring the simultaneous shifts in administration and the rise of the women's suffrage movement, contextualizing the foundation of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority by a group of 22 young women.

In 1912, an air of change swept through Howard University. After Wilbur P. Thirkield, president since 1906, resigned to become a Methodist bishop, a shift in university leadership was signaled. Stephen M. Newman, a White Congregationalist minister, took over, implementing changes that granted autonomy to deans Kelly Miller, Lewis B. Moore, and George W. Cook, known collectively as the Triumvirate. As a result, Black consciousness at Howard began to rise, fueled by Alain Locke's proposed interracial history course and Carter G. Woodson's plans to explore Black issues academically.

Amidst Howard's transformation, the national suffrage movement was gaining momentum, and Washington, D.C., became a hub for Black intellectual and feminist activity. This energy influenced the 22 young women at Howard, who were deeply involved in academic and extracurricular life. Many held leadership positions within the Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority, but by 1912, dissatisfaction arose due to generational and educational divides between undergraduates and alumni, who had moved on to their careers or family lives.



This restlessness was driven by the desire to link with nationwide movements and establish a more politically oriented, service-focused organization. Influences came from their interactions with members of the recently founded Omega Psi Phi fraternity, whose emphasis on becoming a national fraternity inspired the women. The younger women sought to change the sorority's name, colors, and symbols, leading to a reorganization that resulted in the formation of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

This new sorority aimed to expand beyond social activities, focusing on service and engaging with societal issues. The initial proposal for this reorganization was met with resistance from the AKA graduates, notably Nellie Quander, characterized by her firm and dynamic nature. A struggle ensued as both groups rushed to establish themselves legally; however, by early 1913, Delta Sigma Theta was officially founded, with the aim of establishing a national presence and fostering scholarship and community service.

Apart from their internal organizational development, these young women took a stand in broader social movements. They participated in the historic Women's Suffrage March in Washington, D.C., on March 3, 1913, marking their first public act as Delta Sigma Theta members. Despite facing racial tensions and potential violence, these women courageously joined the march, reflecting the broader context of Black women's fight for



enfranchisement. Prominent suffragists like Mary Church Terrell encouraged their participation, bolstering their resolve.

The chapter concludes with reflections on the rivalry between AKA and Delta Sigma Theta, highlighting how these dynamics fostered higher academic achievements among their members. Despite facing significant challenges, the formation of Delta Sigma Theta marked a significant step forward in aligning a sorority with both cultural pride and social change, embodying a commitment to service, scholarship, and the empowerment of Black women at Howard University and beyond.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Empowerment through collective action and societal change

Critical Interpretation: Imagine standing shoulder to shoulder with like-minded individuals, poised at the forefront of a movement that echoes the transformative efforts of the women who founded Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. The key point from this chapter that can inspire your life is the realization of empowerment through collective action. This sorority's foundation was not just about creating a new organization but about embodying a commitment to service, scholarship, and societal change for the empowerment of Black women. Organizing against a backdrop of racial tensions and societal challenges, these women dared to stake their claim in the public sphere, marching for suffrage and advocating for voices unheard. This courageous stand reminds you that harmonious collaboration and a shared vision can ignite change, no matter the adversity. You can draw from their legacy, daring to engage with pressing societal issues and empowering others through community, empathy, and resolute action.



Chapter 3 Summary:

Chapter 3 of the narrative, "Extending the Vision: Nationalizing an Idea," delves into the early growth and development of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, a pivotal African American women's organization originating from Howard University. This chapter focuses on how the sorority expanded its reach beyond its birthplace.

In 1912, Eliza Shippen graduated from Howard University, marking another step in the journey that had begun with the sorority's original twenty-two founders. By the spring of 1913, Myra Hemmings, who served as president for both Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) and Delta Sigma Theta, stepped down, and Madree White was elected as her successor. Under White's leadership, the sorority held its first initiation ceremony, inducting fifteen new members into Delta Sigma Theta. These new members included notable figures like Grace Coleman—sister to Omega founder Frank Coleman—and Eva B. Dykes, recognized for her academic brilliance and musical talent.

Social life at Howard was vibrant for the Deltas, documented by their participation in various events, such as the reception by the Omega Psi Phi fraternity and their own annual banquet, fostering a spirit of camaraderie and academic diligence amongst the members. Moreover, they participated in important political events like the suffrage parade, showcasing the sorority's commitment to societal issues.



The Deltas extended their engagement to more pressing political discourses when they sent a delegate, M. Frances Gunner, to the Intercollegiate Socialist Society conference in New York City in December 1913. Gunner, who was active in several student associations and organizations, represented the only Black student at the conference. She witnessed inspiring discussions on racial and economic issues led by luminaries such as W.E.B. Du Bois. Through these initiatives, they demonstrated an interest in the broader social issues impacting African Americans.

Honorary membership was another means through which Delta Sigma Theta broadened its impact. The organization invited accomplished women such as Mary Terrell and Coralie F. Cook, both significant figures in early African American women's organizing and suffrage movements, to join as honorary members. This brought esteemed women into their fold and allowed Deltas to gain valuable insights and further solidify their influence.

As the founders began to graduate in 1914, they embarked on diverse life paths, yet many continued to pursue higher education and careers in education and the arts. Osceola Adams, for instance, embraced a challenging yet successful career on the stage under her stage name Osceola Archer, while others like Madree White pursued journalism.

The quest to grow Delta Sigma Theta saw its expansion beyond Howard

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University. By 1914, a Beta Chapter was established at Wilberforce University in Ohio, driven by the eagerness of Wilberforce students like Ruby Martin. The setup of this chapter underscored the sorority's inclusive and decentralized approach; Alpha Chapter at Howard ceded some of its powers to allow autonomy within its entities.

World War I momentarily slowed the sorority's expansion, but in 1918, the Gamma Chapter was founded at the University of Pennsylvania. This establishment involved the participation of noteworthy students like Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander and others who were committed to academic excellence and fostering the sorority's mission amidst the challenging racial climate of the time.

The narrative closes with a critical milestone for the sorority. By 1919, Delta Sigma Theta convened its first national convention at Howard University, establishing a Grand Chapter to govern its national outreach. This marked a significant step in transforming Delta Sigma Theta from a local collegiate organization to a national sisterhood, anchoring its legacy and fortifying its ideals of sisterly love, academic excellence, and public service.

Overall, this chapter documents a pivotal moment in the sorority's history, characterized by growth, social engagement, and a commitment to larger societal causes, reflecting the dynamic environment of the early 20th-century African American collegiate landscape.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: Integration of Social Advocacy and Education

Critical Interpretation: By participating in events like the women's suffrage parade and sending a delegate to significant social conferences, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority illustrates the powerful impact of integrating social advocacy with academic excellence. You can be inspired to mirror this dual commitment in your own life. Engaging in active community service or social movements while pursuing personal or academic goals can offer profound fulfillment and inspire others. This integration amplifies your ability to effect change, demonstrating that education is not just a personal milestone, but a tool for collective empowerment.

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Chapter 4:

Chapter 4: Grounds for a Movement

In the wake of World War I, the 1920s unfolded as a transformative period for Delta Sigma Theta, a historically Black sorority. This era was marked by significant social changes and challenges within the African American community. The Great Migration saw Blacks moving in large numbers from the South to northern cities, seeking industrial jobs and escaping racial violence. This shift intensified racial tensions as the Black population grew in the North, leading to increased discrimination and the revival of racist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. Dubbed the "red summer" of 1919, racial riots erupted in more than twenty cities, exacerbating the racial divide. However, this tumultuous backdrop catalyzed a new era of Black defiance and pride, embodied by movements like the Harlem Renaissance and the notion of the "New Negro."

These societal shifts had profound implications for Black college students and sororities like Delta Sigma Theta. As industrialization and urbanization promoted higher education, the number of Black college students surged. From 1917 to 1927, Black students in northern and Black colleges grew significantly. Black women, comprising 20% of all graduates from Black colleges in the 1920s, began institutionalizing educational advocacy, with



figures like Lucy Slowe, who became the first dean of women at Howard University and president of the National Association of College Women.

However, White backlash to these advancements was pronounced, particularly in northern universities, where Black students faced systemic racism and isolation. Black students were segregated in cafeterias, barred from dorms, and banned from extracurricular activities. These discriminatory practices underscored the necessity for protective and supportive spaces, prompting the growth of Black Greek-letter organizations like Delta Sigma Theta on predominantly White campuses.

The rapid expansion of Delta Sigma Theta during the early 1920s demonstrated the pressing need for such organizations. They offered refuge and camaraderie amidst the hostility of predominantly White institutions. Between 1919 and 1929, Delta Sigma Theta established 45 new chapters across different regions, including Ivy League schools and large state universities.

This growth was mirrored by internal advancements within the sorority, including forming graduate chapters and creating new membership categories for community-influential older women. The sorority maintained its commitment to student-focused initiatives, such as scholarship funds, educational workshops like May Week, and organizing cultural and fundraising events like the Jabberwock.



The pressures and competition among Greek-letter organizations necessitated administrative maturation and interfraternal cooperation, leading to initiatives like the National Interfraternal Council. Under the leadership of Sadie Alexander, who emphasized high educational standards,

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Chapter 5 Summary:

Chapter 5: New Era, New Challenge

During a pivotal five-year period, the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority found itself at a critical juncture as it navigated through internal and external challenges. With increasing recognition and status, the organization faced internal disorganization and dissension, which had to be addressed to maintain its vitality. Outwardly, the sorority had to confront ongoing discrimination and align with the growing Black student movement. The two national presidents during this time, G. Dorothy (Pelham) Beckley and Ethel (LaMay) Calimese, faced substantial responsibilities as they guided the sorority through these trials.

Dorothy Beckley, known for her charisma and administrative skills, led an administration that saw pivotal changes. Among her team were prominent figures like the first vice-president Vivian Marsh, second vice-president Martha Hall, and treasurer Osceola Adams. Delta's national convention in New York City in 1924 marked a milestone, drawing the largest assembly of Black college women to date. Key events reflected Delta's growth and impact, such as the awarding of the first foreign scholarship to Gwendolyn Bennett, a notable poet and educator, by esteemed novelist Dorothy Canfield Fisher.



During the convention, the official Delta Hymn was chosen, a product of contributions by Beta Chapter and the collaboration of honorary sorors Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Florence Cole Talbert, whose composition was ultimately adopted as the official hymn. The convention was set against the backdrop of the Harlem Renaissance, with festivities underscoring Delta's cultural engagement and social prominence.

Organizational challenges included authorizing new chapters and improving internal efficiency. Regional divisions were proposed by Alice Dunbar-Nelson to facilitate local engagement and address inactivity plaguing the sorority. These regional conferences aimed to invigorate fellowship and facilitate initiatives like “study-help” clubs for students.

The establishment of regional entities and corresponding members allowed for greater participation by members who were not near active chapters, countering inactivity. The introduction of systematic administrative practices by Beckley improved operational efficiency, laying a stronger foundation for Delta's programs and regional expansion.

Throughout these developments, racial concerns remained central to Delta's focus. Initiatives to counter racial discrimination emerged, such as resolutions condemning civil service segregation and housing discrimination. Despite a lack of public stance on Black campus student



movements, Delta prioritized broader racial equality issues, drawing on insights from mentors like Mary Church Terrell.

Beckley's presidency ended on a high note, but the subsequent administration under Ethel Calimese faced internal strife, procedural miscommunications, and financial mismanagement. A contentious 1929 convention highlighted these issues, leading to decisive organizational restructuring. Despite the challenges under Calimese's leadership, the sorority's resilience and commitment to racial justice, scholarship, and sisterhood were reaffirmed, setting the stage for its future endeavors.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Resilience in the Face of Internal and External Challenges

Critical Interpretation: While reading this chapter, imagine yourself leading through turbulent times, just as Dorothy Beckley did with the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Her leadership embodies resilience, an invaluable trait you can cultivate to navigate life's complexities.

Amidst internal disorganization, Beckley demonstrated administrative prowess and charisma, addressing challenges head-on and helping the sorority emerge stronger. This journey teaches us that even when facing numerous obstacles, perseverance and a structured approach can turn chaos into order. By fostering resilience, you can learn to adapt and thrive, growing from each challenge while strengthening the essence of your pursuits, much like the sorority redefined its identity during a critical period. Embrace resilience, and you will find that no challenge is too great, as every hurdle presents a chance for growth and empowerment.



Chapter 6 Summary:

Chapter 6: Strengthening Within—Looking Without

In the aftermath of the 1929 convention, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. faced a dire financial crisis while poised for significant transformation under President-elect Anna Julian. With the stock market crash heightening financial instability, Julian discovered that the sorority was financially broke and might need to take legal actions against the national treasurer at the time, Annie Dingle, a realtor affected by the economic downturn. Julian, a highly educated woman from Baltimore and the first Black woman to receive a Phi Beta Kappa key from the University of Pennsylvania, also was no stranger to leadership roles within the sorority. Her experience and academic achievements placed her in an ideal position to steer Delta Sigma Theta through this challenging period.

Julian's presidency focused on restructuring and strengthening the sorority's administrative and financial frameworks. Key actions included bonding the offices of grand secretary and grand treasurer to prevent financial mismanagement. Importantly, she initiated the incorporation of the national entity of Delta Sigma Theta in Washington, D.C., a move that legally empowered the organization to operate across the United States and beyond, ensuring no other group could exploit the sorority's name.

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This period also marked Delta Sigma Theta's "Jubilee Year," a time for internal reflection and reassessment. Under Julian's guidance, the sorority revitalized its mission and values, focusing on cultural, educational, and moral standards. These revised objectives aimed at fostering intellectual growth and offering scholarships to deserving individuals, reflecting the sorority's commitment to societal betterment.

The establishment of new organizational structures, such as the reformation of the Advisory Committee into an Executive Committee and later an Executive Board, was pivotal. These bodies were designed to efficiently manage the sorority's expanding activities, addressing the need for decision-making between the biennial conventions. New committees were created to handle constitutional matters, legal disputes, and budgetary concerns, underscoring a systematic approach to governance.

Externally, Delta Sigma Theta wielded its influence to tackle societal injustices. Its Vigilance Committee sent out nationwide surveys within the sorority, seeking members' opinions on crucial issues such as lynching, court reorganization, and unemployment insurance. This data helped shape Delta's advocacy efforts. Under President Herbert Hoover's administration, Delta was vocal against racial injustices like lynching and discriminatory government actions. Their protests against John J. Parker's Supreme Court nomination and the segregation of Black mothers visiting their sons' graves



in France reflected the sorority's demand for equality and civil rights.

The chapter delves into Delta's dedication to fighting racial discrimination in education. They worked to influence the policies of various universities, facing challenges from administrators who were hesitant about Black student organizations. Notably, the effort to establish a Delta Sigma Theta chapter at the University of Illinois exemplified the perseverance required to overcome prejudice.

Globally, Delta advocated for responsible international engagement, opposing the Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act and supporting disarmament at the London Naval Conference. They also contested the United States' prolonged intervention in Haiti, pushing for Haitian independence.

By the end of Anna Julian's tenure, the sorority was stronger, with expanded chapters and improved financial management. Her leadership had not only stabilized Delta Sigma Theta internally but also amplified its role as a formidable voice for Black women's empowerment and social justice. Elected in 1931, her successor, Gladys Shepperd, continued to build on these foundations, further expanding the sorority's regional influence and reinforcing its commitment to scholarship and cultural achievement.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Incorporation of Delta Sigma Theta in D.C.

Critical Interpretation: Through the strategic incorporation of Delta Sigma Theta into Washington, D.C., under Anna Julian's leadership, you are reminded of the power of laying a strong legal foundation. This essential move fortified the sorority's structural integrity, granting it a commanding influence across state lines and safeguarding its identity. You're inspired to consider how legal empowerment and strategic positioning can protect your initiatives from external exploitation or manipulation. Whether it's starting a new venture or securing the legacy of an existing one, structuring your ambitions with foresight and legal backing can multiply their impact and ensure they stand resilient against challenges.

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Chapter 7 Summary:

Chapter 7: "One Blood, One Tradition"

By 1933, the United States faced the full brunt of the Great Depression, deeply affecting both Whites and Blacks. Franklin D. Roosevelt had become President, and his New Deal policies were intended to rescue the crumbling economy. Blacks, however, suffered disproportionately, with unemployment rates astonishingly high compared to Whites, indicating glaring inequity.

The Depression not only affected economic conditions but also influenced social and political landscapes. Black professionals, many facing unemployment, sought help desperately, exemplified by a Delta member's plea for job opportunities. Even those employed faced uncertainty as salaries remained unpaid. The debacle shook Black organizations like the NAACP, which had to form new coalitions and re-evaluate assumptions.

Racial tensions deepened with cases like the infamous Scottsboro trial of nine Black youths in Alabama, which highlighted racial injustices and tested loyalties between organizations like the NAACP and the Communist Party. Unjust disparities were rampant in relief allocations, accentuating the threat of starvation to Blacks. Amidst this, some progressive Whites recognized that racial inequality was hindering economic recovery, prompting initiatives



to address educational and civil rights disparities.

Within the NAACP, philosophical rifts surfaced. W.E.B. Du Bois resigned over disagreements with Walter White, advocating self-sufficiency of Black institutions over integration efforts which White pursued. Meanwhile, Mary McLeod Bethune founded the National Council of Negro Women to unite Black women's groups toward common goals, highlighting the inadequacy of older organizations to respond to evolving roles of Black women beyond traditional scopes.

Greek-letter organizations like Delta Sigma Theta faced criticism for perceived elitism and frivolity. Critics within and outside lamented their lack of democratization and alleged detachment from broader social issues. Nonetheless, these organizations contributed to civil rights causes. Local chapters redirected funds from extravagant events to scholarships and community aid. Yet, the clout of these groups was often misjudged by their highly publicized social events rather than their substantial contributions to community needs.

The Depression exposed both strengths and limitations of Black fraternal organizations. While historical associations often did not compete with predominantly White institutions, they were recognized for their scholarly and political roles. As Black institutions gained credibility, debates ensued within the sorority over expanding chapter criteria to include historically

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Black colleges (HBCUs) rated lower academically. Ultimately, Delta Sigma Theta elected to include "B" rated schools, aligning with the broader effort to enable inclusion and champion racial justice.

The chapter outlines the balance Deltas sought between legacy social functions and impactful activism. Achievements such as advocacy for educational equity, labor rights, and legislative reforms exemplified their evolving identity. Participation in the National Pan-Hellenic Council and the Joint Committee affirmed Delta's commitment to collective racial uplift efforts. Despite financial constraints, these coalitions engaged in serious political activism to counter systemic injustices.

The narrative encapsulates Delta Sigma Theta's cultural and political stature during a crucial era. The organization's heightened participation in civil rights, creation of scholarship funds, and adaptation to changing demographics fostered a tradition of service. Notably, while adapting to the evolving socio-political climate, the sorority maintained its core spirit of sisterhood, aiming to uplift and empower the Black community during challenging times.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Sisterhood and Solidarity

Critical Interpretation: When you embrace the notion of "one blood, one tradition," the true essence of sisterhood and solidarity emerges. This chapter sheds light on the profound impact of unity among women in trying times. Just like Delta Sigma Theta adapted its initiatives to match the socio-economic challenges faced by the Black community during the Great Depression, you too can harness the strength in unity to navigate adversity. By fostering a collective spirit, you can empower each other, galvanize change, and leave a lasting legacy in your community. Recognize that progress is often born from the shared burdens and triumphs experienced within a community dedicated to mutual upliftment and justice.

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Chapter 8: Photographic Insert

This collection of photographs and descriptions offers a vivid glimpse into the rich history and influential legacy of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, a historically African American sorority founded in 1913 at Howard University. The images and captions highlight key figures and moments in the organization's development, showcasing its commitment to education, social justice, and fostering leadership among its members.

The founding members of Delta Sigma Theta, such as Winona Cargile Alexander, Madree Penn White, and Wertie Blackwell Weaver, among others, were pioneering women who contributed significantly to the organization's mission and vision. Their efforts laid the foundation for a sorority that would become a beacon of empowerment and advocacy.

Photographs of major events, like the 1924 national convention in New York City, illustrate the early and ongoing engagements of Delta Sigma Theta with style and activism. Founder Florence Letcher Toms is depicted at the height of fashion, demonstrating the organization's respect for cultural heritage and personal expression.

Prominent members such as Mary Church Terrell, a notable activist for civil rights and suffrage, and Barbara Jordan, a groundbreaking politician, are honored for their contributions to society and the sorority. The involvement



of iconic individuals like actress Bette Davis, who supported the casting of Blacks in non-stereotypical roles, highlights the sorority's influence beyond its immediate community.

Delta Sigma Theta's interaction with national leaders, including President Lyndon B. Johnson and former presidents Gerald Ford and John F. Kennedy, underscores its political engagement and role in legislative advocacy. The sorority's leaders, such as past national presidents Geraldine P. Woods, Frankie M. Freeman, and Thelma T. Daley, have been instrumental in navigating these impactful collaborations.

Musical contributions, such as the Delta Hymn composed by Florence Cole Talbert with lyrics by Alice Dunbar-Nelson, reflect the organization's integration of art and culture into its identity. The sorority's commitment to education and literature is further exemplified by initiatives like the Bookmobile in Carrollton, Georgia.

The legacy of Delta Sigma Theta continues through the participation of its members in various roles and capacities, with figures like Vashti Turley Murphy, “Miss Vash,” and founder Bertha Pitts Campbell, who remained active and spirited into her nineties. Their enduring commitments are testaments to the sorority's impact over the decades.

Overall, these images not only chronicle the historic achievements of Delta

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Sigma Theta Sorority but also celebrate the vibrant contributions of its members to society, making it an enduring force for positive change.

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Chapter 9 Summary:

Chapter 8 Summary: From Coalition to Autonomy

Chapter 8 of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority history reflects a pivotal period from 1935 to 1947, characterized by growth, external partnerships, and the gradual transition towards organizational autonomy. Under the leadership of three successive presidents—Vivian Marsh (1935–1939), Elsie Austin (1939–1944), and Mae (Wright) Downs (1944–1947)—the sorority expanded its influence and took on various roles within the national dialogue on civil rights and education.

Changing Leadership and Expanding Influence

After Jeannette Jones declined a second presidential nomination due to illness, Vivian Marsh rose to prominence, bringing unparalleled experience in chapter establishment and national program development. The Delta organization saw an exponential growth in membership, reaching over two thousand by 1939, and developed a reputation for its commitment to public affairs and civil rights initiatives alongside organizations like the NAACP and the National Urban League.

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Marsh notably represented Delta in lobbying for the Costigan-Wagner federal anti-lynching bill in 1938, a symbol of Delta's earnest engagement in critical civil rights issues despite the bill's ultimate failure. This advocacy effort highlighted the sorority's emerging autonomy and influence within the Black struggle for justice, reflecting a broader professionalization of the civil rights movement.

Educational Initiatives and the National Library Project

Vivian Marsh's administration initiated a shift toward independent projects, most notably the National Library Project announced at the 1937 convention in Cleveland. This initiative aimed to provide traveling library services to Black communities in the South, addressing the severe lack of educational resources caused by systemic segregation. Despite numerous challenges delaying its launch until 1945, the project underscored Delta's dedication to educational equity and empowered chapters to actively support local initiatives.

The NYA, under the stewardship of Mary McLeod Bethune, granted momentum to such endeavors by increasing federal support for Black educational institutions, inspiring Delta's focus on contributing to this national effort. The sorority's first project established library services in rural areas, mirroring the priorities of other advocacy groups working to



break down barriers blocking educational access for Black children.

Internal Challenges and Organizational Development

The rapid expansion and increasing complexity of Delta's operations brought significant administrative challenges, creating tensions within its leadership. As the membership grew, issues such as failure to execute national directives and administrative inefficiencies became apparent, as noted by Grand Secretary Edna Kinchion. The lack of an appointed executive secretary and a unified national headquarters exacerbated these challenges, leading to frustration and discontent, as expressed by notable members like Osceola Adams.

Yet, the sorority continued to press forward, adopting resolutions at the 1939 New York City convention aimed at improving administrative capacity and funding for scholarship programs. This pivotal convention, coinciding with the New York World's Fair, fostered unity and a sense of legacy with the attendance of founding members and accomplished alumni.

Strategic Initiatives and the Path Forward

Under President Elsie Austin, a groundbreaking Black female law graduate,

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the sorority prioritized reorganization to enhance administrative effectiveness. Additionally, Dorothy I. Height, a prominent YWCA executive, proposed a trailblazing national job analysis project as a response to the systemic barriers Black women faced in finding employment. This initiative sought to expand occupational opportunities and representation for Black women, setting in motion a progressive agenda that aligned with the pressing demands of the era, especially as World War II loomed on the horizon.

The chapter concludes with the recognition of Delta Sigma Theta's resilience and foresightedness in navigating organizational challenges while contributing substantially to education and civil rights. This period laid the groundwork for subsequent decades of impactful advocacy and community service, embodying the sorority's enduring commitment to uplifting Black communities and advancing social justice.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Empowering Education through Independent Initiatives

Critical Interpretation: You're reminded of the profound impact one can make by adopting independent initiatives aimed at education and equality. The sorority's National Library Project, despite initial delays and logistical hurdles, symbolizes the relentless pursuit of meaningful change. It serves as a testament to overcoming systemic barriers through dedication, laying out a blueprint for you to take initiative and actively address disparities in your community. This empowers you to champion education as the cornerstone of thriving, equitable societies, reaffirming that even difficult journeys can culminate in transformative outcomes.

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Chapter 10 Summary:

Chapter 9, "Coming of Age," delves into a transformative period for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority amid global and national upheaval during World War II and the postwar era. The chapter begins with the unexpected passing of Grand Secretary Edna Kinchion, which, alongside America's entry into the war, posed significant challenges to the sorority's plans and prompted discussions around pressing socio-economic issues.

The sorority introduced the National Jobs Project against the backdrop of the war, which had started in Europe in 1939 but soon involved the United States. As the U.S. geared up for war, significant opportunities arose for both Black and White workers due to increased demand for manufacturing. Nevertheless, discrimination persisted, with Blacks frequently sidelined by employers citing a lack of skills. Responding to mounting pressure from Black leaders like A. Philip Randolph, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 in 1941, which prohibited racial discrimination in defense industries, establishing the Federal Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to oversee its enforcement.

Coinciding with these developments, the sorority's Detroit convention in 1941 became the setting for introducing the Jobs Analysis and Opportunities Project. Led by Elsie Austin, the initiative aimed to improve access to job opportunities for Black women, emphasizing leadership within the sorority

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to address economic issues. The project encouraged local chapters to drive change within their communities, reporting tangible results.

A notable experimental model was implemented in Baltimore, where efforts included analyzing job opportunities and working conditions for Black women, often revealing significant disparities in wages and benefits. The initiative also highlighted the need for unionization and proper training programs.

During wartime, the sorority embraced a slogan, "Delta Dynamic for Defense," pledging support for the government and President, and investing in Defense Bonds. They also launched initiatives like the Victory Book Drive for servicemen and contributed to supporting military facilities that served Black servicemen. Despite facing barriers, such as segregated opportunities for Black women in the armed forces, the sorority persisted in advocating for integration and equal opportunities.

Postwar, the sorority confronted new challenges as the nation transitioned to peace. The Jobs Project's focus shifted from analyzing discrimination to personal development. The economic landscape evolved, with more Black women entering professional fields, though many remained economically vulnerable. At the sorority's 19th national convention in 1947, the focus of their national project expanded to a broader minority group representation, signaling a move towards more universal civil rights goals.

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The chapter also highlights the sorority's growing engagement in international affairs, notably through communications with delegates at the United Nations conference as part of their Public Affairs Committee efforts. They sought to ensure that international charters included provisions for minority protections.

Simultaneously, the sorority launched a Five-Point Program addressing education, employment, housing, and race and intercultural relations, urging chapters to promote these areas. Notable projects included advocating against discriminatory practices in various industries and supporting community initiatives like child-care centers and educational facilities.

Concluding the chapter, there is praise for the leadership of Mae Downs, who, despite her effective presidency, opted not to serve another term due to the demands of the role. Her successor, Dorothy Height, was poised to continue advancing the sorority's objectives. With these initiatives, Delta Sigma Theta demonstrated a commitment to addressing pressing socio-economic issues, advocating for racial equality, and fostering educational and professional growth for Black women in an evolving America.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Introducing the National Jobs Project

Critical Interpretation: By spearheading the National Jobs Project, you can derive inspiration from how Delta Sigma Theta Sorority tackled the pressing challenges of economic disparity and racial discrimination amid a global crisis. As the war provided unprecedented employment opportunities, you would see how the sorority's leadership, under Elsie Austin, emphasized empowering Black women by facilitating access to job opportunities and advocating for skills development and fair treatment. In tackling socio-economic injustices, the sorority didn't merely stand idly; they demanded systemic change through initiatives like job analysis, ensuring that Black women had the training and union representation to secure their rightful place in the workforce. This initiative is a testament to the power of organized, targeted action in transforming community landscapes and striving toward equality. Reflect on how engaging locally and applying your abilities can turn socio-economic challenges into opportunities for growth, progress, and wider societal advancement in your own life.

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Chapter 11 Summary:

Chapter 10 of the book details a transformative period in the history of a prominent sorority under the leadership of Dorothy Height from 1947 to 1956. During this era, Height emerged as a formidable leader, guiding the organization through significant social and structural changes. The chapter follows a logical sequence of Height's achievements, her strategies to modernize the organization, and the challenges she faced.

Height's leadership style was deeply influenced by her extensive background in social organizations like the YWCA, where she held several significant positions, showcasing her commitment to racial harmony and women's rights. Her efforts in the sorority mirrored those of a broader movement that foreshadowed the feminist resurgence in subsequent decades. Height's early initiatives included the Jobs Project and the National Library Project, both of which were spotlighted through media coverage and public ceremonies, significantly boosting the sorority's public profile.

Under Height's administration, international engagement became more pronounced. She led initiatives that not only amplified the organization's national impact but also positioned it as an international player. The chapter highlights how Height's global travels, such as her teaching stint in India, influenced the sorority's global outreach, leading to scholarships and international chapters that fostered cross-cultural collaboration.



Domestically, Height's efforts were channelized through the American Council on Human Rights (ACHR), which played a pivotal role in lobbying for civil rights legislation. Height, alongside influential figures like Elmer Henderson and Patricia Harris, ensured the organization's involvement in pushing for desegregation and equality across various sectors. The chapter clearly depicts the organization's activism in these years, encapsulating a spirit of social responsibility and justice.

Internally, Height spearheaded a significant reorganization of the sorority, addressing structural inefficiencies and advocating for a centralized national headquarters, which materialized under her tenure. This pursuit of a national headquarters in Washington, D.C., reflected a strategic move to place the organization at the political heart of the country, enhancing its ability to influence national policies.

Despite her successes, Height's extended tenure was not without controversy. Her desire to extend her term beyond the traditional limits sparked debates on governance and leadership within the sorority. The chapter captures the internal conflict that arose from her efforts to remain in power, mirroring historical tensions seen in other civil rights organizations led by strong female figures.

Ultimately, Height's leadership left a lasting imprint on the sorority, marked



by increased organizational efficiency, expanded influence, and a commitment to social justice. While her leadership style sometimes attracted criticism, her impact on the sorority was profound, bridging the gap between grassroots activism and national influence. The chapter concludes with Height's transition to lead the National Council of Negro Women, a role she would hold for many years, further emphasizing her leadership legacy in the broader context of the civil rights movement.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Dorothy Height's transformative leadership and strategic initiatives to modernize the sorority.

Critical Interpretation: Imagine navigating a landscape teeming with societal challenges and structural hurdles, yet through it all, you possess the foresight and tenacity to craft a vision that transcends the ordinary scope of leadership. Dorothy Height's story is a testament to creating lasting impact. Her approach epitomizes inclusiveness and strategic prowess, which can guide you in your personal endeavors to not only adopt a visionary mindset but also effectuate meaningful reforms in any setting. Through thoughtful modernization and international outreach, she redefined the parameters of leadership—ushering in an era of heightened awareness and global collaboration. By embodying Height's strategic ethos, you, too, can leave an indelible mark within your communities or organizations, fostering a culture of progress while championing social justice and equality.



Chapter 12:

Chapter 11 of "Delta in the Movement Years" chronicles the transformative era in the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority during a period of social upheaval and change in America. Before Dorothy Height's presidency, the sorority was seen as a respectable group of philanthropic women, but not necessarily structured to implement substantial programs. Height sought to transform Delta into a cohesive national organization with a solid framework, continually refining the roles and responsibilities within the organization. This was achieved through the strategic development of the Five-Point Program, which aimed to address key societal issues like job opportunities, mental health, and international goodwill.

Under Dorothy Harrison's leadership from 1956 to 1958, the sorority focused on communications improvements and began addressing civil rights issues directly, such as the Little Rock crisis. Harrison's administration laid the groundwork for more direct civic engagement by supporting initiatives like The Delta Newsletter.

Jeanne Noble succeeded Harrison and served as president from 1958 to 1963. At just 32, Noble pushed the sorority towards greater involvement in the student movements of the time and fostered deeper ties with Africa, such as supporting a maternity wing in Kenya. Her passion for education and public service directed Delta's path during the turmoil of the civil rights era.



Geraldine (Pittman) Woods led from 1963 to 1967, emphasizing social action and legal advocacy, important during this historical watershed. Under her direction, Delta supported civil rights legislation and offered practical support to students engaged in protests.

From 1967 to 1971, Frankie M. Freeman ushered Delta through a period of political polarization, focusing on direct action and legal battles. In contrast, Lillian P. Benbow, president from 1971 to 1975, initiated controversial yet innovative projects, including the National Commission on Arts and Letters, while grappling with internal conflicts and hazing issues.

The sorority's involvement in the pivotal Little Rock Nine crisis exemplified its evolving role in civil rights activism. Despite initial hesitations about overt activism, Delta members provided significant support to Daisy Bates, a leader in the school integration efforts in Little Rock, both financially and morally. This marked a crucial turning point in the organization's engagement with civil rights, demonstrating a readiness to step onto the political battlefield.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Delta Sigma Theta navigated internal challenges, such as maintaining high academic standards in light of increasing interracial membership. The Yancey Commission on Undergraduate Development was established to address these and other



challenges, revealing that while members were generally supportive of maintaining scholarly standards, local chapters struggled to effectively implement national programs due to resource and organizational constraints.

The sorority began transitioning towards a public service organization

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Chapter 13 Summary:

Chapter 12 of the book focuses on the pivotal years of change and activism for the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, particularly during their fiftieth anniversary and the significant socio-political events of the 1960s.

Golden Jubilee and Reflection: The chapter begins with the sorority's grand celebration of its fiftieth anniversary in 1963, which was marked by honoring its founders who had significantly contributed to both the sorority and society. Notable attendees included Osceola Adams, Ethel Black, and Winona Alexander, each having left their mark on education, theater, and social work. The convention was a moment of reflection on both the past achievements and future potential of Delta Sigma Theta.

Current Societal Challenges: The chapter then transitions to the convention that took place in New York City in August 1963, which coincided with the momentous March on Washington. This was a time when the civil rights movement was gaining immense momentum, underscoring themes of freedom and equality. Notable guests such as President John F. Kennedy and civil rights leaders highlighted the importance of the sorority in societal progress, reflecting its growing influence and achievements in civil rights.

Activism and Youth Influence: The sorority was strategically poised at a

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juncture of increased civil rights activism, largely influenced by the younger generation. Young activists, including sociologist Joyce Ladner, inspired the organization to become more actively involved in civil rights, challenging older members to recognize and respond to the urgency of the civil rights struggles of the time.

Legislation and Lobbying: From 1963 to 1971, Delta Sigma Theta's role expanded significantly within the civil rights movement, notably through lobbying for legislative changes such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The sorority engaged with political figures and used its influence to push for legislative changes, thus becoming an important force in legislative advocacy during this critical period.

Adaptation and Broader Engagement: The chapter covered Delta's engagement in broader social issues beyond civil rights, including poverty and education. The sorority established the Social Action Commission to focus on civil rights and became involved in federal initiatives like Project Headstart following President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. This era marked a broadening of Delta's mission to include public service and social justice, integrating these principles into their organizational framework.

Changing Roles and Increased Influence: Key figures within Delta, such as Frankie Freeman, played significant roles in national civil rights discussions and initiatives, reflecting the sorority's growing importance in



national matters. Freeman's role in the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights expanded Delta's influence and engagement in key civil rights issues.

Conclusion and Evolution: As the decade progressed, Delta Sigma Theta's response to societal challenges evolved, and by the end of the period covered by the chapter, the organization had officially expanded its mission to include public service and advocacy. This evolution was essential for the sorority to effectively respond to the needs of its members and broader society during a time of significant social upheaval.

Overall, this chapter captures a time of significant growth and transformation for Delta Sigma Theta, as they confronted key societal changes and expanded their mission to effect meaningful change in American society.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Recognition of Young Activists' Influence

Critical Interpretation: In this chapter, you're invited to reflect upon the profound impact that embracing the energy and vision of young activists can have, both personally and within the broader community. The involvement of younger members breathed new life into the prestigious Delta Sigma Theta Sorority during this pivotal time. They brought a fresh perspective that redefined the organization's role in the civil rights movement. This inspired sense of urgency and innovation compelled the more seasoned members to expand their scope of involvement, ultimately contributing to instrumental legislative changes. In your life, recognizing and supporting the passion and commitment of younger generations can provide new insights, challenge the status quo, and drive transformative change. It reminds you of the importance of intergenerational collaboration where diverse voices can inspire actionable progress, encouraging a dynamic blend of wisdom with forward-thinking ideas for a better future.

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Chapter 14 Summary:

Chapter 13: Toward a New Identity

Chapter 13 delves into Delta Sigma Theta's transformative journey towards embracing and redefining its identity amidst social and political upheaval. This chapter opens with a speech by Texas State Senator Barbara Jordan at a national convention, urging the organization to lead in societal change—echoing the necessity for dialogue and a proactive stance against poverty and racism.

In the era of civil rights, Frankie Freeman's unprecedented rise to the presidency in 1967 is notable as the sorority's symbol for change. Her leadership was marked by unconventional methods, including bypassing the Nominating Committee and championing civil rights. Under her guidance, between 1967 and 1971, Delta Sigma Theta expanded its role in public service, running leadership seminars and community programs, even amidst internal restlessness over racial and economic issues.

The sorority's involvement included pioneering programs for low-income students, contributing to initiatives like the Poor People's Campaign, and engaging with the Black Power movement. Yet, while these actions earned Delta a reputation for cross-party collaboration, they also faced internal



challenges concerning their image and issues of colorism within the sorority. Freeman's tenure saw debates on embracing civil rights actively, addressing Black middle-class inaction, and unifying against class and racial divides.

The chapter further explores the organization's struggle to respond to the varied expectations of its members regarding activism and social engagement. While traditionalists supported integration, others leaned towards addressing class separation and aligning more with Black Power ideologies. This friction highlighted the necessity for Delta Sigma Theta to redefine its public service role, aligning its objectives with societal evolution, guided by members' experiences and generational perspectives.

This period set the stage for future conventions, where debates over racial and political identity became more poignant. By 1969, themes like "One Nation" reflected internal discord between integrationists and those frustrated by mainstream assimilation. Key figures like Frankie Freeman and Osceola Adams vocally argued against separatism, fearing it would erase civil rights struggles.

Freeman's administration and subsequent leaders navigated these discussions, planting seeds for the sorority's evolving identity. The 1969 convention's debates exemplified the transition into the 1970s—Delta Sigma Theta's legacy of growth aligned with civil rights principles and the complex dynamics of activism, class, and colorism.



Chapter 14: Delta Sigma Theta, Inc.: The Contemporary Years

Chapter 14 transitions into the sorority's contemporary period, detailing its advancements in tackling technical and social challenges. Despite a major setback with the film "Countdown at Kusini," the organization persevered, using its Arts and Letters Commission to continue promoting black cultural significance. The sorority demonstrated resilience by transforming the film into a successful fundraiser, showing its ability to pivot even amidst failure.

Under leaders like Thelma Daley and Mona Bailey, the organization saw expansion and a return to foundational values. Daley, with her extensive Delta experience, focused on community involvement and education, reintroducing stringent academic performance criteria amidst dwindling college enrollments. Her efforts fortified Delta's image, bridging gaps between radical change and traditional values.

Bailey's era saw strong political engagement, marked by collaborations with the Congressional Black Caucus and prominent involvement in campaigns like Jesse Jackson's candidacy. Delta's elevation in political circles underscored its influence in shaping conversations on education, self-determination, and women's rights. Bailey also instituted pivotal summits on Black education and Black women's roles, reflecting an era that



recognized systemic insufficiencies amidst federal aid retraction under Ronald Reagan's presidency.

Hortense G. Canady continued with targeted initiatives like "Summit II: A Call to Action in Support of Black Single Mothers," addressing socioeconomic issues facing single mothers. These programs illuminated challenges like systemic biases and economic hardships, encouraging community-centric solutions. Her administration expanded Delta's educational outreach, reinforced the cultural diaspora connection, and reignited dormant initiatives like the Delta Education and Research Foundation.

As Delta Sigma Theta approached its 75th anniversary, its legacy was celebrated for its unwavering commitment to social justice and community empowerment. Yet, it faced internal challenges, such as refining its pledging process and bolstering active membership participation. The narrative affirms Delta Sigma Theta's ongoing dedication to evolving its identity in tandem with societal shifts, emphasizing introspection and action as vital to advancing the sorority's mission of empowerment and public service.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Resilience in Adversity

Critical Interpretation: Chapter 14 of 'In Search Of Sisterhood'

illustrates the unwavering resilience and adaptability of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. in the face of challenges. While facing setbacks such as the film 'Countdown at Kusini,' the organization demonstrated an admirable capacity to pivot, transforming an initial failure into a fundraising success. This key lesson is a testament to the power of resilience. You are reminded that there will be obstacles in life that test your resolve and ingenuity. But by harnessing creativity, collaboration, and a strong commitment to your core values, you can overcome setbacks, transform challenges into successes, and continue to leave a meaningful impact on your community and beyond.

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