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'Greek life'

Greek-letter student societies in the United States higher
education system on the local and national scale

Diplomarbeit

Zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades

eines Magisters der Philosophie (Mag.phil.) an der

Philologisch-Kulturwissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck

eingereicht bei

Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Mario Klarer, M.A.

Institut für Amerikanistik

Philologisch - Kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät

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2020

Acknowledgments:

I would like to sincerely express my gratitude to the people who helped me to realize this project. Ever since my first time at the University of New Orleans during fall and spring semester 2015/16, I knew I was going to be visiting the city of New Orleans again. I am happy that the revisiting of this city eventually resulted in finding a research topic for my diploma thesis. With the help of the wonderful staff of Center Austria at the University of New Orleans, I was able to secure a research spot for my thesis. For that I want to thank Mag. Gertraud Griessner and Dr. Günter Bischof for helping me to organize this endeavor and providing support during my research stay in New Orleans. Additionally, I would have not been able to do this research abroad without the support of the International Relations Office at the University of Innsbruck and Dr. Mathias Schennach. Thank you also to my supervising professor Dr. Mario Klarer who was willing to support my efforts to dive into this topic that I was personally very interested to further explore. I was also happy to find a very cooperative and friendly way of communicating with members of the administration and faculty at the University of New Orleans. Thanks to their willingness to participate in my research, I was able to secure the information I needed to realize this paper. For that I want to thank Dr. David Rutledge, Dr. John Nicklow, Dr. Carolyn Golz and every other member of the friendly UNO staff and especially the staff of Earl K. Long library for helping me navigate the UNO archives.

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1 Introduction

As a European student coming to an American college, it was strange to me that I would find signs around campus that had Greek letters on them with sayings like “Go Greek!”, “College isn’t college without going Greek” or “Rush Lambda Chi Alpha”. I found out soon that these Greek letters are the names of student organizations at the university and that they were in the process of trying to acquire new students to be part of their group. I was also told that these kinds of student organizations exist at a large number of universities across the United States of America and that they all adhere to certain codes, values and rituals. My first personal experience with these groups took place on the campus of the University of New Orleans during an academic year abroad. Out of the many students that participated in the exchange program between the Leopold-Franzens-University of Innsbruck and the University of New Orleans, or UNO, I was not the only one who did not know what these so-called Greek life organizations were exactly. Personally, I only had slight memories of seeing movies that took place at US colleges that featured wild party scenes in which “frat bros” or “sorority chicks” would get drunk, dare each other to do crazy challenges and were in constant dispute with the faculty and administration of the college they attended. However, such behavior was never witnessed by me at UNO and, in fact, the presence of the Greek life organization was visible on campus but it did not seem like they were the kind of wild and rowdy people that have Greek letters tattooed on their bodies and caused havoc on campus. Still, members of these organizations that I met used certain vocabulary to describe their groups and what they do which were not familiar to me. They also told me that they were not allowed to tell me some things they did. I, therefore, was intrigued.

This diploma thesis takes a look at what researchers sometimes label as a phenomenon that is exclusive to the United States of America, i.e. Greek life (DeSantis 6). The aim is to explain to

the reader what Greek life or a Greek life organization is and what its features are besides being student groups that name themselves with Greek letters. There is much more to be elaborated about these groups. The two core elements of this paper are the explanation of the Greek life phenomenon on a US nationwide basis and the comparison of the information obtained about Greek life on a national basis to how this system operates and takes form on a local scale. The site for comparison on the local scale will be the University of New Orleans, located in Louisiana. For this paper, research has been conducted at the University of New Orleans in order to obtain information on how the Greek life system is to be described and evaluated at that institution. Comparing Greek life on the national and local scale has the benefit of providing the opportunity to take a detailed look at how aspects of a national phenomenon are put into practice on the local scale. Authentic source materials, firsthand experience, interviews and on-site research serve as the basis for this diploma thesis.

In order to convey a better understanding of Greek life, the first task of this paper is to elaborate what defines student organizations as Greek life organizations. To do that, it is important to determine the qualities and features that are a part of the Greek life culture. This definition can then be supplemented with the extensive amount of information that is available about Greek life and its qualities. Much can be learned from examples such as online sources of Greek life organizations in which they present themselves and therefore one can see how they are incorporated into the university day to day life in which they exist. Public discussions that are captured mostly in online articles and opinion pieces are an equally insightful provider of information. Greek life organizations across the USA publish their own content, have their own websites and share a lot about their history, which values they hold up and what makes them stand out as opposed to other student groups that are unaffiliated with Greek life.

It is vital to explain the terminology that is frequently used not only by members of Greek life organizations, but also by scholars, reporters or within public discussion that deal with this phenomenon. The paper will explain this terminology in order to form a basis for a discussion on the subject. This will be done by providing examples of how the language of Greek life was applied in its practices and how some of these terms were coined or came into being.

Another vital element of this paper is an account of the history of the student organizations that are today labeled as Greek life. How they came into existence and manifested themselves in American higher education, developed their language, customs and reputation is key to understanding the topic and many of the opinions and values that are still shared by members today.

Furthermore, the media representation and public discourse that surrounds Greek life will also be discussed. For many years the media has been focusing on misconduct, deviance and claims about elitism within the Greek life system. Many incidents have gathered nationwide or even international attention and have contributed to the formation of negative stereotypes about fraternities and sororities all over the United States. Analyzing the Greek system on a local scale is another way of finding out whether or not these stereotypes hold up in the individual cases or local examples.

Explaining what Greek life is and elaborating its terminology and historical background will create the proper background and frame of reference for the research conducted at the University of New Orleans in the spring semester of 2019. The evaluation and presentation of this research aims to paint a picture of how Greek life has evolved since the founding of the University of New Orleans in 1958 and still exists today. A variety of research methods have been applied to gather data that will allow a look into the student experience of Greek life but also the involvement

of these student organizations in campus life, faculty and university administration. This ranges from observing their engagement in official events on campus, looking at the process of member acquisition, evaluating students' opinions on members of Greek life and also shared personal experiences by Greek life members, as well as university staff. Thus, this paper shall demonstrate in what way the local Greek life system at the University of New Orleans shares and represents features of the national Greek life phenomenon. This method shall also prove that it is vital for the understanding of Greek life to rely both on general information and reports about the phenomenon as a whole, as well as more detailed examples that can be obtained through research at the local scale.

2 ‘Greek life’ in the United States of America

2.1 Definition

In order to understand the aim of this paper, a certain terminology and definition needs to be set. In general, the term ‘Greek life organization’, or Greek life, refers to student organizations that exist at multiple colleges around the United States. Greek life is divided into male student groups that are called fraternities and their female counterparts, sororities. Many colleges that have Greek life organizations represented at their campus will usually offer a definition on their website of what these organizations are. Since these definitions are mostly alike, this definition by Appalachian State University shall serve as a representative example:

Fraternalities and sororities were established to further the social, scholastic and professional interests of its members. They are mainly associated with colleges and universities. Most fraternities and sororities adopt Greek letters to represent their organization, and as a result they are often referred to as Greek letter societies, or simply Greek organizations. (Fraternity and Sorority Life)

In his definition of the male Greek life organizations, fraternities, William Baird makes some important distinctions about how Greek life organizations can be perceived and under which function they are bonded together:

College students have always shown a more or less marked tendency to form themselves into societies. Whether founded upon a national, literary or social basis, these organizations seem to have been coeval with the colleges themselves. Throughout the United States there is a class of students’ societies, usually secret in their character, which have rapidly grown in favor, and have become of great importance in the college world. They are [...] united by a common bond

of friendship and a common name, generally composed of Greek letters. From this latter fact they are known among non-collegians as *Greek-letter* societies. (Baird 1).

Baird brings forward what this paper will focus on: Student organizations that throughout history have made their way into many college campuses across the United States of America. At the center of analysis will be groups that organize on a social basis and call themselves ‘social fraternities’ or ‘social sororities’. In this paper, ‘Greek life’ will refer, unless otherwise specified, to these social fraternities and sororities. This distinction is important because there are also organizations that name themselves using Greek letters that focus primarily on academics. Such organizations are called Honors Societies or professional fraternities or sororities and are usually seen as a separate phenomenon from the social Greek life organizations. This is illustrated, for example, on the website of Dartmouth college, where Honors societies are listed separately from the other Greek life organizations that are social organizations (Dartmouth Greek Life). It is the norm that the organizations will label themselves openly as a social, professional or honors societies. Also, Greek life organizations are by far not the only student clubs, groups or organizations that exist at US colleges. However, member organizations of the Greek life system have distinct features that set them apart from other student organizations. In a personal interview with Dr. John Nicklow, president of the University of New Orleans and alumni member of a Greek letter fraternity, he explained the difference between Greek life organizations and other student groups or clubs. What sets them apart is that Greek life organizations are often connected to each other throughout the whole country. They share the same or similar values, tend to the same traditions and are often governed by a national headquarter. Regular student organizations like a club for Latin American students, the chess club, Physics societies and so on usually exist on one campus and are not affiliated with similar clubs at other colleges. Also, while most student clubs

focus on one shared interest or hobby, social Greek life organizations involve their members in a more encompassing experience focusing on their shared values, ideals and social activities (Dr. Nicklow Interview). The features that are unique to Greek life as opposed to other student organizations will be listed and explained in this thesis.

It is important to point out that an absolute definition is hard to produce because, as this thesis will show, the connotations associated with Greek life are still being publicly discussed and constantly re-evaluated. Most definitions are offered by Greek organizations themselves or scholars and commentators who critically evaluate this phenomenon. This thesis will list many aspects of social Greek life organizations that are shared by most Greek life organizations across the USA, thus defining factors of Greek life that are relevant for the analysis of the Greek system. The fact that most of the public discussion about Greek life is focused on social fraternities and sororities is the basis for the usage of the term ‘Greek life organizations’ as a term to refer to social fraternities and sororities within this thesis. Most definitions that are found online on university homepages that present their Greek life organizations will often equate Greek life to social fraternity and sorority organizations. This is why the terminology will be equally synonymous in this thesis.

2.2 The language of ‘Greek Life’

One cannot dive into the culture of Greek life without knowing the language used to describe its features, rituals and customs. On Greek life organizations’ homepages and other outlets as well as in academic literature and online discussions, specific terms are applied for various phenomena and terms within the realm of fraternities and sororities. Due to the fact that both people involved and those outside of Greek life use these specific terms, an array of them will be elaborated here and, whenever possible, illustrated with an example. Fortunately, for everyone looking to find out

more about Greek life, many colleges or Greek organizations aim to educate people about the language used when discussing Greek life phenomena. Thus, many definitions of the following terms are offered by Greek life or university outlets and in some cases the etymology and origin of the words are well elaborated in academic literature concerning Greek life. Additionally, I have been provided with information on Greek life specifics by the Assistant Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life at the University of New Orleans, who was willing to answer several of my questions concerning terminology and various other aspects of Greek life via a written interview. Examples of how some of the following facets of Greek life take shape in day to day college life will be demonstrated in chapter 3 of this paper that deals with Greek life at the University of New Orleans specifically.

2.2.1 Brothers and Sisters

Looking into how members of Greek organizations address each other, one can find terms in Greek life that remind us of the language in cloisters, abbeys or monasteries. Not only monks and nuns refer to each other with the terms brother and sister but also members of the same fraternities or sororities.

The term fraternity was of course not invented by the student organizations that make up Greek life. Merriam-Webster's dictionary describes "fraternity" as follows: "[A fraternity is] a group of people associated or formally organized for a common purpose, interest, or pleasure." (Merriam Webster)

Drawing from this definition, which matches the definition of Greek life offered by Baird at the beginning of this paper (i.e. fraternities), and the Latin root of the word 'frater', meaning brother, one can trace how it became custom within fraternities that members refer to each other as fellow brothers.

The same deduction counts for the female counterpart, the sororities. Hailing from the Latin word ‘soror’ meaning sister, members of sororities have also adapted the custom of addressing fellow members as their sisters. However, it is important to note that the first female Greek organizations did not label themselves as sororities. The first female Greek organization that labeled itself a sorority was Gamma Phi Beta, founded in 1874. They opted for that label after a Latin professor of their university coined the term as an appropriate way to label the female counterpart of fraternities. Before, female Greek organizations such as the first one, Kappa Alpha Theta, labeled themselves as Greek-letter fraternities for women or women’s fraternities (Courtney).

An additional term in connection to brother and sister is ‘Big’. Once a new member is initiated, he or she is appointed a mentor to elaborate the customs and accompany the new member. That person is usually referred to as the ‘Big’ as in big brother or big sister (Greek Vocabulary).

2.2.2 Chapters and charters, national/grand chapters

When fraternities and sororities spread out from their founding university to other universities, they establish local chapters or colony chapters. A chapter is therefore a unit of a fraternity or sorority at a certain college. Thus, only fraternities or sororities that exist at more than one location have chapters. (Greek Vocabulary)

The expansion process of fraternities used to be quite chaotic. New chapters would be established without a lot of communication between the already existing chapters of the same fraternity. This lack of coordination would lead to some chapters allowing different chapters at new universities to be founded and to a lack of cohesion and communication between the chapters of the same organization. Sometimes, new chapters would later be found out about by other

chapters, who would then disapprove of their existence and question their integrity within their fraternity as a whole. This led to confusion, especially in the pre-Civil War time of Greek life. After the war, the system of expansion and supervision within fraternities was changed with the establishment of so-called grand chapters or national chapters. Either a chapter was voted to be a grand chapter or the original chapter of a fraternity would get the status of a national chapter. These chapters would take the role of authority when it comes to information and guidelines to their organization's customs, rituals and expansion processes. Matters of relevance to the organization would be discussed in conventions to which every chapter could send delegates to and they would collectively discuss policies and vote on new resolutions that would affect all chapters. In some cases, matters of administration were put into the hands of alumni to keep them involved in their organization's workings and also to rely on them for financial support (Baird 16-19). This process shows how connected the organizations are amongst each other and that they exist in the way they do because of networks that reach far beyond a single college campus.

A charter is a document that is drafted by students who aspire to start a chapter of an existing fraternity or sorority on their college campus (Greek Vocabulary). Usually, the national chapter of the proposed fraternity or sorority will then approve or disapprove the charter. Additionally, the school will also have to approve the founding of a new chapter and usually has a system in place to which students apply while they are drafting a charter. If all requirements are met, a new chapter can be founded following the approval of the charter (UNO Assistant Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, Interview).

A fitting and contemporary example of what criteria are important to found a new chapter of a Greek life organization at a new campus is offered on the website of the Gamma Sigma Tau fraternity:

Are you interested in Greek life, but not particularly interested in any of the fraternities already on your campus? Not to worry, as there are literally hundreds of fraternities in the United States with a wide array of focus areas. There is a good chance that there is a Greek-lettered organization out there that suits your values and goals. This step-by-step guide will show you how to find a fraternity to your liking and how to successfully establish a chapter on your school campus.

We first provide a checklist of the things you need to do to start a fraternity with detailed explanations below:

1. Research fraternities
2. Contact the fraternity's national board
3. Contact your school's Greek Life office
4. Create an interest group
5. Affiliate your interest group with a national organization
6. Apply for recognition from your school's Greek Life office

(How to Start a New Fraternity at Your School – A Guide).

This excerpt of a website shows that many colleges nowadays usually have a system in place that handles matter of Greek life, new charters and chapter founding. Also, the process of founding a new chapter today still very much resembles how it was done when the first fraternities of the so called 'Union Triad' expanded to other universities. Then and now it remains important for the aspiring founders of a new chapter to advertise and explain the infrastructure and nature of the institution in which they want to establish a new chapter as well as advertise the people who want to found it (Syrett 83-84). The quote from Gamma Sigma also reveals that even though there

are hundreds of different fraternities and sororities, they do have different focus areas and are not be seen as a homogenous entity.

2.2.3 Rush, Rush week, Bid

‘Rush’ describes the process in which fraternities and sororities ‘rush’ to recruit new students to join their organization. Vice versa, the new students who are looking to become involved with Greek life will also ‘rush’ to get in touch with the various organizations that exist at their school. The time period in which this process occurs is usually referred to as ‘Rush week’. That is because these activities, in which interested students and Greek life organizations connect, last about a week (Burell).

The time-span of rush week can vary from college to college and sometimes it is even labeled differently. For example, the term ‘rush’ is considered to have a bad connotation within some colleges and for that reason is named differently at some institutions. The University of New Orleans calls this time period “Recruitment” (UNO Assistant Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, Interview).

While many customs and rituals of Greek life organizations are kept secret, rush procedures and events are often publicly shared in order to attract and inform potential new members. The events that fraternities and sororities hold throughout the country at different schools vary and are sometimes tied to specific traditions, but some examples of what rush week events can be are easily found. The following is an example by the Lambda Chi Alpha chapter, located at the University of Maryland in Baltimore county. This example is particularly interesting, as it also shows how a fraternity can already set a tone towards potential members and convey the aspects that they look for in new members. Also, the use of ‘brother’ as a referral to the members of their organization is showcased here:

Rush week is a semesterly initiative intended to recruit undergraduate students of sterling character and high scholastic aptitude. Our events serve as a platform for brothers to meet potential candidates and to address any questions they may have about the fraternity. Students who carry a respectable GPA, are already heavily involved with university organizations, and demonstrate that they possess the maturity and resolve needed to excel academically while being in a social fraternity are considered for bids. (Lambda Chi Alpha Spring Rush 2019)

With this example, it is observable what the fraternity values and what new members should apparently consider when ‘rushing’ to join Lambda Chi Alpha at this university. Here, a highlight has been placed on good grades. Lastly, the term ‘bid’ also appears in this example. A bid is given out to potential new members by the fraternity or sorority and expresses the interest of having a selected new student enter the pledging process and eventually become a new member (Greek Life Vocabulary).

On this outlook on rush week by UMBC’s Lambda Chi Alpha chapter, there is also a list of activities that are hosted by the fraternity. They host activities like playing dodgeball or attending a bonfire where interested students can freely join to socialize with members. Some events are open, meaning everybody can attend, and some are closed events where an invite is necessary. However, all activities seem to aim towards the vetting of new members. The chapter also does not miss the opportunity to advertise their fraternity’s famous members, such as former US president Harry S. Truman and the status of their organization on a national scale (Lambda Chi Alpha Spring Rush 2019). The point can be made that not only new students want to join fraternities or sororities but that the organizations are also always on the lookout to recruit new members. The above example from Lambda Chi Alpha and many other cases of rush week events

that are accessible make it clear that rush week is an important time for Greek life organizations to advertise for their group.

When researching fraternity and sorority rush weeks and rush events, it is often mentioned that the rush to join a sorority is usually conducted with more formal events while fraternity rush activities are often informal (IvyWise Newsletter). While the Lambda Chi Alpha chapter mentioned above hosts events like a barbecue, a poker night and dodgeball that make a rather informal impression by the way the events are described, a considerable difference in tone and formality can be found with some sororities and their rush procedures. An insightful example is offered by the Panhellenic Council of the University of Kentucky in which rushing procedures and other information about joining a sorority are elaborated and presented. At first sight, it is noticeable that the process is also called ‘recruitment’ and not ‘rush’, similar to how it is labeled at the University of New Orleans. The guide is issued by the Panhellenic Council, which is the coordinating body of 14 different sororities that are represented at the University of Kentucky (2019 Fraternity and Sorority Life recruitment guide, UKY). The recruitment guide gives a very clear insight into what is expected from students interested in joining a sorority. The information provided ranges from a code of conduct and ethics over to financial requirements of joining a sorority and it also lists and describes every single sorority present on campus. To highlight the point of the more formal nature of sorority recruitment it is important- to point out that the guide even gives recommendations of dress code for the specific events that transpire during the recruitment phase. Additionally, every day of recruitment is dedicated to a different theme or aspect of Greek life such as: philanthropy, sisterhood, preference or bid day (2019 Fraternity and Sorority Life recruitment guide, UKY). On the same website that features this recruitment guide, one is also forwarded to recruitment guides by the sororities of other Universities like Texas A&M or Iowa State University, which are very similar to the referenced University of Kentucky guide.

The website of the University of New Orleans also offers a similar guide to its prospective new sorority members that includes dress codes and other guiding information about the recruitment phase (Suggested Attire, UNO.edu) The research for this paper has not yielded a guide for fraternity rushing procedures that compares in its level of detail or comes across equally formal. This gives credibility to the claim that sorority rush or recruitment tends to be more formal and structured. Browsing through the various websites of Greek organizations across the country, there are noticeable differences from campus to campus, organization to organization and chapter to chapter. However, after comparing various rush week or recruitment practices they all serve the same purpose – to connect prospective members and Greek life organizations. This again gives credibility to the claim that the Greek life system has shared features on a nationwide basis.

Observing the rush process today also shows how customs have had to catch up with the changing landscape of student associations on US college campuses. The precursor to today's Greek life organizations were literary societies in which students, at that time all male, could organize and socialize (Baird 5). Intricate and coordinated rush or recruitment processes were not necessary in the same way as today as there were usually only two of these organizations present at a campus (Baird 5). Today, some universities can have well over fifty Greek life organizations established at their campus (Anaya-Aldana).

2.2.4 Pledging, Pledge, Initiation

Once a bid is given to a prospective new member by a fraternity or sorority and is accepted by the interested student, the student enters the pledging phase and is then, in some cases, also referred to as a 'pledge' (Greek Vocabulary).

The pledging process is essentially the initiation period into the organization that one has pledged to. Again, there are many different forms that the pledging period can take and customs

vary quite widely but some essential communalities and roots of the phenomenon shall be pointed out. As with the terms rush or rush week, there is also different terminology applied for the pledges or the pledging period. Once again this is because some organizations or schools see a bad connotation with the word pledge. This is because multiple serious incidents, some involving student deaths, have occurred in the pledging period within various organizations across the USA (Patterson). A lot of these negative connotations hail from the controversial hazing practices which are discussed in chapter 2.4.1. of this paper.

As the example of Greek life at the University of New Orleans shows, the transitional phase between being a pledge and an initiated member usually focuses on the pledge getting to know his or her organization. That means learning about its history, getting to know the customs and being made familiar with practices that are sometimes only disclosed to members and kept from outsiders (Recruitment FAQ UNO, Lambert)

Pledging within Greek life has a history of being more irregulated and controversial at the time of the first fraternities. This meant that established members of fraternities could ask or demand various tasks, behaviors or other things from newly pledged members. These rituals were often not disclosed to the school at which the organization was operating in and that eventually led to more regulations. This changed not only the customs but also the length of the pledging period. As it once was sometimes as short as a day, it can span several weeks now (Syrett 152-153). Information about pledging policies, time frames and rules are today often found on the official college websites and seem to be agreed upon with the Greek life organizations that exist at that school. A good example is the homepage of Oregon State University. One of its fraternities describes what the next step for the prospective member is upon accepting the bid. In this case it involves a pledging ceremony where friends and relatives of the prospective member can witness

as the new member commits to the fraternity and wears a special pin to showcase his status as committed pledge (Pledging Ceremony, Oregonstate.edu).

At the end of the pledging period stands the initiation ceremony which elevates the prospective pledge to a full member of his or her Greek organization. The initiation ceremony seems to hold a special place in Greek life culture as it serves the same purpose wherever it is conducted but takes its own and unique form from organization to organization. It is also the final step to fully joining a fraternity or sorority. In an article of an information website about universities and their student organizations, a sorority member claims that while every Greek life organization is essentially the same in its social function, it is its initiation rites that allows the organization to set itself apart from others. The initiation ceremony conveys to the new member all the remaining information that every full member is granted. In this example, that includes the secret handshakes or greetings, meaning behind symbols and so on. A new member is usually expected to speak vows and swear loyalty to his new brothers or sisters and has to commit to secrecy of the newly acquired information (Unlocking the Secrets to Greek Initiation). With the exception of one Greek life organization, Delta Upsilon, the research for this paper has yielded the result that all initiation ceremonies seem to be secret and the exact process is never shared with non-Greeks or members of different Greek life organizations. Most media outlets that cover the subject or official statements by fraternities or sororities agree that the initiation ceremony is what cements the bond between the brothers or sisters of an organization and lays the base for a new member to be able to integrate properly into his organization and connect with members from different chapters across the nation.

2.2.5 Badges and Pins

It has developed to be custom in many of these groups that members, at certain events or times, outwardly present their allegiance to their organization by wearing a badge or a pin on their clothing that shows the organizations Greek letters and thus the allegiance to one's organization. As this custom emerged, it became customary for many members of fraternities to wear that badge regularly. This means it was worn and displayed not only during events within the organization but also in the public domain, on and off campus. Syrett attributes this as a part of the deliberate distinction between people who went to college and people who didn't, which, in the US antebellum period, was more of a social class indicator than it might be today. And, more importantly, the badge or pin distinguished fraternity members from non-members, which again is labeled as a dividing line on college campuses between affluent and students of less financial or social means (Syrett 97).

Syrett names specific prices that would be spent on obtaining a fraternity badge or pin and also remarks that they were sometimes even bought at the prestigious New York City 5th avenue company "Tiffany & Co." He concludes: "Fraternities were for men of means" (Syrett 56-57). There is an argument to make that this statement, referring to the acquisition of badges and pins, still holds up today in some ways. While none of the fraternity or sorority members that were involved in my personal research at the University of New Orleans none were wearing their badges, but rather wristbands, t-shirts or hats showing their allegiance, there is an abundance of evidence that the pin and badge business still constitutes a pillar in Greek life culture. Many sororities and fraternities still require their members to buy and wear badges or pins once one joins the organization. This can be seen as a sort of unlisted fee or cost that is required to fully join a Greek life organization next to admission, membership fees, housing and so on (Sportelli). This is further illustrated when looking at the various online presences of Greek organizations. A very

illustrative example is offered by the online presence of the Sigma Kappa Sorority, a national organization with chapters across the USA. One can see not only the wide array of pins and badges that are to be worn by members, depending on their status within the organization, but also Sigma Kappa provides a set code of how the jewelry is to be worn and presented (Jewelry, sigmakappa.org):

The new member pin and triangle badge are to be worn above all other fraternity jewelry, whether honorary, professional, or social. The new member pin and the triangle badge are to be worn over the heart on the outer most layer of clothing to indicate membership. This policy means that the badges may not be used on bracelets as charms, lapel pins, pendants, rings, etc., until you are an alumna member. (Jewelry, sigmakappa.org).

It goes on to even list the options for a pin's further usage after the member of the sorority has passed. Emphasizing once again the bound for life dogma of Greek Life organizations, this is another feature that sets Greek life apart from other student organizations.

Upon the death of a member one of the following is to be done:

the badge may be buried with the member,

the badge may be left to a chapter or to a relative who is a Sigma Kappa member,

or the badge may be returned to national headquarters. (Jewelry, sigmakappa.org)

Furthermore, the badges and pins have to be purchased via the organization itself. A set price for the individual items is thus not disclosed to the public. The same goes for the online presences of most Greek Life chapters and organizations, prices are often not listed and the organizations themselves are the channel over which new members can or must acquire the merchandise.

When trying to grasp the prestigious value of this seemingly mundane accessory an answer will be provided through the existence of various online shops that trade, buy and sell vintage Greek Life badges and pins from decades and centuries ago for considerable sums of money. *Fratpin.com* is one example of these sites (Fratpin.com) and, additionally, there is also an active scene of collectors and hunters of pins from certain organizations, time periods or of particular impressive artistic quality. With some of them naming themselves “Fraternity Pin Collector Society” they even arrange meetings to trade, sell and hunt. A phenomenon that is not condoned by the Greek Life organizations themselves, as they like to keep these pieces of merchandise and identity off the free market (Rosman).

The history and relevance of this seemingly arbitrary merchandise reveals that it is embedded in the culture of many Greek letter organizations and connected to the character of these organizations trying to be exclusive through often unlisted financial strains on new members, such as buying a fraternity- or sorority pin.

2.2.6 National Interfraternity Conference (NIC), Interfraternity Council (IFC)

The National Interfraternity Conference is the coordinating body for a number of fraternities in the USA and the result of numerous attempts to give the various Greek organizations a representative body that speaks on behalf of all of them. In his book *Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities*, William Baird, who was himself a fraternity member, laments the lack of cohesion between chapters of the same fraternity but also the lack of communication and coordination amongst Greek life organizations in general. He does so in the 6th edition of his book which was published in 1905, previous to the founding of the National Interfraternity Conference. Baird describes that at a local level, fraternities would hold so called ‘Pan-Hellenic’ events in which different fraternities would come together and take part in shared events and exchange of ideas

and interests. Efforts of fraternities coordinating on a national scale however kept failing or led to no conclusive or binding arrangements (Baird 6th edition 29-30).

With the establishment of the Interfraternity Council in 1909 a coordinating body for fraternities nationwide had finally been established. Baird recognizes this in the 10th edition of his Greek life handbook. In 1909, representatives from 26 different fraternities gathered for the first National Interfraternity Council meeting to discuss their interests and publish the proceedings and results of the conference in order to keep all chapters informed. This practice would continue annually (Baird 10th edition 35-37). After forming as an official organization in 1910, renaming itself to National Interfraternity Conference in 1931 and to North American Interfraternity Conference in 1991, to include Canadian organizations, the NIC today has 68 member organizations with 5500 chapters on 800 campuses in the USA and Canada (History of the NIC, Valdosta.edu)

On the local college level, the Interfraternity Council, short IFC, is the coordinating body of chapters from fraternities that is established as soon as two or more different fraternities are chartered at a university. Each chapter has a member that is part of the local IFC and handles matters of communication with the NIC as well, thus establishing the possibility for national networking amongst NIC fraternities. The official description of the IFC says that the NPC provides guiding material and help to local IFC members. The question remains open if that support is granted only to IFC members who are part of a fraternity that is part of the NIC or if that support is made available to all IFC representatives (About Interfraternity Council, nicfraternity.org).

2.2.7 National Panhellenic Conference (NPC)

While the first sororities followed decades after the first fraternities, the first umbrella organization for female fraternities, or sororities, predates their male counterpart. The National Panhellenic Conference was founded in 1902 with seven sororities aligned with it. The first attempts of connecting sororities was already made in Boston in 1891 (Baird 10th edition 35-36), and after a temporary lull in further developments the Intersorority Conference was established in 1902 and would change its name to the National Panhellenic Conference (The History of the NPC). Today, 26 sororities are affiliated with the NPC. Similar to the Interfraternity council that operates on a local level, the NPC also employs the help of the Panhellenic Association as a local cooperative body between NPC-affiliated sororities (About the NPC).

2.2.8 Chapter housing, housing

Apart from offering a social network, activities and involvement in campus life, some Greek life organizations, albeit not all or every chapter, will sometimes offer housing options for their members that are close to or even on the college campus.

In the 10th edition of William Baird's book about fraternity life, Baird describes the process and the phenomenon of fraternity housing. The funds for a communal space in which members can congregate as well as live are raised from the members and especially from alumni donating money to their chapter. The common goal of building and maintaining a chapter house is supposed to strengthen not only the character of the individual but also the bond between brothers and also their pride towards their chapter, college and time spent with their Greek life organization. Baird does also warn about potential negative aspects like expanding an organization too far in numbers just to realize a prestigious housing project when it should actually remain smaller. He remains positive towards fraternity housing all together and praises the fact that Greek housing relieves

colleges of the pressure to provide accommodation. Baird also mentions that provided housing by the chapter will also lead to higher costs for prospective members and thus to a certain level of social exclusion. However, he does not further discuss this problematic aspect of exclusiveness but rather advocates for more Greek life involvement on campus that surpasses housing and even proposes that Greeks employ instructors and professors to relieve the university of disciplinary duties as well (Baird 10th edition 28-30).

Already from the middle of the 19th century onwards, fraternities have attempted to offer common space and housing options for their members. In 1876, Zeta Psi chapter of Berkeley University was the first fraternity to build a house for their members to live in and that trend continued to grow steadily. Syrett also sees the housing projects as prestigious examples of how much alumni value their involvement with their former chapters. Fraternity houses also enabled the physical separation between Greeks and non-Greeks which Syrett sees, unlike Baird, as more problematic. He claims that the reliance of universities on Greek life organizations for housing has proven to have a long-lasting effect on the relationship between Greeks and their college (Syrett 161-163).

Today both sorority and fraternity chapters at various colleges own their own houses in some form. That ownership might be directly as an organization or through an alumni-owned corporation (Syrett 163). It is observable at many colleges that the schools do in fact cooperate with the Greek life chapters in their housing policies. Often the available Greek housing options will be listed publicly on some universities' homepages as the example of Drexel University in Philadelphia shows. At this university, fourteen different Greek life organizations own houses that offer housing for students that become members (Fraternity and Sorority Housing, Drexel.edu). Additionally, universities will guide new students towards fraternity or sorority housing using their

own infrastructure. The University of Dartmouth, New Hampshire has its own office that facilitates the connection to Greek housing opportunities (Greek life housing, Dartmouth.edu).

A recent controversy about housing policies at Pennsylvania State University illustrates that there is still room for debate around the issue of student housing and the involvement of Greek life in it. The debate at Pennsylvania State University concerns Greek life organizations that worry about not making enough revenue through their housing opportunities because the college administration wants to ban first and second-year students from living in fraternity or sorority houses (Ahn 2019).

My personal research at the University of New Orleans has concluded that not all fraternity or sorority houses are officially recognized and endorsed by the University the chapter is located on. At the University of New Orleans, no sorority and only one single fraternity chapter is in possession of a house. That house however cannot be found on UNO's website and is not endorsed through official university channels. In an interview conducted with UNO's current president, Dr. John Nicklow, he confirms the existence of a fraternity house under the ownership of the Lambda Chi Alpha chapter of UNO. However, Nicklow says that it is the university's policy not to endorse Greek housing as it increases liability for incidents concerning alcoholism or other forms of misconduct. This is also the reason that the university currently has no part in the Greek life chapter's housing endeavors. (Dr. Nicklow Interview).

2.2.9 Rituals and Founders Day

From their inception onward most fraternities have adhered to the strict code of secrecy about their rituals and customs. This has often brought criticism towards Greek life. Even though the reasons for this criticism changed over time, the secretive nature of fraternities and sororities towards many of their customs and practices remains. The first fraternal organization, Phi Beta Kappa, adopted

some of their rituals and the secretive nature from the Freemasons and researcher and member of a freemason lodge, David E. Stafford, claims that connections between Freemasonry, Phi Beta Kappa and later the first social fraternity Kappa Alpha contribute to the fact that secrecy has remained a staple in Greek life culture (Stafford 2016).

The webpage *fraternityadvisor.com* advocates strongly in favor of the value of secrecy. According to their view, the secretive nature has the aim to make membership an exclusive privilege that lifts the veil to members only (Fraternity Secrets and Rituals). Additionally, it can be claimed that the reason for secrecy lies in the purpose of the institution of Greek life itself. Apart from the social aspect during college years, going Greek comes with a vast social network that often spans members from across the country. The bond that members can have even without ever having met is, as with many secret societies, fortified through codified language and practices that are known only to insiders (Syrett 118-119).

In 2015 a sorority member was sued by her sorority for publicly disclosing rituals that are performed within the sorority. Reading about this case gives at least some examples of what these rituals can be and how much worth is put on secrecy. Rituals can include handshakes, phrases, the performance or knowledge about songs or poems as well as codified language (Masnick 2015).

For an outsider, information about rituals and signs within a sorority or fraternity are hard to attain. At the University of New Orleans, prospective members of Greek life organization that I talked to would show me that their organization handed them folders with information about the history and the rituals of the organization. However, I was denied every request at taking a closer look inside these folders and copying anything was out of question. When asking about rituals, the only thing that the different students would disclose to me was that “Founder’s Day” was an important tradition and that they had to learn a lot about their organization’s history, which is celebrated that

day, in order to pass the initiation procedures. In an interview with Kal Landy, who at the time of the interview was a member of the Theta Xi fraternity chapter at University of New Orleans, the only ritual he was willing to disclose to me was the celebration of Founder's Day (Kal Landry Interview).

Indeed, Founder's Day seems to be one of the few traditions that are at least partly disclosed to outsiders. On Founder's Day, Greek organizations commemorate the founders of the first chapter of their organization. As opposed to other customs the information on those founders is usually publicly disclosed and all the dates of every fraternities and sororities celebration are easily located (Founder's days, leadinggreek.com). Founder's Day is a good example of how rituals aim to fuse together a certain group based on shared experience, knowledge and practices. All chapters of a national fraternity or sorority celebrate Founder's Day on the same day and celebrate the same historic origin that their national organization have drafted up. The national chapter of Delta Zeta sorority even sent out a proclamation to its chapters that was to be read at every chapter meeting during the week of Founder's Day activities (Brown-Phillips 2019). Most organizations will have their history and a reference to their founders displayed on their websites. Theta Xi fraternity, for example, dedicates a small biography to every founding member and the founding history of the organization is also freely available (History of Theta Xi). The aspect of secrecy is also something that sets Greek life organizations apart from most other student groups. Chapter 2.3. about Greek life history further elaborates why Greek life has developed the secretive nature within their organizations.

2.2.10 Philanthropy

Many fraternities and sororities, be it national or local chapters, advertise their involvement in various philanthropic efforts. Usually the organizations that are supported by Greek life chapters can be found on either their organizations' website or often on the university homepages where all local Greek life chapters are listed. At Tulane University, all ten established IFC Greek chapters have a philanthropic cause or communal service organization listed that they support (Interfraternity Council Members, Greek.tulane.edu). Some fraternities or sororities support an organization on a national basis, which means that every chapter of the organization works towards the same philanthropic goal. The fraternity Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, for example, has chosen to support the mentoring program *Big Brothers Big Sisters* while Phi Gamma Phi supports the *Red Cross* and the *USO* on a national level (Nieves-Whitmore 2019). A philanthropy cause that is supported by the whole organization collectively is often referred to as "national philanthropy" and the organizations will often mention and document their involvement in philanthropy publicly and as a way to advertise their organization (Philanthropy, Theta Xi Gamma Chapter).

A study conducted by *NPCatalyst*, an organization working closely with NGOs (What We Do), shows that all 40 Greek advisors who were asked in the study support and endorse the philanthropy aspect of Greek life. It goes on to mention that furthering philanthropic programs is often endorsed by the national chapter and awarded. Also, pursuing these programs helps chapters to prove their worthiness in order to keep their charters and sometimes it is a prerequisite to even start a new chapter. The money is usually raised through various activities like fundraisers, cooperation with local organizations but also donations from members or alumni themselves (Parker 2012, NPCatalyst Study). A fraternity or sorority engaged with philanthropic efforts

usually has one person, a member, in charge of these operations. This position is called the philanthropy chair (Philanthropy not partying).

Noteworthy is also that the philanthropic efforts of Greek life are often mentioned as one of the redeeming factors of Greek life. Many articles can be found in which philanthropy is mentioned as being a core feature of Greek life that people should focus on instead of public criticism concerning elitism, alcoholism and other negative aspects (Philanthropy not partying). In 2014, Kristin Musulin, Greek life member and journalism student at the University of Maryland, wrote that philanthropy is an underreported but highly important factor in Greek life culture that strengthens communities, leadership qualities. She also mentioned the amount of money raised by philanthropic efforts which should be mentioned here.

According to the most recent National Panhellenic Council 2013-2014 annual report, sorority women from across the nation raised over \$5.7 million for philanthropies and reported nearly 1 million hours of community service in the last academic year alone.

Even more impressive is that, in the same time frame, fraternity men in The North American Interfraternity Conference raised \$20.7 million for philanthropies and completed 3.8 million hours of community service. (Musulin 2014)

These numbers, while quite significant, should still be seen critically. When looking into the dues, fees and other expenses that Greek life organizations ask of their members in order to obtain membership, be allowed into housing and enjoy the full benefits of membership, it becomes clear that a lot of money is flowing into Greek organizations. Considering also the numbers of nationwide members in the Greek system, the general number of funds raised is put into perspective and the real impact and status of philanthropy remains debatable in its significance.

The amount of money flowing into philanthropy efforts as opposed to other expenses really is put into perspective after seeing how some Greek life organizations present themselves and their possessions publicly. The YouTube channel “College Weekly” features various videos in which fraternity chapters of various colleges present their fraternity houses, how they party and also talk about their rituals. In most videos, fraternity brothers are seen flaunting their expensive fraternity houses, cars and equipment. What really puts philanthropy significance into perspective is the example of the Theta Chi chapter at the University of Florida. In the video the executive vice president of the chapter says that alumni have donated over four million dollars to the fraternity and with that money the house for the chapter has been built which includes a lot of luxuries like the alumni room featured in the video. That room is used for social gatherings, watching football and other things (College Weekly, YouTube Video). The same fraternity has raised about forty-three thousand dollars for their advertised philanthropy cause, the United Services Organization (Theta Chi). Not often is it possible to access information about money coming into a Greek life organization or about how it is spent but at least this example shows that the amounts that flow into philanthropy need to be put in perspective with the general amount of money that Greek life organizations accumulate through previously mentioned channels such as housing dues, alumni donations, membership fees and so on.

2.3 History

The history of college fraternities and sororities dates back to the beginning of American higher education facilities and the first colleges. With the first sororities being founded decades after their male counterparts, a large part of Greek life history focuses on the development of the all-male fraternity system as the first organizations where students would organize and congregate in a social and academic setting with their college peers.

Even though professional, academic or honors fraternities and sororities evolved with and exist alongside the social fraternities, the social fraternities seem to draw the most attention and coverage in media and academic discourse. Additionally, the culture around Greek life and the topic of its history remain relevant topics today and are controversially discussed. An ostensive example of this can easily be found by simply searching for videos on *YouTube* on the history of fraternities. A video with almost two million views on the YouTube channel *Vox Video* discusses the history of fraternities on US college campuses and why they are still tolerated. The video tries to offer a critical view on the various aspects of Greek life. A quick glance at the comment section offers an array of opinions ranging from claiming that the video maker is just bitter to never have made it into a fraternity himself, to positive acclaim for highlighting controversial aspects of Greek life history. Any commenters share positive experiences from their involvement in Greek life and others are openly hostile towards the video makers:

“Sounds like someone at *Vox* didn’t get a bid :(“ (*Vox*, Why colleges tolerate fraternities), comments one user. This is a good example of the controversial nature of Greek life and its history and role.

Despite the discussion within its comment section, the video itself offers some basic information and benchmark data on the history of Greek life that deserves to be expanded upon to better grasp the nature of Greek life’s history in the US.

The *Vox* video’s narrator mentions that the existence and influence of secretive, male societies, such as fraternities of freemasons, played a critical role in the late 18th century US culture and politics and that it is not surprising that these secret societies would also take a foothold in the United States collegiate system (*Vox*). However, this does not explain the reason why these

societies were formed at colleges in the first place and why they are described as secretive in their nature.

Unlike today, where college education in the United States is well established and widely available, higher education had a different status, form and representation in early 18th century United States. Nicholas L. Syrett describes the situation of college education in the US from the 18th century onwards and lays out the framework to understanding fraternal organizations in his book *The Company He Keeps, A history of white college fraternities*. Syrett's book serves as one of the main sources for reconstructing the historical context of today's Greek life system.

US colleges of the seventeen-hundreds were created to educate men on their journey towards becoming ministers. Only later in the early eighteen-hundreds did non-clerical education find its way into college curricula. The prestigious Harvard college was founded to produce ministers and most colleges were meant for vocational training. Liberal Arts were, at that time, not considered worthy of being taught. Traditions in education and culture were firmly held on to by various institutions of higher education. Allegheny College, founded in a Pennsylvania frontier town in 1817, had a chip of Plymouth Rock enclosed in its cornerstone. The infamous Yale report of 1828 denounced any critics that attacked the orthodox and antiquated curriculum and critics described the curricula of American colleges at their founding time as antiquated and unrepresentative of the knowledge and wisdom acquired by the world's philosophers and scientists. (Earnest, 21, 24)

Rather than a provider of contemporary education, college was an instructor of the students on their way to becoming decent citizens of the American Republic (Earnest, 11-12). Strict rules regarding meal times, being allowed to leave campus, usage of books along with hefty fines for violations of these rules were attempts to impose the administrations' will upon students (Earnest

42-43). Especially in the Southern states, where students were used to owning slaves, taking strict order from Northern educated professors and faculty was not well received and often led to violent outbursts against faculty members (Earnest 44-46).

The general number of students at these institutions was a low percentage of the population and could be divided into three groups: poor students aiming for a clergy career, wealthy students pursuing business ventures or general better education befitting their higher social class and, thirdly, the middle class, whose characteristics remain undescribed by Syrett (Syrett 15-16). Colleges at the time, for example in the New England region, were, as already mentioned, quite small. For example, the prestigious Amherst College in Massachusetts – a typical example of a New England collegiate institutions in the 19th century – had a mere 120 students enrolled in the year 1846 (Syrett 16). In this context of rather small higher education institutions, compared to today's numbers, the first organized student unions, and precursors to the Greek life system, emerged.

It appears that the small numbers of students at various universities are the framework in which the social and academic intermingling of students was enabled. Syrett mentions literary societies that were run by the students and usually existed in pairs at many colleges, meaning most students would be in one of two student-run literary societies. This is significant, because it gave students the room and environment to flee the regular college curriculum, which was widely perceived as restrictive, untimely and boring by the students (Syrett 16-17). It was in the context of these literary societies that students were able to build a community with its own rules, values and codes of conduct. In short, these literary societies were a kind of social club that offered a welcome change from the less stimulating day-to-day proceedings at the university (Grandillo). There was no mandatory prayer or other disciplinary measures imposed by faculty, but instead

students created a habitus which members abided by. Syrett describes a series of rituals and acts that were established at universities such as Yale University that resemble rituals of today's Greek life culture or even hazing procedures. This includes the rivalries of freshmen and sophomores as well as initiation and greeting rituals that happened outside the formal university procedures and were exclusively organized by the students. As for hazing, Syrett mentions the process of students getting stripped of their clothes, being tarred, feathered, gagged and having to endure certain physical and psychological strains in order to be accepted into their new peer group (Syrett 17-19).

Literary societies also started being self-sufficient in some ways. They raised money for commodities that the college would not provide for its students. This included basic things like rugs, furniture or drapes, but also collecting literature for their own libraries which sometimes even surpassed the collection of the college (Earnest 35). Earnest also names the literary societies as the precursors to the Greek life organizations that followed. In the practice of these societies raising money, one can already spot the later practices of Greek life, which often raises money for philanthropic endeavors. Their first efforts were to raise money for themselves as students to have a better and more educational experience at college. These first philanthropic acts happened in their own best interest, so to speak. Thus, a form of student subculture formed on US campuses, with their own rituals, values and code of conduct. The reason why the Greek letters found their way into these societies' names is because as literary societies, they occupied themselves with studying Greek and indulging in Greek literature and philosophy adding these Greek letters to their organization's names, they tried to convey the notion that they were descendants of that enlightened culture and thus moving in a different direction than the orthodox collegiate system (Syrett 25).

The literary societies gave students a means to organize against faculty rules and restrictions and thus put them in direct conflict with university administration in many places. This led to assaults on faculty members, disturbances of classes with noise, buildings being set on fire and even the deaths of some tutors. Faculty tried to reprimand the students by involving parents, enforcing disciplinary measures and having students sign agreements promising to follow the rules upon entering college (Syrett 22-24). This was the context out of which the first fraternities evolved.

A distinction needs to be made here between the literary societies and fraternities that focus on the social aspect of communal studying and living on a campus. This will be attempted by comparing two Greek life organizations that are often mentioned in the same breath when it comes to mentioning the first fraternity organization: The Kappa Alpha Society and the Phi Beta Kappa fraternity. The first organization that utilized the Greek letters in their name is the Phi Beta Kappa society. Founded in 1776 by five students at the college of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, Phi Beta Kappa introduced and held on to customs and traditions that many other Greek life organizations following in their footsteps would adapt and keep until today. This included, for example, a special form of greeting among members, initiation rites, a seal and a badge to mark the allegiance to their society and a set code of laws of conduct. (Lombardi 2012). Phi Beta Kappa has the characteristics of an honors society, as it focuses primarily on the members' academic progress and the intellectual exchange between members, a key feature and characteristic of the aforementioned literary societies. Until today, honors and professional fraternities or sororities, such as Phi Beta Kappa, focus on furthering academic process related directly to studies at their respective colleges. Extensive social activities and shared housing are rare in this kind of Greek letter organization. Some of the organizations focus on one specific subject such as law, physics

or chemistry and admit only students of these subjects. While social fraternities and sororities are always exclusively for one gender, honor and professional societies can also be co-ed. Simply browsing through the lists of honors societies at colleges across the US will prove this. The yearbooks of the University of New Orleans, for instance, frequently feature pictures and member lists of their honor societies featuring men and women (1965 Trident).

However, a feature of Phi Beta Kappa that, until today, defines the nature of many Greek life organizations, is secrecy. The rituals, customs and codes of conduct are not disclosed to non-members. The organization itself justifies this as follows:

Phi Beta Kappa's first meeting took place on December 5, 1776 in the Apollo Room of the Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg, Virginia. At a time of political and social turmoil, the organization's founders envisioned a secret society that would give members the freedom to discuss any topic they chose. Ever since, freedom of inquiry and expression have served as hallmarks of ΦBK. (History of Phi Beta Kappa)

Secrecy as a means of providing a safe space for members to discuss various topics, be amongst each other and able to converse freely in a time of political turmoil is a feature that fraternities, and later sororities, held and hold dear. Browsing through countless Greek life organizations' public information, one will often find mention of the values of communality and brother- or sisterhood, philanthropies and history that the organizations hold dear, but details about their rituals, laws and procedures remain undisclosed to the general public.

For both social and honor or professional fraternities, their secretive nature was predominantly negatively received by other, non-Greek, parties. The early Greek organizations shared this secretive nature with other groups. Particularly the freemasons were a prominent group

of mostly wealthy and influential people at the time of the late 18th and early 19th century, with members such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin (Vox). In the 1840s and 1850s, the distrust towards the first fraternities grew out of widespread scepticism about secret societies. The Anti-Masonic-Party represented the political body for that mistrust. The climate of suspicion against secret fraternities on and off college campuses led to severe opposition by the institutions that the students and members of certain fraternities attended. The college administrations did not appreciate the fact that students organized academically and socially without faculty or institutional supervision, a conflict that is still relevant today (Earnest 128-129). Around the time that the first social fraternities emerged, the Phi Beta Kappa chapter at Harvard University abandoned the aspect of secrecy as a vital element of their society in order for them to continue their engagement at the school (Harvard Phi Beta Kappa). However, there seem to be almost no other Greek life organizations that have dropped their secretive nature.

The Kappa Alpha Society, founded in 1825, is considered the first social Greek letter organization. This fraternity's first chapter was founded at Union College in Schenectady. This fraternity was committed not only to furthering its members' academic lives, but also to engaging in social activities, and put an emphasis on the fraternal aspect of the organization. As the society itself claims on its website, the aim behind its founding was to break out of the orthodox and antique ways of their college's curriculum and to provide a secular space of interaction, participation and fraternization among the selected students at Union College (Tarleton qtd. in Ka.org) The founding of the Kappa Alpha Society inspired other students at Union College to follow by founding their own Greek fraternities. With the organizations Sigma Phi and Delta Phi, founded in 1827, the so called "Union Triad" was established (Syrett 13). These three fraternities are often mentioned as the precursor for the Greek life system at American colleges that followed

and exists until today. Taking a look at how the three Union Triad fraternities present themselves, there is no lack of mentions of them seeing themselves as the precursor of the modern Greek system, breaking out of the orthodox ways of college institutions at their time. They also placed an emphasis on the fraternal and social aspect of their respective societies:

They called their organization a society and clearly had in mind the same thing which had motivated the founders of Phi Beta Kappa 50 years earlier. But, consciously or not, they chose to prevent their group from going in the direction its predecessor had. They opted for a stronger dose of fraternalism and made it clear from the beginning that this was to be a student organization, not one controlled by its alumni. As a "literary society" the group encouraged the exposition of outrageous ideas and became an early exponent of the idea of "Progress," a concept central to the development of the U.S. in the 19th century--and one viewed by most theologians in 1825 as rank heresy. (Tarleton qtd. in ka.org)

The Delta Phi Fraternity, along with Kappa Alpha Society and Sigma Phi Society, comprise the hallowed Union Triad - the first three social college fraternities in North America. From these three fraternities at Union College (regarded as the "Mother of Fraternities") can be traced the extensive Greek system seen on college campuses today. Much as now, anti-fraternity sentiment was rampant in the college administration. [...] Delta Phi has continued in the exclusive tradition they established to promote a strong brotherhood of men of the highest character and ability. (A Tradition of Excellence)

The Sigma Phi Society was founded on March 4th, 1827, on the campus of Union College in Schenectady, NY. It is the second oldest Greek fraternal organization in the United States.

After its founding, the Sigma Phi became part of a triumvirate of Greek letter organizations at Union that would come to be known as the “Union Triad.” These were the first three social “fraternities” in the United States, and as such hold a special place in the pantheon of Greek letter organizations nationwide. With the founding of the Beta of New York at Hamilton College in 1831, the Sigma Phi Society became the first Greek organization to establish a chapter at another college. (History of Sigma Phi Society)

These three fraternities describe themselves as social organizations that foster the value of brotherhood and communality amongst their members. They proudly present themselves as precursors to the modern Greek life system. As mentioned in the excerpt of Sigma Phi’s history, the organizations from Union College quickly spread out to other institutions as well. To explore how the Greek life system with its fraternities and later sororities expanded and eventually became a nation-wide phenomenon, one must look into how these organizations went about establishing chapters at other universities around the country. Fraternities had an interest in expanding their organization to other institutions across the country and a vetting and scouting process to figure out where to establish so called “sister chapters” developed.

Established fraternities were interested in seeing new chapters of their organizations emerge at different colleges across the country. For that to happen, a student or a group of students at a college would apply to the existing chapters, or the national chapter overseeing all organizations’ operations, by drafting a petition for a charter. That petition would then be evaluated before being approved or rejected. Fraternity members from already established organizations at the other colleges would look into the reputation of the school where the new chapter was to be formed, as well as the students who were petitioning to form it. At the time of these first large scale expansions across colleges nationwide, fraternity members were already

aware of the social and business benefits such a network of associates can have in their professional lives. Thus, associations for alumni were also quickly established and served as a tool for upholding the potentially lifelong connections that fraternity members would establish (Syrett 80).

Based on the reputation that fraternities would make or earn for themselves, students at different colleges would choose to found a new chapter and ask the founding chapter for permission to start a new one (Syrett 84). One could say that through the people that associate with a certain fraternity and by the way they choose to present themselves and their values, every organization builds its own brand that looks to attract similar minded associates. In his book, Syrett features ostensive examples of how prestige, class, birth and ability play a vital role in the founding of Greek life chapters across the United States. It is important for the applying students to be able to boast with their college's reputation as well as their own ability and heritage in order to impress the founding chapter or national organizations. It is described as a rigid process that often involves committees within the Greek organizations who will deem certain requests either worthy or unworthy (Syrett 84-88). The various documents that Syrett analyzed in his research that show the application processes and expansions of various organizations to college campuses nationwide illustrate the appeal of social and professional connections by particular students.

The emergence of national organizations with chapters across many colleges is what separates these social Greek fraternities from other Greek letter organizations that predated them, such as honors or professional societies and also from literary societies or debate clubs. Through the establishment of alumni associations, national communication among members and a vetting process, college men could count on connections in their professional and social lives that would surpass the college years, and would rely on like-minded "brothers" to spend their adolescent college time with (Syrett 118-119). Thus, it can be argued that Greek life was an inclusive

experience, but only when one was able to obtain membership. The privilege of being part of it was until and also past the American Civil War reserved for white men who could afford college and fraternity membership (Syrett 119).

During the Civil War, Greek life activities and the formation of new chapters receded and only one new fraternity was founded. Correspondence between fraternity chapters in the Northern states and chapters in the rivaling South, however, did not stop. Some fraternities embraced and boasted of their members' military feats both within the Union and the Confederate states, and some fraternity men still considered their fraternity members of other chapters their brothers, even though they were pitted against each other in war (Syrett 110-113). The war did not put an end to further expansion and formations of Greek life organizations. After the end of the Civil War, new Greek life organizations formed. In the South, the Lexington Triad formed: Three fraternities that still went by Greek names but also based their values primarily on what they defined as Judeo-Christian values. Additionally, a number of "female fraternities" or sororities established themselves (Danchik 2017).

After the war, critical voices against fraternities first spoke out against the framework and social structure of these organizations. While the first criticism that Greek life organizations faced in the late 19th century was chiefly against their secretive nature, the elitist and social class component was now also targeted by critical voices. Fraternity men were pointed out to be in a financially privileged position that allowed them to not only pay college tuition easily but also the expenses of being in a fraternity, with its fees and other endeavors that require financial participation from members. Additionally, critics pointed out the often poor academic performance by fraternity members and the meddling in college politics as well as raising their members to conformity as opposed to critical thinking and individualism (Syrett 121). This criticism, made

by non-Greek students of the University of California in Berkeley, led to a series of events that reveal for one the first times in their history the power of the Greek system at colleges. Some fraternity members of that university lashed out violently against the publishers of the student newspaper, which led to the university deciding to ban fraternities from campus. That did, however, not happen, because alumni of the fraternity threatened to cease financial support towards the university (Syrett 121-122). This goes hand in hand with the statement in the *Vox* video on fraternities mentioned earlier (*Vox*): Universities relied, to a certain degree, on donations and financial support from fraternities, sororities and their alumni (*Vox*). Syrett makes the argument that in the antebellum period, the motives for young men to go to college had changed. Careers in the clergy were no longer at the center of college curricula, but rather vocational preparation for law, medicine and business. Many of these jobs required good education and connections in order to establish oneself after college. Some schools had more prestigious reputations than others and affluent families would aim to see their kids in these institutions. Being in a well-established and well-connected fraternity only adds to that prestige (Syrett 124-125). The elitist nature that critics see in Greek life is thus definitely a part of the history of some organizations.

It was also only after the Civil War and about thirty-five years after the founding of the first fraternity that the female equivalent, the first sorority, was founded. The Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority was founded in 1870 at Asbury University in Indiana. The founder, Bettie Locke, was denied entrance into any of the male fraternities and also found no previously established all-female Greek organization in the country to support the founding of a new chapter and thus – along with three fellow female students – founded the first female Greek organization. (*Theta Roots*) While Kappa Alpha Theta is labeled as a sorority today, the term sorority did not show up until

1874 with the founding of Gamma Phi Beta at Syracuse University. Before that, female Greek organizations would usually label themselves as female fraternities or women's fraternities (Courtney 2017).

It seems ironic that it was the denial of entrance by men and especially fraternity men to many aspects of college life gave rise to the first female Greek organization, as many of them felt marginalized at their schools. At the beginning of the 1850s, some schools opened their doors to women as well. They did so at different times, but the reactions were comparable. Women entering college had limited to no access to many extra-curricular activities, often dominated by fraternity men, and were also mostly kept from joining literary societies, honors clubs and so on (Syrett 172-175). This gave rise to a similar urge that college men felt at the beginning of the American collegiate system, to organize against a restrictive and discriminating system and further one's own interests. Thus, the first sororities sprang up on US colleges. Despite the dismay of the male dominated campuses, numerous women's societies were founded and grew in their numbers.

With Greek life alive and well after the Civil War, the American collegiate system changed in its numbers, demography and culture following World War I and the 1920s. Student enrollments grew massively, with almost 600.000 students at the beginning of the 1920s and over one million at the beginning of the 1930s. Members of the American middle class would send their sons and daughters to college to prepare them for their career. College education had become somewhat mainstream (Syrett 186-187).

It is the 20th century that saw the emergence of some phenomena that are still criticized about Greek life culture today. These shall be only mentioned briefly in this overview. Syrett mentions the enhanced competition among students for prestige and social recognition, a battle in which Greek life organizations and colleges played a significant role as they could vary drastically

in their membership and tuition fees. Thus, certain organizations and institutions became available only to financially privileged students and also often unattainable for foreigners and/or immigrants (Syrett 188-189). According to Syrett, Greeks used their influence to take find a foothold in many extracurricular activities, student government and other programs on campus, in order to assert dominance through exclusion of non-Greek students (Syrett 197). Some universities, like the University of Cincinnati, even established new rules in order to keep Greek life members from taking too much control over campus politics (Going Greek History 1920-1940). Syrett additionally points out various statistics and data that show how Greek life members, especially fraternity men, performed poorly academically, and uses this as an indicator that Greek life had abandoned its core aim to further academic study, but rather become an elitist retreat for privileged students to enjoy leisure and social irresponsibility in their college days (Syrett 197-198).

After a steady growth period of Greek life members and organizations during the 1920s and 1930s, the involvement of the United States in World War II was also felt in Greek life. With many men going off to fight in the war, college activity and, as a consequence, Greek life activity, declined during wartime. Many fraternity houses were taken over to be used by the armed forces, many chapters closed down, and between 1943 and 1944, 40% of active chapters were suspended. An example of the decline in Greek life presence on a college campus is the case of the University of Cincinnati: As more male students were drafted into the army, the number of active chapters on campus was reduced by more than half, and even the sororities lamented the lack of fraternity men on campus. A Cincinnati newspaper published the following lament by sorority women in which they complain about the scarcity of male dates for their activities. This quote is illustrative for the social nature of Greek life organizations as well:

Sororities! Nuts! A heck of a lot of sorority life WE got this year. With all the men gone we've been at our wit's end to get dates for ourselves, much less for our pledges. And as for exchange dinners, record parties, beer brawls, coke dates, etc., well, they've been mighty few. We've had to improvise with a few sandwich dates, for instance, two blondes, and a brunette. And all those cozy little hen parties — boring, but they pass the time. (Going Greek History 1940-1960)

The lull in Greek life activity opened room for a discussion of whether fraternities and sororities should continue to be a part of college life across the USA, leading to lobbying efforts by Greek life members to maintain their status after wartime. Even though critical voices, reports and other outlets pleaded for a reduction of Greek life, abolishment was not achieved at any university (Syrett 233-236).

The postwar time was a time for regrouping and growth for Greek life across the country. Syrett attributes the culture of conservatism as a breeding ground for the re-establishment of Greek life, as he claims that, following World War 2, fraternities in particular became the bastions of conservatism, conformity and careerism. While this interpretation remains up for debate, depending on which sources are evaluated, it is a fact that Greek life grew steadily in the decades following World War 2. The 1960s saw the biggest expansion in chapter numbers since the 1920s and, even though the percentage of students involved in Greek life declined, the numbers of overall members grows steadily (Syrett 237-238). Today, there are about 9 million people involved in Greek life.

In his historic overview, Syrett often dives into the cultural aspects of members of fraternities, such as masculinity, gender roles, racial discrimination, sexism, elitism and alcohol abuse. All of these topics are of significance when analyzing the culture surrounding Greek life.

As this paper is dedicated to shining a light on the local Greek life activities at the University of New Orleans, these topics will be mentioned and further discussed if they are relevant to the discussion of the history of UNO Greek life. However, the next chapters will try to highlight some aspects of the public debate that surrounds the Greek life system and its controversial aspects.

2.4 Criticism and public debate

Today, most Greek life organizations are accepted and incorporated into their collegiate surroundings. The school's administrations work with Greek life on an official level throughout most colleges in the United States. Greeks are allowed to represent their organizations during official events that often happen on campus and contact with Greek life can directly be established through most universities' homepage or through other official channels. With the National Interfraternity Conference and the National Panhellenic Conference, fraternities and sororities are organized and represented on a national level and there are no reports of a scarcity for new prospective members whenever rush week arrives.

However, one cannot research the phenomenon of Greek life without coming across a seemingly endless stream of reports that highlight its negative aspects as well. Both in the past and present there have been public debates and academic discussions about the flaws of the Greek life system. These criticisms have less to do with the institutional hardships and conflicts between schools and Greeks that were relevant in the early days of Greek life, but rather with what happens within the context of fraternity and sorority events, rituals, customs, traditions, values and practices. This means, discussing Greek life is not only a matter of analyzing the relationship between the higher education system and its students, but also considering the reaction of non-Greeks and the public to what the implications of "going Greek" are or what they might entail.

The debate about the pros and cons of Greek life are sometimes difficult to summarize and track as there are many aspects covered by the critics. Additionally, statements of Greek life organizations or individual members will often times dismiss criticism about the Greek life system claiming that there are some individual occurrences that deserve criticism, but the system does not deserve the bad reputation it gets from critics. Often the redeeming qualities of Greek life involvement are praised by people writing in defense of Greek life and criticism is usually done away with a few words, as it was observable in the examples in chapter 2.2.10. about philanthropy (Philanthropy not partying, Musulin 2014)

However, this does not deflect critics from looking into the flaws of Greek life, especially when a new scandal or public debate finds its way into the media or to public attention. A fairly recent example is the discussion about the nature of Delta Kappa Epsilon (DKE) fraternity at the University of Yale. The DKE chapter counts among their alumni several US presidents, including George W. Bush and his father George H.W. Bush. An alumnus of DKE whose name was most recently involved in public debates is Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. A 2018 article in the New Yorker describes how the sexual abuse allegations against Kavanaugh also led to scrutiny into his collegiate past, which included his membership at the Yale chapter of DKE. The many allegations and incidents that were uncovered or debated all shed a bad light on the fraternity and show how the colleges struggle when it comes to disciplining their Greek life students. These issues required new policies and featured aspects of discrimination based on race or cases of sexual assault that needed to be addressed (Orbey 2018). This highly prominent case illustrates well that Greek life remains controversial and is still cause for criticism, reforms and public debates.

Critical voices often speak up against Greek life's apparent nature of discrimination against people who do not fit their criteria. That may be being black as a reason for exclusion from mostly

white male fraternities but can also be based on religious beliefs or sexual orientation. Furthermore, critics see a difficult relationship when it comes to dealing with problems of sexism, gender roles and, especially, masculinity among Greeks that lead to the enforcement of further questionable practices such as hazing, peer pressure and misconduct against campus rules or codes.

Lastly, a look is taken at instances where sexual misconduct and even incidents of students dying has occurred as well as how they have been dealt with on a legal level, publicly and by the involved members or organizations. The analysis of this thesis aims to draw a picture of the climate that many associate with Greek life. The question, whether or not criticism of the system as a whole is completely justified shall remain open, as there is not enough data available to make a definite statement. However, analyzing the debate around Greek life on a national scale will help to judge the research conducted for this paper at the University of New Orleans.

2.4.1 Hazing and alcohol abuse

The description of the word hazing might as well have been included in this section of the thh about Greek life terminology, because everyone who researches Greek life will eventually stumble upon this word in one way or another. That is, of course, unfortunate since this term is badly connotated for many reasons.

In the context of Greek life and the college experience, hazing is classified as follows by the official website of the University of Michigan:

Hazing as defined in Garret's Law (M.C.L. 750.411t), includes the following willful acts, with or without the consent of the individual involved: physical injury; assault or battery; kidnapping or imprisonment; physical activity that knowingly or recklessly subjects a person or persons to an unreasonable risk of physical harm or to severe mental or emotional harm; degradation, humiliation, or compromising of moral or religious values; forced consumption of any

substance; placing an individual in physical danger, which includes abandonment; and undue interference with academic endeavors. Acts of hazing only include those acts which are done for the purpose of pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, participating in, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization. Acts of hazing include acts inflicted by an individual onto one or more people. (What is hazing, University of Michigan)

As this elaborate quote illustrates, history and past incidents have shown how broad the spectrum of hazing, which has been reported to occur in Greek life, can be. Most university homepages will offer a definition of hazing that is more or less identical with the one offered by the University of Michigan. Additionally, there is even a website dedicated solely to the problem of hazing, how to educate people about it and how to stop it (hazingprevention.org) which shows the scope of the problem and its relevance. To better understand this issue, some of the examples of what hazing has looked like and still looks like today shall be illustrated. Also, the way cases of hazing have been treated publicly and by the people involved will serve to better understand the depth of this issue.

Hazing, as the act of putting new members of a group through difficult, challenging or even humiliating situations, is not a phenomenon that was started exclusively within the Greek life community. Already before the first Greek organizations emerged, students performed acts upon their inferior classmen in order to make them feel their inferiority and take their position as their underlings who have to earn their place. It is also not a phenomenon that is exclusive to the American higher education system, but is, in some ways, found also in the history of the British collegiate system, as well as in other instances in history ranging back as early as Ancient Greece. The underlying idea behind this practice, however, seems to be comparable (Sterner 1-3). To focus more on the higher education system in America, it is important to note that hazing was performed

at colleges decades before the first Greek life organizations were formed. In fact, Hazing was already common in the preceding literary societies. Second year students would haze first year students in order to subordinate them. Many humiliating acts were performed by sophomores that included practices that are mostly unfamiliar and no longer performed today, or, at least, not heard of in contemporary reports of hazing. These practices often lead to a vicious circle of a hazing culture, as the freshmen who lived through the hardships of hazing would repeat the process upon new college students a year later (Syrett 18-19).

Reports about hazing escalating to a point where students died and heavy use of alcohol became more frequent surfaced later and, in many cases, also occurred within the Greek life community. The first death due to hazing practices happened in 1873 during the pledge process of the Cornell chapter of the Kappa Alpha society, which is also the first social fraternity. The student and Kappa Alpha pledge Mortimer N. Leggett died after being left on his own while being blindfolded. He fell into a gorge and died due to the sustained injuries. The treatment of this fatal incident proves to be exemplary of how little consequences fraternity members had to face for such occurrences. None of the involved Greek members of Kappa Alpha society were prosecuted or even expelled from school or their Greek organization. The father of the deceased student even said that his son's consent to the hazing practices was proof that whatever happened was as much his son's responsibility as it was the responsibility of his hazers within the Kappa Alpha society. While Cornell University went on to warn about the potential dangers of hazing practices, no real action was taken to prohibit or stop the rituals. Twenty-six years later, in 1899, another Cornell student perished during a hazing challenge imposed by the Kappa Alpha society. Once again, the involved students' deeds remained without legal consequences (Nuwer qt in Sterner 7).

In the early 20th century, as hazing deaths became more common, the phenomenon was frequently discussed in the public sphere and partly triggered the founding of the National Interfraternity Conference. However, the NIC remained only as influential and powerful in its regulatory power as its members allowed it to be (Stern 7-8). A look at Wikipedia's list of hazing deaths in the United States since the 1900s shows the majority of hazing deaths occurred within Greek life organizations and the most recent case of a student dying dates back to November 10th 2019 (List of Hazing Deaths).

Author and questioning observer of the Greek life system Hank Nuwer offers a list of the many hazing deaths in the USA in which many of the practices of various Greek life organizations, mostly fraternities, are described and the circumstances of the deadly incidents are more closely discussed (Nuwer Database). Stern, based on Nuwer's work, gives a brief outline of how hazing practices changed during the 20th century. Hazing is described as a persisting phenomenon over the course of Greek life's existence, especially as a way of being initiated into the tightly knit community that is the Greek life organization (Stern 7-8). Stern includes the following sentence that describes the appeal of joining Greek life at colleges:

The reason for their [social fraternities] growth was attributed to the fact that more and more young men were leaving behind the brotherhood, friendship and camaraderie they had in their close-knit frontier communities and fraternity membership was an easy way to re-establish close social and emotional connections with other students. (Stern 6)

This quote is not only a good attempt of explaining the Greek life phenomenon as a whole, but it is also an explanation for the voluntary participation of pledges in hazing procedures upon joining a fraternity or sorority. Syrett also mentions the widespread willingness by pledges across the country to subjugate themselves to these often crude and dangerous practices. Others, however,

have tried to stop the hazing practices at their colleges in order to avoid them, yet, they still wanted to join the organizations they are pledged for and anonymously reported hazing that often occurs during the so-called Hell Week (Syrett 247). In Greek life terminology, Hell Week describes the rough phase of an initiation period and that is where hazing usually occurs (Merriam-Webster).

While the methods and practices to haze new members might have changed over time, the practice seems to have remained, as there are still reported deaths among Greek life pledges today. In fact, more deaths because of hazing have happened since 1990 than in all previously recorded years (Hollman in Schmalzer 3).

Because it is still frequently mentioned in today's discussion about hazing, the correlation of hazing practices and alcohol abuse should also be mentioned and pointed out here. Hazing has included many different tasks that were laid upon pledges over time and students have perished from aforementioned escapades like being left alone in the countryside. Other deaths have occurred because of physical injuries or beatings, especially with paddles, a common practice in Greek life. In another instance, a student died in 1959 after choking on a piece of liver that he was forced to eat (Syrett 246). In the time following the Second World War, alcohol has increasingly found its way into the hazing practices of various organizations. Syrett mentions the Delta Psi chapter of Columbia University in New York which, by the early 1960s, asked their pledges to drink a certain amount of alcohol in order to pass the initiation (Syrett 247). Columbia University today, emphasizes their anti-hazing policy on their website and points to the New York State laws that label hazing a criminal offence (Anti-Hazing Policy). The involvement of alcohol in hazing and Greek life culture in general is often highlighted in popular culture in movies or TV shows such as *Animal House*, *American Pie Presents: Beta House*, *Blue Mountain State*, and many more. Partying and having to drink excessively in order to gain recognition and membership within

Greek life, is a common trope in all of the mentioned examples. The representation of Greek life and alcohol in popular culture is surely not a work of fiction. Observing what policies colleges have installed today to prevent hazing or reading news reports about hazing related injuries or deaths, will often have alcohol consumption, labeled as binge-drinking, mentioned as a critical factor. Overall numbers and data on alcohol consumption connected to hazing unfortunately seem to be unobtainable. The reason for that is most likely the fact that many practices within Greek life until today remain secret and that there are probably many incidents that occur that are never disclosed to college administration or the public. Nuwer also points out that we can only know about reported incidents of hazing deaths and that we do not know how many cases remain unreported and unheard of (Nuwer Database). The organization StopHazing.org does offer some data that dates back to 2008 which is hard to fact-check. In the data they offer, it becomes visible that hazing occurs in other organizations besides Greek life as well. However, social fraternities and sororities have the biggest share of hazing incidents. Also, most reported hazing procedures involve alcohol (stophazing.org). The validity and relevance of this data remains questionable. However, the significance of alcohol is made obvious when reviewing the anti-hazing policies and campaigns that are publicly propagated by various colleges. As an example, Cornell University published an informational pamphlet to not only point out the risks of alcohol in connection to hazing and initiation rites, but also to inform about how to provide potentially lifesaving assistance to people who experience an emergency situation due to over-intoxication. The different anti-hazing campaigns at Cornell University make the sincerity of the problem visible (Hazing at Cornell). Another, almost comical, report that highlights the role of alcohol is a publicity stunt at Franklin College in 2017. College athletes went five days without drinking alcohol to highlight the so-called National Hazing Prevention week in order to raise awareness against alcohol abuse.

This was later lauded on the website of Hank Nuwer, an author who fights for awareness against hazing practices (2017). The policy and public examples that connect hazing and alcohol consumption are seemingly endless and both male and female Greek organizations are involved and affected. Today, 44 US states have anti-hazing laws in place that feature various disciplinary measures, fines, penalties and even jail time for offenders. However, the enforcement of these rules and surveillance over potential hazing dangers seems to be a challenge that law enforcement, colleges, Greek organizations, students, alumni and other involved parties have not yet fully mastered.

2.4.2 Elitism and discrimination

Not rarely is the aspect of elitism brought up in the media and scholarly articles about Greek life. A simple contemporary example ties in well with the aforementioned example of hazing. Schmalzer describes the practices of some sororities that will pick their members not merely because of academic merit, but also make their prospective new members' looks and social status a criterion when it comes to giving them a bid to join their organization. Thus, prospective members are discriminated based on criteria that are for the most part out of their direct control or influence, which can cause emotional pain and damage (Schmalzer 7-8).

But what seems to be the general debate about elitism and social exclusion among Greek life organizations? The following example will illustrate the debate:

Fraternities are the perfect example of when privilege looks after privilege for privilege's sake. Fraternities will help their members to succeed where others who are just as capable but did not have the fortune of joining a fraternity will be sidelined. This guy talks about the success he had where his membership was key to that, which simply allowed other people to not be successful because they are not part of the club. When powerful people get together to

look after their own, the net benefit to society is negative, not positive. It's always been the case, and always will be, but don't pretend it's anything but mutually exclusive benefit for the members and them only. Society in general is worse as a result. (TedxTalks, User comment by *elink1*)

This comment and the video that it was made in response to, serve well to show the controversy surrounding Greek life organizations and the connection to an individual social status. This comment is an answer to a video in which a fraternity member and former chapter president of the Sigma Phi Alpha fraternity at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, California, holds a TedTalk about the positive aspects of being in a Greek life organization such as his former one. What makes the juxtaposition of the comment to the TedTalk speaker Kamal Andrawis so interesting is that most of the things listed as benefits and redeeming factors of Greek life are seen as the points of criticism by the commentator. The speaker talks about how his chapter was quickly able to raise money after a fellow member faced hospital bills. Also, he talks about how big the emphasis on leadership training is and how former members and alumni will pass down opportunities for jobs and internships to younger members of their fraternity. While all these examples listed by the speaker seem to be something that students can benefit from, the commentator seems to criticize exactly that. The passing down of opportunities and the facilitation and establishment of a social network is at the center of the critique. The main point of the critic seems to be that all the success is only possible through membership and that this membership within the Greek community is not open for everybody, which implicates an exclusionary aspect of Greek life (TedxTalks). Additionally, research conducted at various universities has also yielded a conclusion that supports the argument of Greek life's supposed elitist nature. It has been concluded that it is sometimes hard or impossible to obtain leading positions in student

government, extra-curricular activities, clubs or social events within one's college without being part of the influential Greek system. Often, Greeks of various organizations banding together and bundling the voting power is a determining factor in the outcome of certain campus elections. At the University of Alabama that Greek electorate has even been given its own nickname; "The Machine" (DeSantis 8).

In general, it can definitely be claimed that people that were at one point part of a Greek life organization are well represented in high-status and powerful positions later in life. Not only most US presidents, but also the majority of congressmen and congresswomen, senators, supreme court judges and other people in high offices and especially influential personas in the private sector and business are former Greek life members (Greek life statistics). Alan DeSantis offers some illustrative figures that show the representation of Greek life members in the public, political and private sector domain up until 2003. The list goes to show that 76% of U.S. senators, 120 of the *Forbe's* 500 CEOs and 18 U.S. presidents since 1877 were Greeks. At the time these figures were current, only 8.5% of U.S. college students were part of Greek life. DeSantis raises a vital point when he adds that:

[...] the members of America's Greek system do not remain isolated on college campuses forever. They eventually grow older, leave their Greek houses, and enter the general population. Given the fact that there are already millions of Greek alumni in America today and that their ranks are augmented by 200,000 graduating seniors every spring, [...] Far from being an academic exercise, understanding the Greek system is a part of understanding America. (DeSantis 8-9)

This is an interesting quote by DeSantis, who is in his book very critical of the influence of Greeks within college campuses and the country in general. This quote is noteworthy because

DeSantis highlights the same features and qualities of Greek life as he speaker of the aforementioned video, Kamal Andrawis. The fact that DeSantis mentions these aspects from a critical point of view and Andrawis mentions basically the same point as a reason for praising the Greek system, shows once again the potential for divided opinions on the issue.

The debate remains whether these accomplishments and achievements of former Greeks are merited through individual hard work and personal application, or if being part of the Greek community equips one with benefits that are accessible only to members. If that is indeed part of the reason for being successful, then the most important question to be asked is whether or not anyone could gain membership in a Greek life organization if he or she desires it. As already mentioned in the section about housing or badges and pins, Greek life does not come without cost. Costs and fees that are due apart from actual membership fees will definitely have an impact for students of lower financial status leading to the favoritism of students of more financial means. A lamented consequence of that is that a highly underrepresented part of the college population, Greeks, end up being highly overrepresented in influential positions post-college. The situation is especially exclusionary at elite colleges that are already hard to attend for lower income students due to high fees. Colleges such as Princeton or Cornell have a student population in which most students are already part of high-earning, more privileged sections of the country's population and the underrepresented low-income students at these colleges are significantly limited in their options or means to join a prestigious Greek life organization for which the dues and fees are costly (Chang 2014).

Additionally, Syrett makes the point that the exclusion of others usually happens in favor of the more privileged, mostly white male population many times in his historical report about fraternities. He emphasizes especially exclusion based on money, race, religion and social status,

and the financial means that fraternity members and alumni have to pressure colleges to act in their favor. The title of Syrett's book *The Company He Keeps* itself hints at this core point of elitism within Greek life. Syrett claims many times that fraternity men take great care of who is allowed into their organization and that new people entering Greek life do not disrupt the established social structure. That structure consists mostly of people who can afford the privilege to participate in Greek life and also fulfill the social and often, unfortunately, the racial requirements to join (Syrett 91, 161, 185, 193-193). There are many articles and opinion pieces to be found in which the consensus boils down to the analysis that especially fraternities serve the function to maintain, perpetuate and strengthen an already privileged and homogenous group of people; straight, white, affluent and Christian men (Chang 2014).

To provide a local example of how this favored treatment among brothers and sisters of Greek life might look like, I interviewed two members of the Theta Xi fraternity at the University of New Orleans. In their statements, both admitted that there have been cases where their fraternity had to deny access to students who applied to their organization because they could not afford the fees that need to be paid to the organization (Kal Landy and Gage Cochran Interview). Also, one member disclosed that every graduating member of the Theta Xi chapter of the University of New Orleans receives access to a database of all Theta Xi alumni via the social media platform *LinkedIn*. Through that, according to Gage Cochran, alumni can reach out to recent graduates who belonged to the same fraternity and vice versa (Gage Cochran Interview). This example does illustrate an opportunity that is open to these members of a Greek life organization that is not available for outsiders. It remains unclear how the exact alumni connections between Greek life members look like as this information is not easy to come by with regular online research and most

likely remains undisclosed to nonaffiliated people. An article in *USA Today* labels this phenomenon an unspoken credit to Greek life that should not be underestimated in its value:

There is an unspoken credit that comes along when introducing yourself as a brother or sister in Greek life. You immediately present yourself as a part of an organization. For anyone in Greek life, they have recollections of their responsibilities in their chapter and consider you as part of the Greek fam. And to anyone in the same sorority or fraternity as you, well consider it an automatic foot in the door. (Dara 2014)

2.4.3 Gender roles and sexual misconduct

Fraternities predate sororities by several decades and the college campus was a place for men for many years after the founding of the US higher education system. As the history of Greek life in section 2.3 already pointed out, women had to face and overcome adversity in many ways once they were allowed to attend college. Eventually, the first women would form the first women-fraternities and today, many college women are organized in sororities. However, all is not equal it seems. Differences in the recruiting system, reports about rampant sexism among fraternity men and critic on reinforcement of seemingly antiquated gender roles are a frequent topic among Greek life members and critics alike. The establishment of the female counterpart to the male fraternities has not, it seems, cleared the atmosphere of sexism, sexual misconduct and assault and discriminatory practices.

Historical and contemporary analysis often claims that fraternities represent a space in which masculinity and the idea of being manly is a crucial value that needs to be achieved, maintained and perpetuated. Syrett lists countless examples in which the strive for manliness by fraternities is described. In most of these examples, being manly is associated with winning the

affection and sexual favors of women. The sexual conquest of women was however only part of proving masculinity next to other valued attributes such as being able to drink a lot of alcohol or being athletic. With the emphasis on masculinity, being homosexual or being suspected of homosexuality became the absolute taboo within the fraternity space. This fostered a culture of overcompensation leading to a kind of hyper-masculine behavior shown by many fraternity men. Openly hostile sentiment against homosexuality is also well documented. In addition to elaborating on the inner workings of fraternity masculinity, Syrett also describes how strictly people within the Greek system would adhere to certain rules when it comes to dating and finding a partner. That includes the phenomenon of Greeks staying among their own in dating, meaning that fraternity men would look for sorority women and vice versa. The aspect of gender role expectations is illustrated by the example that men would be considered worthy only when they were able to financially provide for the woman and a woman was accomplished when the man she settled for was financially well off (Syrett 60-67, 102, 191-192, 293-297).

Syrett concludes that the culture of sexual misconduct and lewdness towards women is in its essence a product of proving masculinity in the hyper-masculine environment. Tragic cases in which sexual assault and rape occur have a tendency to be unreported or unsanctioned within the fraternal context as the drive for proving masculinity reigns supreme among Greek life peers (Syrett 301-302). The synopsis of Wiersma-Mosley's survey on sexual assault and rape culture on college campuses also puts fraternities in responsibility of playing a significant part in perpetuating and furthering an environment in which sexual assault occurs. This also ties in well with criticism about the elitist status of the Greek system as many perpetrators are either not prosecuted or face only mild consequences for rape, assault or other sexual misconduct. The author also sees responsibility and need for reform within the college as an institution because they often fail to

take action against sexual assault cases committed by their students and thus create an environment in which rape culture can continue to flourish (Wiersma Mosley 2017).

On the counterpart the question remains whether or not female Greek life organizations or sororities also play a role in furthering gender roles and behavior that warrants criticism by contemporaries. Lisa Handler, in a 1995 paper, argues that even though sororities serve as a space in which women can be amongst each other in a safe space, they do not challenge the male dominance within the Greek system or college life. A common feature of sororities and fraternities that Handler identifies is the naturalization of heterosexuality and a culture of silence or discrimination when it comes to homosexual tendencies within the community (Handler 239). Also, similar to fraternity culture, is the forging of a bond between the members through shared rituals, language and events (Handler 240). While the bond of sisters within the sorority can be seen as authentic, strengthening and supportive and as a helpful way to help young women safely navigate through their time at college, Handler ultimately does not see sororities as breaking with traditional gender roles in which women subordinate themselves to men. Male attention, especially attention from fraternity men, continues to have a high value among sorority sisters and potential unease with the status quo and the social structure and rules it demands is to be tolerated. Handler does not see sororities as an emancipatory tool but rather as a compliant factor to a male dominated culture (Handler 252).

Apart from individual members' or chapters' actions that contribute to how gender equality is structured on campus, there are certain frameworks in place within the college system as well as the Greek system that contribute to a status quo that can be argued to be discriminatory against women. One of these regulations is connected to the culture of alcohol abuse, power structures and misconduct. The National Panhellenic Conference as the umbrella organization for 26 national

sororities ruled that alcohol is not to be tolerated within sorority houses and that sororties are prohibited from serving or consuming alcohol at their events (NPC Manual). As a result, fraternities, who are not subject to this rule, take on the privileged role not only as party hosts on campus but also as the providers of alcohol. According to different critics, this leads to a dependency of sorority women on fraternities and their events which in turn grants the fraternity men power over these women as they can make the rules who can and cannot attend the often highly anticipated and desired parties. This phenomenon is also said to fit in with the culture of women having to appease men and feeds into the trope of inequality and inferiority in social and socio-economic status in college, as well as in society in general (Weirich 2017). The consequences of policies and values like these are showcased in a report about sexual violence and assault risks issued by the National Institute of Justice in a 2008 report. Fraternity houses and fraternity parties are labelled as dangerous places for women and especially sorority women are seen as a high-risk demographic to fall victim to sexual assault (National Institute of Justice Report). Existing campaigns against sexual assault on campus like *End Rape on Campus* point out the danger that Greek life and especially fraternities pose for sexual assault, rape and misconduct (EROOC, Greek life). Unfortunately, many recent reported cases about sexual assault within the context of Greek life events or parties are still easily found online. The debate about Greek life and sexual misconduct will likely remain active.

3 ‘Greek life’ on the local scale at the University of New Orleans

3.1 Research

In order to gather information about the Greek life organizations and their members at the University of New Orleans in Louisiana, I have spent approximately two months as a research fellow at the University of New Orleans from March 2019 to May 2019. In order to obtain authentic, qualitative and credible material, I applied several methods to obtain as much knowledge as a non-member of Greek life can get. Due to their secretive nature with their own rules, codes and traditions that are not disclosed to outsiders, it was not an easy challenge to gather enough data to properly paint an overall picture of UNO’s Greek life during the course of the university’s existence. However, the data that has been gathered will highlight at least some of the imprints that Greek life has made at the university. The information about UNO’s Greek system is largely based on the following research methods:

3.1.1 Interviews

I have contacted multiple Greek organizations in pursuit of finding members who were willing to answer questions about their experience within their chapter. Unfortunately, this proved rather ineffective as most of my emails remained unanswered. However, I was able to interview two current members of the Theta Xi fraternity chapter. Their reports cannot serve as a quantitative study or basis to make general claims about UNO’s Greek life but their remarks can serve to illustrate the individual experience of some members within the context of the University of New Orleans and its Greek life history. Fortunately, I was also able to interview Mr. James Bentley. Bentley was a member of the Theta Xi fraternity chapter at UNO in 1970 and a LSUNO student during the 1960s and provided accounts of how his and other Greek life organizations conducted

themselves at that time. Additionally, he is still involved with the Theta Xi fraternity via their alumni association.

In order to gather some information about the position of the University administration and leadership towards the Greek system, UNO representatives were interviewed as well. Fortunately, I was able to sit down and talk with Dr. John Nicklow, leader and president of UNO. As head of operations at the university, his remarks are a credible source to ascertain the university's official position on the Greek system. Additionally, an interview was conducted with Dr. Carolyn Golz, UNO's dean of students, head of student affairs and student involvement and thus also in charge of overseeing Greek life activities and policies on campus. Another interview was conducted in written form with the assistant director of fraternity & sorority life who wished to remain unnamed for this thesis.

3.1.2 UNO Archives

The Earl K. Long university library at the University of New Orleans features an archive in which two major information sources for this research were accessed. In the archives I was able to review the university yearbooks which were published sporadically within the years 1962 and 1992. The 13 yearbook editions that were accessible all feature the number, names and members of all Greek organizations that were represented at UNO during those years.

Another source of information about UNO's history and campus life as well as Greek life involvement is the *Driftwood* magazine. The *Driftwood* is UNO's student newspaper that appears weekly, is run by students and reports campus activities, reflects current debates and hosts various opinion pieces by students and campus staff alike. The magazine is not an official outlet of the university's administration and its comments do not reflect UNO's official policies

(unodriftwood.com). All archived issues of *Driftwood* from 1959 to 2019 were examined for relevant information on UNO's Greek system and its involvement in student life as well as student and reports about the UNO administration's sentiment towards Greek life.

3.1.3 History of the University of New Orleans

The accounts of the University of New Orleans' history serve as an important backdrop to understanding the nature and development of its Greek life system. Robert L. Dupont, in celebration of the university's 50-year anniversary, wrote a book on its history which serves as a useful means of contextualizing the information on its student involvement through Greek life. Additionally, the findings within the UNO archives also contribute to the contextual information that surrounds UNO's Greek life history.

3.2 History of the University of New Orleans

Compared to institutions like Yale, Princeton, Amherst or Duke University, the University of New Orleans lacks a history that spans more than a century or even two centuries, compared to Yale University or others mentioned above.

Obviously, this means that the Greek life chapters at UNO have not been around for many of the challenges and upheavals that organizations at other universities had to face over time. Still, as chapters of national fraternities and sororities which date back more than a century, Greek life at UNO stands within the same tradition. With the first chapter established in the late 1950s, Greek life history at the University of New Orleans is much shorter than at many other universities. This does not mean that there is nothing to report on. The University of New Orleans and its unique history and status is and was home to a number of fraternity and sorority chapters that have all faced their own challenges and tell their own stories. Through extensive research within the

archives of the University of New Orleans, a light can be shed on the college's history as well as the Greek life that inhabits the campus.

Before the name University of New Orleans, or UNO, was established, the university was named LSUNO, short for Louisiana State University in New Orleans. LSUNO was a branch of Louisiana State University and constituted the first state sponsored higher education institution in the New Orleans metropolitan area. The founding of LSUNO was considered by many to be overdue, as New Orleans was the largest metropolitan area in the United States without a state sponsored university (Trident 1962 20). Between the passing of the legislature that led to the founding of LSUNO in 1956 and the opening of the university, two years passed. A site had to be found and eventually LSUNO found its campus at the former site of a Naval Air Station at the Lakefront area on Lakeshore Drive, at the northern end of Elysian Fields Avenue. The university still resides in this spot today (Trident 1962 20).

The circumstances and the time in which students first got to the campus and how they first organized amongst themselves are important for this paper's focus on student life and student involvement.

3.2.1 UNO the commuter university – A gap for Greek life to fill

The University of New Orleans was founded as a commuter's college. This means that students did not live on campus or in university owned facilities. (Dupont 37, 64, 76) This is an important factor to consider when thinking about student life and campus activities. Many other colleges in the United States have most of their students living on or close to campus. This is, until today, not the case with UNO. In fact, only ten years after the founding of the university, the first housing option for students was built: Bienville Hall (Dupont 76). The 1970 yearbook comments on the

first establishment of student housing, saying that it will diminish the commuter status of the school as more people will now live on campus (Trident 1970 31). However, the commuter status of the university never seemed to fully disappear. 22 years later, in the 1992 yearbook, the daily commute for the majority of UNO students is still a relevant topic as the stories of students commuting cover several pages in the yearbook (Privateer 1992).

UNO can still be considered a commuter college today. UNO does offer several housing options for their students via private contractors (Living on Campus) but only about 9% of enrolled students live on campus premises (UNO Student Life). This context is important for understanding the dynamic of student life at UNO because many students come for classes by car or public transport and leave the premises afterwards, while at other colleges, students might be on campus for the better part of their day. In the 1990 yearbook, a pro Greek life student sums up his motivation for joining a fraternity as follows:

At a school like UNO, a commuter campus, you find nothing to do in between class. I know that I needed more out of college. (1990 Privateer, 127)

Dupont mentions that the first students to arrive at LSUNO encountered a “clean slate”, meaning there was little infrastructure, academic life and duties were still somewhat unstructured. There were no signs of student organizations, a university mascot, traditions or similar socially cohesive elements. Most students would arrive from different parts of the city, some from different states or even different countries. The first establishment of student organizations and Greek life happened in 1958 and Dupont labels them support mechanisms for students who are freshly coming to the university and lists some of the activities through which Greek life organizations involved themselves in campus life. (Dupont 96-97).

A personal interview with James Bentley contributes to the validity of the claim that especially social interaction and cohesion among students was lacking in the early days of UNO. This gave the Greek life organizations an important role to play and the opportunity to fill that gap. Bentley also says that the fact that the transitional phase from high school to university was undergoing a change made Greek life especially appealing to him. He elaborates that many students coming out of high school were not up to par with university standards, which made it hard to participate in class for him and his peers. For him, that was the reason to seek out the support system that a fraternity could offer him in order to succeed academically (Bentley Interview). The 1989 yearbook, *Privateer*, features a self-description and advertisement of Greek life organizations that goes along the same lines as Mr. Bentley's recollections. In this example, Greeks also advertise the personal connections, friendships and support system that they can offer their members. As in the interview with Mr. Bentley, the fact is addressed that many students come from different high schools and encounter a new environment in which they do not yet know anyone. The pro Greek life sentiment in the yearbook goes on to list various testimonials of students who are happy that they joined a Greek life organization. It is even conceded that Greek life makes up only about 2% of the college population but highlights that "once you are accepted into a sorority or fraternity, you are a member for life" (Privateer 1989, 159). This highlights once more the concept of lifelong commitment to one's organization.

An interview with current Theta Xi fraternity member Gage Cochran gave insights into the personal motivation that made him pledge to a Greek life organization. Above all other reasons, he listed the lack of ways to connect with people on campus, partly due to the commuter status, as a reason to look for an established social network within a fraternity (Gage Cochran Interview).

3.3 Greek life at the University of New Orleans

In chapter 2 of this thesis, several aspects of Greek life were highlighted. The history, customs and the way Greek life members conduct and manage themselves has been examined. Also, the discussions and controversies that surround Greek life on a national scale have been elaborated and exemplified. Within this section, the thesis aims to highlight the local Greek life scene of one college, the University of New Orleans. The aim is to see in what way one can identify previously described features on a local scale and how these aspects are perceived and talked about within the context of this university. It has to be acknowledged that the amount of data collected does not make it possible to establish an all-encompassing account of Greek life activity at the University of New Orleans. Still, the examples that are covered will provide proof of whether or not Greek life at UNO resembles in some ways the nationwide Greek life phenomenon.

3.3.1 Organizations – present and past

Since the years of LSUNO/UNO's founding, several social fraternities and sororities were and are represented at the university with their respective charters. In the UNO yearbook *Trident* (which was later renamed to *Privateer*) they represent themselves and their numbers. The yearbooks of thirteen different years have been analyzed. Unfortunately, others were unavailable. The data comes from yearbooks of the years: 1962, 1963, 1965, 1966, 1969, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992. This leaves a lot of years uncovered, but still gives an insight into the founding of some of the Greek life organizations, their numbers and some of their activities. Also, this gives us a frame of reference for comparison to today's numbers of Greek life members and organizations at UNO.

3.3.1.1 Current UNO Greek life chapters

According to the assistant director of fraternity & sorority life at the University of New Orleans, who wishes to remain anonymous, there are currently about 220 active members within 10 different Greek life organizations (Greek life assistant director Interview). With close to 8000 students currently enrolled at UNO, only about 2,7% of students are active members of Greek life. This constitutes a stark contrast to other institutions in which the percentage of students involved with Greek life can be as high as 70% (Friedman 2016). The current active chapters are divided into four fraternities, four sororities and two African-American Sororities. The fraternities are all part of national fraternities that are part of the National Interfraternity Conference and are organized and represented at the University of New Orleans via the Interfraternity Council. All four sororities are also chapters of national sororities which are part of the National Panhellenic Council. On the local scale of UNO, the four sororities are represented and organized through the Panhellenic Association. The two African American sororities are part of the National Panhellenic Council which, similar to the NIC and the NPC, is a governing and representative body for these Greek life organizations (Greek life assistant director Interview). The currently active Greek life chapters at the University of New Orleans are:

Panhellenic Association

- Delta Zeta
- Sigma Kappa
- Zeta Tau Alpha
- Alpha Xi Delta

Interfraternity Council

- Lambda Chi Alpha
- Kappa Sigma
- Theta Xi
- Phi Kappa Sigma

National Pan-Hellenic Council

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

3.3.1.2 First Greek life chapters at LSUNO

It is safe to assume that Greek life organizations were established already at the beginning of LSUNO's existence. In *The Beacon of LSUNO*, the student newspaper that preceded the *Driftwood*, there is mention of events that are organized by Greek life organizations. The Theta Phi fraternity sponsored the "Hobo Hop", a shaving contest. From this short mention we can also take away that there was already more than one active Greek life chapter on campus, as the event description says "various fraternities and sororities will participate in the talent show." (The Beacon 4). The event description goes on:

The I.F.C. (Interfraternity Council) is promoting this activity in keeping with the general policy mutual benefit for all social fraternities on campus. Hoping that this will prove successful, the Council advises all fraternity men to submit their idea to respective representatives and to get organized for the big contest. (The Beacon 4)

This excerpt shows that already in the first year of the LSUNO, fraternities existed and were already coordinating with each other via the Interfraternity Council, which was apparently already staffed and in place. The fact that their sponsored event is announced in the campus newspaper also shows that Greek life organizations were involved in campus life early on and that the interest in their activities was big enough to be announced to the college population via the newspaper. Not only the fraternities are represented in this first public mention of Greek life, but the sororities as well. The chapter of Delta Epsilon Beta organized a hayride event for which students could buy tickets from members in order to participate. Also, there is a short mention in the newspaper which reports the election of a new treasurer, president and secretary within the sorority. This is interesting because not only does it show that the inner workings of the sorority seem to be of enough public interest to be published in the campus newspaper, it also shows transparency within the sorority. There is no mention of a Panhellenic Association to facilitate coordination between the sororities (The Beacon 4). The Interfraternity Council, on the other side, was well established in LSUNO's first year, 1959. The IFC describes their role as follows:

The Interfraternity Council serves as a governing body for all campus fraternities and provides a means by which difficulties can be solved through arbitration.” (Driftwood Dec 25th, 1959)

This description does not differ a lot from the way UNO's Interfraternity Council describes itself today (Greek life, UNO.edu).

In his book about the history of the University of New Orleans, Robert Dupont mentions the Greek life organizations as they are listed in the yearbook of 1962 (Dupont 97), but an earlier listing of fraternities and sororities at LSUNO can be found in a *Driftwood* issue of 1959. In a segment called “Around the Campus”, the *Driftwood* reports on student organizations that can offer unaffiliated students an opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. The *Driftwood*

lists the various Greek letter organizations and mentions three sororities: Zeta sorority, Delta Epsilon Beta sorority and Alpha Gamma Mu sorority as well as three fraternities, Sigma Alpha Pi, Theta Phi and Sigma Alpha. The description of all six mentioned Greek life organization features the names of the newly pledged members, information about the rush or recruitment process, the names of their officers and information on how to join them. In contrast, only four non-Greek affiliated organizations are mentioned (Driftwood Sept 18th, 1959). Thus, it can be said that Greek life organizations have been a part of the university's history and public discourse since the first year of its existence. James Bentley, in the interview that was conducted for this thesis, adds that Dr. Homer Hit (the first president of LSUNO and also a fraternity member in his student days) aided actively in the creation and networking of the first LSUNO fraternity chapters and attended Greek life events to show support (Bentley Interview). Dr. John Nicklow, current UNO president, also stated that he actively supports Greek life chapters at UNO and said that he makes sure to attend a number of Greek life organization's events (Nicklow Interview).

In 1962, the first students graduated from LSUNO. The year was commemorated with the first yearbook of the class of 1962. The first edition of the *Trident* lists five social fraternities and four social sororities. The yearbook also features a description of the Interfraternity Council and the Panhellenic Association. This is the first account of the establishment of the Panhellenic Association. The organizations that are represented at this time on campus are:

- Interfraternity Council
 - o Lambda Chi Alpha
 - o Delta Gamma Chi
 - o Delta Sigma Xi
 - o Phi Kappa Theta

- Tau Kappa Epsilon
- Panhellenic Association
- Alpha Gamma Mu
- Delta Epsilon Beta
- Kappa Chi
- Zeta Tau Alpha

All of these organizations use the platform of the yearbook in order to present themselves and showcase their history at the university, their achievements and goals. The description of how their fraternity or sorority was founded or chartered at the university is especially insightful.

When going through the several LSUNO/UNO yearbooks and also when looking at the list of Greek life organizations at UNO today, one quickly realizes that different organizations seem to inhabit the campus throughout the years. One reason for that may always be that there are simply no new members who are recruited into the organization and thus a chapter becomes inactive until new members decide to cultivate the chapter once more. A look into the organization's descriptions and their own history as presented in the yearbooks, however, shows us that there can be a different reason for new organizations appearing and others disappearing. The example of Lambda Chi Alpha illustrates this well. In their first yearbook representation, the following account of their history at LSUNO is given:

On March 16, 1960, the members of Sigma Alpha Gamma, a prominent local fraternity, merged with Delta Chi Omega to create a stronger local. On June 30, 1960, Delta Chi Omega, under the sponsorship of Dr. John Goudeau, was initiated by a degree team from Arkansas State University into one of the largest and most prominent international fraternities, Lambda Chi Alpha. As a colony of Lambda Chi, the fraternity continues to

maintain high social and academic standards with high hopes for the future of LSUNO.

(Trident 1962)

This story behind the founding of Lambda Chi Alpha at LSUNO shows us a few things that are discussed in the earlier chapter of this thesis about the founding and spreading of a Greek life institution around the country. A group of students organized themselves in a Greek life organization that operates only on a local level and thus they are not affiliated with a nationally active organization. Many of the members of UNO's Lambda Chi Alpha chapter in 1962 used to operate under the name Delta Chi Omega and were chartered only locally at the university, with no ties to a national fraternity. After they merged with another local chapter, they received a sponsorship or endorsement from an outside party, in this case Dr. John M. Goudeau. Through that connection, the local fraternity became affiliated with the national fraternity Lambda Chi Alpha and their chapter was transformed into a colony of that fraternity. This also means that a member of the newly nationally associated fraternity had to join the Interfraternity Council for representation. In the same yearbook, a group photo of the Interfraternity Council shows Harold Muller of Lambda Chi Alpha as a part of the council (Trident 1962, 130-132). This example of how Lambda Chi Alpha became an established chapter within the LSUNO/UNO Greek system is exemplary for similar cases.

Another example from the same year is the Delta Gamma Chi fraternity. Delta Gamma Chi has existed at LSUNO since the founding year of the university, 1959. In 1962, they first asked the university for permission to petition the Theta Xi national fraternity in order to become a colony chapter of said organization. That permission was granted (Trident 1962 133). For the Delta Gamma Chi fraternity, this transition was successful in terms of becoming a part of a national fraternity and growing their numbers. In the following year, the yearbook lists the former Delta

Gamma Chi chapter now as a chapter of Theta Xi. Additionally, they then merged with another local fraternity, Delta Sigma Xi, and thus expanded their number of members from 21 to 40 (1963 Trident, 62). Thus, neither the Delta Gamma Chi nor the Delta Gamma Xi fraternities are represented from 1962 onward, as they have merged and the members are now organized within the Theta Xi fraternity chapter.

The analyzed yearbooks usually feature the names of the Greek life organizations, their members, and often they tell a similar story of how they made their way to UNO's campus and which members were previously affiliated with other organizations that operated under a different name. This process of name changes and affiliations is not exclusive for fraternities at UNO, as sororities underwent similar changes in their formation and establishment. In 1960, the Zeta Tau Alpha chapter also started operating at LSUNO as a local chapter with the name Delta Nu with no national affiliation until it later became a colony and chartered colony chapter of the national Zeta Tau Alpha sorority (Trident 1962 142).

Understanding that these name changes often come from new affiliations or a new chapter being started is important in order to grasp why, at different years within UNO's history, different organizations play a role in campus life.

In the first graduating year of LSUNO in 1962, 251 students were active members of a Greek life organization, provided the 1962 *Trident* really listed all members. With 3,110 students enrolled at LSUNO at the start of the 1961 fall semester (Dupont 64), that means about 8% of students were organized within the Greek system. That puts the percentage of Greek members significantly higher than today's 2.7% of students who are active Greek life members at UNO.

All documented and archived editions of the *Driftwood* from 1959 until today feature reports, articles or comments on the Greek life activity on campus. Since consistent data on every

Greek organization during the years is made available neither by the Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Association nor the university administration, the *Driftwood* and the yearbooks are the only sources that support the claim that there has been consistent Greek life activity since the founding of the university. The reports and recollections taken from these sources illustrate, in parts, what that activity and involvement looked and looks like. Especially the history of the local chapters gives an insight into the process of how Greek life chapters are established, expand, change their names or become affiliated with other chapters and national organizations.

3.3.2 Rush and Recruitment

Greek life organizations at the University of New Orleans also attracted and gained new members through the process of rush or recruitment, as described in chapter 2.2.3. Rush procedures were already established in the first year of the university. The *Driftwood* gives an update of LSUNO's first rush week and lists all new pledges, the bids that were given out and what events the Greek life organizations will now conduct with their aspiring members (Driftwood, Sept 25, 1959). A 1963 *Driftwood* article informs readers about the various rush events and how to sign up to be a part of the process. Also, from this it can be concluded that the rush events are communally organized by the Greek life organizations governing bodies, the Interfraternity Council and the Panhellenic Council, as they are listed as the sponsors and coordinators of the rush events. Prior to rush week, both the Interfraternity Council and the Panhellenic Council already hosted events in order for students to get in touch with Greek life representatives and find out which organizations' events they want to attend during rush week (Driftwood, Sept 20th, 1962). A week after the 1962 rush week announcements, the *Driftwood* published a full list of all new pledges that the Greek life organizations were able to acquire in the rush week period.

Throughout the years, the Greek chapters also informed readers about their success and practices that they offered during rush week via the format of the yearbook. Pictures of rush events or descriptions of the events and how many new members were recruited are featured regularly. What stands out when looking through the reports about new recruitment is that some Greek life organizations put emphasis on new members that hold leadership roles in other organizations or groups on campus. Up until 1990, there are numerous examples of Greek life organizations flaunting the fact that they have acquired people who hold other positions in non-Greek organizations as well. Delta Sigma Pi in 1963 present themselves proud of their rush week program through which they were able to recruit a member of the Student Government Association, or SGA, the representative student body of LSUNO/UNO. In that year, the same fraternity also acquired new brothers that were part of the College of Business Administration on the Honor Council, and two other new brothers were recipients of honors awards from the university (1963 *Trident*). In the same year, Delta Zeta proudly reports the following about their rush week accomplishments:

The Delta Zeta's are proud to have members in the Honor Society, [...], Student Government Association Officers, College Officers [...] (1963 *Trident*).

These two examples and many more that are found in the *Driftwood* and yearbooks up until 1992 show that Greek life organizations have a tendency to be particularly proud and paint themselves as accomplished when they are able to obtain new members that are already in leadership roles in other university organizations. This gives validity to the claim that involvement in student life and politics is important to the nature of the Greek system at UNO. The special value that is put on these kinds of members shows that the point that Syrett raised about Greek life involvement in other extracurricular organizations is also a phenomenon that exists at UNO (Syrett

197). Rush week, which was part of UNO's Greek system, seems to have proven useful for Greek organizations to recruit members who are part of other student groups or student government as well as other non-affiliated students.

In addition to rush week, Greek life organizations at UNO also host an array of activities within the so-called Greek Week. Greek Week was introduced at UNO for the first time in 1979 and follows the example of other universities with Greek life. It is a week in which many social activities organized by Greek organizations are hosted and contact with the faculty is cultivated and philanthropic goals are pursued. In the first mention of Greek Week, it becomes clear that a goal of these public events is further awareness for Greek life and the eventual recruitment of new members. By looking at the last event of this first Greek Week it is observable, once again, that a special emphasis is put on recruiting members that also hold positions in other student organizations on campus:

Activities will wrap up with a Leadership Workshop for officers of all student organizations. [...] Topics covered will include goal setting, handling conflicts, recruiting members and liability. (Driftwood Sept 27th, 1979).

Unfortunately, the detailed accounts of new member acquisition are not as available today as they were up until the publication of the last yearbook in 1992. It seems the presentation of new members and the reports on rush week results are now happening more on the social media sites of the Greek life chapters. Most of these social media outlets are only open to members. Still, what was once known as rush week is still happening at UNO today under a new name: recruitment. Greek life organizations still host numerous events in order to advertise their chapters and also to educate students on what Greek life is. All their activities and the schedule can be publicly accessed on UNO's website, which includes all activities that happen during the recruitment phase

and gives proof that Greek life at UNO is currently still actively recruiting new members (Greek life, UNO.edu).

3.3.3 Involvement in campus life, social activities and philanthropy

It seems fitting that the first mention found in the UNO archives of Greek life at LSUNO that proved their early existence in 1959 presented itself as an announcement for social activities (The Beacon of LSUNO 1959). After all, the various student organizations call themselves social fraternities and social sororities. The *Driftwood* as well as the yearbooks serve as a source for many reports about the social activities that UNO's Greek life organizations were affiliated with. While it could be argued that every social and public activity organized by Greek life serves to raise awareness about Greek life and recruit new members, such as Greek Week and rush week, it should still be observed what other social activities the Greeks were involved with on campus.

One of the ways that LSUNO's Greek life organizations acted in a social framework is through sports. In fact, the first organized sports activities that are ever reported to happen at LSUNO are intramural sports clubs run by the Greek life organizations. As early as 1959, an inter-fraternity football league was established on campus. This league featured the established fraternity chapters and was only open to fraternities (*Driftwood* Oct 16th 1959). In the same year, the sororities were also gearing up for the first organized intramural sports events featuring sororities competing against each other in sports like volleyball (*Driftwood* Oct 9th 1959). Other organized sports leagues soon followed with an inter-fraternity basketball league (*Driftwood* Mar 11th 1959) and an inter-sorority basketball league as well (*Driftwood* Apr 9th 1960). While intramural sports at UNO today are not limited to Greek life, fraternities and sororities were the first to start organizing sports activities on campus. It can be argued that the Greek life involvement played a role in the development of the sports culture at LSUNO/UNO. A *Driftwood* article that

commemorates the first year of intramural sports gives credit to the Greek life organizations that hosted these sports events and already talks about the establishment of intramural sports clubs to be founded by all different kinds of students, not just Greeks (Driftwood Apr 22nd 1960). Whenever a chapter of a sorority or a fraternity did well in a sporting event, they would usually advertise that achievement. The success of Lambda Chi Alpha in the 1968 campus football league was advertised in the 1969 yearbook by the chapter, while Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity boasts of their success in the intramural tennis events. In fact, every Greek life chapter that had achieved some success in the athletic events made sure to mention this in the yearbook (Trident 1969). It could be hypothesized that a driving force for the establishment of an athletic culture on campus was not only in the best interest for fraternities and sororities from a social aspect, but also to better establish themselves within the national context of Greek life. College sports and Greek life, according to Syrett, share an interesting bond. Sports play a role in Greek life expansion: Syrett mentions the fact that in order to gain a charter from a national Greek life organization, the athletic engagement of the university of the applying chapter also constitutes a criterion that the national organization will consider (Syrett 84). As many LSUNO Greek life chapters sought to expand and merge with national organizations, it certainly made sense for them to be part of the local athletic scene within their own university. In the case of LSUNO/UNO, they can even be attributed with having started the first organized sports leagues.

Besides sports, there are various social activities that involved Greek life organization throughout the history of the University of New Orleans. While the intramural sports program was operated by Greek life organizations and thus only members could participate (1965 Trident), there was an array of other social activities that Greeks participated in and contributed to. Many of these activities can easily be tracked in the *Driftwood* and the yearbooks. Student newspaper segments

like *Around the Campus* (Driftwood, Oct 9th 1959) that give updates on campus life and are frequently featured in *Driftwood* issues give insight into the social activities organized by the Greeks.

The Greek life organizations of LSUNO/UNO have a tradition of participating in and sponsoring events that are organized by the university and are not primarily Greek events. Some events, like the United Fund drive, a charity event organized by the university, was sponsored by Greek life (Driftwood, Oct 9th 1959). There are also plenty of records in the yearbooks that support the claim that Greek life is often actively involved in social events that are not primarily Greek life social events but are open to all students. The participation in the United Fund Drive, for example, showcases how Greeks involved themselves. In a 1964 Fund Drive event, members of Greek life would contribute some of the entertainment. Sigma Kappa sorority members dressed up, Alpha Xi Delta hosted a pie-eating contest and Lambda Chi Alpha made an event of smashing pies in the faces of their new pledges (Trident 1965). Besides many Greek life organizations being involved in this event and thus showing their contribution to campus social life, this also shows that not all Greek life rituals are performed in secret. This is illustrated by the fact that Lambda Chi Alpha performed part of their pledge initiation rites at a university event. In this case, it was the smashing of pies into the pledges faces. While it may sound silly, it does constitute an example of Greek life activity that is carried out in the open rather than secretly.

In the yearly tradition of homecoming week at LSUNO/UNO, Greeks also showed up and contributed. In 1970, homecoming week featured an array of parade floats that were built by students. Greek life is represented here as well, as they won the award for building the best floats (Trident 1970). In the same year, there is another example to be listed that illustrates how Greek life has contributed to building traditions on campus. The Sigma Kappa fraternity and the Delta

Sigma Pi fraternity established an annual game of basketball in which the members of the fraternities compete against each other in a basketball match while riding on donkeys. The description of the event mentions explicitly that it has become a yearly tradition (Trident 1970). In 1991, Greeks are again mentioned as part of a university tradition: April Fest. The event is originally sponsored by the Student Activities Council, a part of the Student Government Association, the governing student body, funded by the university. However, members of Greek life contributed the food and some of the entertainment program to the event (Privateer 1990). In 1992, Greeks once again are mentioned as being part of the homecoming week activities as well as contributing to April Fest (Trident 1992). The tendency of UNO's Greek life to be involved with campus social activity continues today. On UNO's homepage, one can look through the events that are hosted by the university on campus and some event or contribution that is powered by Greek life will usually be among the list. For example, in the 2019 homecoming week, Greek life members hosted a trivia night (Homecoming Event Calendar, UNO.edu).

Closely tied in with social activities that the UNO Greeks participated and still participate in are the philanthropy efforts pursued by the various organizations. During the course of their existence at UNO, Greek life organizations did not only participate in charity events by the university, but also in their own events. The first examples of philanthropic efforts are found in the 1962 yearbook. Delta Sigma Xi fraternity held fundraising events for orphans, Kappa Chi sorority raised money for welfare programs and other organizations report about their involvement in the university sponsored United Fund Drive (Trident 1962). As discussed in chapter 2.2.11. Greek life organizations will usually have a philanthropic cause that is supported by every chapter of the organization across the country. The early mentions of philanthropy by UNO's Greek life organizations show that local chapters who are not yet affiliated with a national organization will

also pursue philanthropy in some capacity. This shows that including a philanthropic effort into a Greek life organization seems to constitute one of the pillars when starting a chapter and does not necessarily require engagement with a national organization. Once the UNO local chapters gained affiliation and recognition as colony chapters of national organizations, the philanthropies of the national organizations were adapted. This is observable in reports of various philanthropy events held over the years. Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity, in 1979, hosted a beer keg roll through the city of New Orleans to raise money for St. Jude's children's hospital (Driftwood Nov 8th 1975). The website of Tau Kappa Epsilon lists the support of that hospital as a national philanthropic effort by the fraternity (TKE Service and Philanthropy). As already described, UNO's Theta Xi chapter started under a different name until it became part of the national Theta Xi fraternity organization. With the admission into the national fraternity, they also adopted the philanthropy cause of their national organization and held events to raise money for that cause. One of these events was a pole-sitting marathon which was open to the public and attended by members of the fraternity, faculty and regular students (Driftwood Mar 27th 1980). Today, every chapter recognized at UNO has a philanthropic cause that they support. A complete list of all organizations and their philanthropy is available on UNO's homepage. All Greek life chapters are members of national organizations and support the national philanthropy effort of their organization. Additionally, some of the ways that money is raised via social events are mentioned in self-descriptions of the organizations, similar to how it used to be done in the first yearbook of 1962 (Greek life, UNO.edu)

From 1959 until today, examples of Greek social events can be found in all analyzed issues of the *Driftwood* as well as in all of the yearbooks that were analyzed for this thesis. Greek life social activity is easily found and when looking through the sources that are available, one could say it is an inseparable part of Greek life at UNO and also inseparable from campus social life.

However, as the next chapter will show, the strong representation of Greek life social activities has also led to controversy and discussion about the actual presence and role that UNO Greek life has.

3.3.4 Discussions and controversies:

Even though Greek life organizations were established on the LSUNO/UNO campus early on and still exist today, discussions about Greek life practices and their presence in student and campus life also found their way into the discourse among UNO students. Especially during the first few years of the university's existence, reports on Greek activities are more or less exclusively positive. The representation of Greek life in the public mediums such as yearbooks and the *Driftwood* has also stirred up debates that need to be considered when evaluating the role of Greek life at UNO.

In terms of representation of Greek life, a heavy debate took place that can be traced back to the *Privateer* yearbook of 1990. Started by a letter to the editor, included in the *Driftwood*, by a student whose name has been withheld by the newspaper, a debate about the impact of Greek life can be followed throughout several of the *Driftwood's* weekly issues. The student criticizes the 1990 yearbook because he or she feels the Greek organizations are overrepresented. The point is raised that there are many other student organizations that are not affiliated with Greek life that also contribute to the social life of the university, but Greeks are represented the most even though they only make up a small percentage of the overall student population. Furthermore, one point of criticism is that many of the Greek members are seen drinking alcohol in the yearbook pictures (*Driftwood* Aug 30th 1990). In an issue published two weeks later, a *Driftwood* staff member backs up the complaints and adds:

If people unfamiliar with the University of New Orleans were to look through this book, they would come away with the impression that the typical UNO student belongs to a Greek

organization and does nothing but attend basketball games while trying to promote ‘school spirit’, which is a ridiculously overblown theme (Driftwood, Sept 13th 1990).

We can read that he also laments the perceived overrepresentation of Greek life and goes on to add that there are indeed many other people on campus that are not represented (Driftwood, Sept 13th 1990). Further critique comes jointly from the African American student organizations who criticize that they feel underrepresented (Driftwood, Sept 20th 1990).

The letter of complaint about the yearbook received a response in the form of another letter to the editor, the name of the contributor again being withheld. In this letter the unnamed writer defends the validity of Greek life. He or she highlights the fact that due to the fact that UNO is a commuter university, Greek life is a staple for students to form strong social connections on campus with other students. Because of that and the many ways that Greeks involve themselves in campus activities, the author says it is warranted that the representation features many members of Greek life. Additionally, he lists a number of annual events and campus traditions that Greeks are involved with on a regular basis (Driftwood, Sept 13th 1990). The last account of this controversy is a letter from the editor of the yearbook saying that the critique has been received and will be taken into consideration for the following yearbook (Driftwood Sept 20th 1990).

This controversy is included in this thesis because it opens the possibility to critically evaluate in what way all examples of Greek life social involvement in this paper are to be judged. Judging from the regular mentions of Greek life activity, it can be assumed that Greeks indeed play a big role in social activity. However, through this discussion about the 1990 yearbook, it is also shown that this opinion is clearly not generally shared. The research for this thesis has indeed shown that the representation of Greek life through university media outlets is plentiful. In

interviews conducted with current university president Dr. John Nicklow and dean of students Dr. Carolyn Golz the question of the impact of Greek life was also raised. It is interesting that both Dr. Nicklow and Dr. Golz agree to a certain extent with the defending position in the September 13th 1990 *Driftwood* issue. Dr. Nicklow agrees with the statement that Greek life organizations allow students to actively engage in campus life, stay socially connected and thus are more likely to be successful (Nicklow Interview). In terms of campus events, Dr. Golz says she and the administration as a whole appreciate the strong connection among Greek life members which helps to boost attendance at campus events and thus contribute to the social life on campus:

“We know that we can count on them to show up and support other aspects of campus life” (Golz Interview).

The general consensus among all students towards the status that Greek life holds at UNO remains unknown and would require a general survey of student opinion. The only example for such an attempt is offered in the *Driftwood* in the year 1963. An opinion poll was presented that covered the issue of whether or not Greek life should be banned from campus or not and what its redeeming features are, if there are any. The opinion poll yields mostly positive results towards Greek life. However, some critical voices are printed as well. A history student, non-affiliated with Greek life, adds:

“They seem to do nothing more than propagate bad music and institutionalize discrimination” (Driftwood Mar 14th 1963)

Of course, this opinion poll is outdated and can't be representative of today's opinion, but it still showcases that Greek life has not been seen as exclusively positive throughout LSUNO/UNO's history, even though that could be assumed due to the many positive reports on it.

Greek life organizations have in fact made negative headlines that are direct result of the actions of some of their members. The most prominent example of that was an incident involving the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity. The Tau Kappa Epsilon chapter of UNO was suspended in 1990 after members of the fraternity were caught drawing a racist slur on the back of a car window of their fraternity brother who was dating an African American woman. According to the article, a university official, Dee Siscoe, suspended the charter that the fraternity had at UNO. The two perpetrators were also suspended, one for a year, the other for a semester. The article goes on to state that the suspended chapter could re-apply to become admitted as an official organization again after a certain period of time. However, during the suspension, the fraternity members were not allowed to hold any meetings, congregate or participate in campus events. Also, the national chapter of the Tau Kappa Epsilon issued an apology to the university for the behavior of their colony chapter (Driftwood Aug 1st, 1990). The controversy did not end with the suspension of the chapter. It was later reported that the members of the fraternity were seen congregating outside of campus and wearing t-shirts with their Greek letters publicly during rush week. To escape further sanctions, the suspended chapter hired a lawyer who advocated that they were not violating the terms of suspension and that the fraternity would re-apply for a charter in the following semester. The administration of UNO did not pursue further actions against the fraternity (Driftwood Sept 13th 1990). A complaint by representatives of African American student organizations followed stating that they had not received a letter of apology even though that was demanded by the university (Driftwood Sept 27th 1990). A mocking caricature by an unnamed commentator in the *Driftwood* followed as well. Titled “What Fraternity Suspension Means at UNO” the caricature shows members of the suspended fraternity continuing their social activities, selling t-shirts on campus and drinking alcohol (Driftwood Sept 13th 1990). The story of Tau Kappa Epsilon is no

longer covered in following *Driftwood* publications. Today, the fraternity chapter is no longer a part of UNO's Greek life and in the available yearbooks and *Driftwood* issues of the following years, there is no more mention of the fraternity. They did not get chartered again after their suspension. The official homepage of Tau Kappa Epsilon national organization confirms that the fraternity chapter at the University of New Orleans (Theta Mu) is currently inactive.

This example of a negative incident showcases that the faculty acted and took measures against discriminatory acts. It also highlights the capacities that Greek life organizations, even the small ones of UNO, can have, as they were able to hire a lawyer to represent them. Additionally, it shows that the sources that this paper is based on need to be carefully evaluated. If one only read the yearbook entry of Tau Kappa Epsilon, no negative sentiments or reports of incidents would be found (Privateer 1990). Based on what the *Driftwood* reports, it appears that the UNO administration is in fact consistent in putting sanctions on members of Greek life if policies are violated. During the 1997 rush week, an alumni member of the Phi Kappa Theta fraternity showed up intoxicated to a rush event. The alumni member was asked to leave the campus and the affected fraternity chapter was sanctioned. The sanctions, imposed by the Interfraternity Council, included a fee and barring the chapter from further rush events that year. An important background information to this story is that in the same year, a student at Louisiana State University died from alcohol poisoning. This also led to the rush events at UNO being significantly less attended than the year before, according to the article (*Driftwood* Sept 11th 1997). This also shows that the local Greek life is not isolated from what happens within the Greek system at different institutions.

A careful review of the various contributions that made it into the *Driftwood* over the years shows that Greek life at UNO is not untouched by criticism that is often directed at the nationwide

Greek life system rather than what happens on the local scale. The last example, from the September 11th 1997 article, shows this quite clearly. The death of an LSU student that year also prompted discussions at UNO about the connection of alcohol and Greek life. In a *Driftwood* article, members of UNO's Greek life tried to convey that alcohol consumption is a part of their social interaction, but not what their organizations are all about. Members of UNO's Greek life complained that the negative cases at other institutions put them in an undeserved negative spotlight. A member of the Delta Zeta sorority commented as follows:

It makes all of us look bad. I know it was another campus and it was a fraternity, but it's an embarrassment to all of us. (Driftwood, Aug 28th, 1997)

In a letter submitted to the *Driftwood*, a student criticizes the supposedly superficial nature of Greek life in general, saying that they care for campus politics only if they directly benefit them. In this case the complaint is based on the fact that an event on women's politics is not supported or advertised by the Greeks. Supposedly, Greek life women would rather worry about what they will wear for their events and how to look pretty, instead of focusing on civic topics and politics. The writer of the letter goes on to say that the lack of advertisement by UNO's Greek system was the reason why the event's attendance was low (Driftwood Oct 25th, 1979). What is interesting about this complaint is that it criticizes the values of Greek life while simultaneously acknowledging the impact that Greek life support has on campus events, because the lack of attendance is attributed to the fact that Greeks did not advertise the event.

The most recent incident of what could be called an anti-Greek life sentiment is found in 2016 when unknown perpetrators vandalized several benches on campus that had the Greek letters of the various organizations on campus on them. The article on this incident reports that the Greek

organizations worked together on rebuilding the benches. In the article the Panhellenic Council and the Interfraternity Council also state that this constitutes an unfair attack on Greek life which, according to them, is already underrepresented on campus (Driftwood Apr 27th, 2016). This shows that the issue of representation of Greek life on campus is still relevant and that most parties may hold differing positions towards the topic.

While there are other occasional reports that criticize the value of Greek life at UNO, it is true that a large part of the coverage surrounding Greek life is positive. The examples in this section, however, should make clear that some reports may be one-sided and that there is other social activity at UNO that might be more prominent than the coverage shows. Especially the discussions about whether or not being part of Greek life is representative for being a student at UNO shows that this is a topic that divides opinions throughout the university's history and continues to be relevant today.

3.3.5 Greek housing

Despite the fact that the percentage of students who are part of a Greek life organization was and still is low at the University of New Orleans, the establishment of Greek life housing projects has been discussed and the topic of fraternity and sorority houses continues to be somewhat relevant today.

In 1979 the UNO administration and the local Greek system were on the verge of establishing Greek housing projects at UNO. Observing the process of how this came to be, gives an interesting insight into how Greek housing projects can be established and what this process tells us about the financial and organizational structure of some Greek organizations. The *Driftwood*, for several weeks, covered the story of how UNO Greeks applied for housing. In 1979, a committee made up of representatives of several UNO Greek life organizations petitioned to

establish the framework that would allow Greek life organizations to buy property that is owned by the university or campus-adjacent in order to build housing and meeting facilities for Greek chapters. This proposal was endorsed by UNO's dean of students' assistant, Sandra Clark, who argued that it would provide more visibility for Greeks on campus as well as fostering a culture of responsibility for the organizations who need to maintain and finance their lodgings. In the article, Clark elaborates that among the 11 fraternities and sororities who are interested in establishing their housing projects, most of them have the means to finance these projects. Clark mentions housing funds that are set up within the chapters where money has been collected over the years and also talks about the local chapters' national organizations who are willing to give money from funds collected from all their chapters. Before an application for housing was even possible, alumni from the organizations researched how housing at UNO's campus could be realized, and former fraternity member Jean Funck dedicated his urban studies master's thesis to advocate for the establishment of Greek lodging at the UNO campus. Additionally, members of the local chapters lobbied within their national headquarters in order to get an approval and to secure funding for realizing the project (Driftwood Oct 25th 1979). Follow up articles document the discussion that ensued within the board of directors of the university, the faculty and the Greek life advocates. The lively discussion featured different positions. Opponents of the proposition to establish housing, like Dr. George Reinecke, vice-chancellor for academic affairs, argued against Greek housing, citing risks of alcoholism and increased liability of negative incidents related to hazing. Others, like George D'Aquin, vice-chancellor of business affairs, were in favor of the proposal and argued that it could bring more student life to the commuter campus and make the university more attractive. Also, the issue of proper representation of Greek life was brought up again by several parties. Both the argument that Greeks needed more representation and the argument that they were already overrepresented were raised (Driftwood Nov 8th, 1979). The

coverage on the discussion continues into the year 1980 and shows that most advocates for the housing proposition mentioned everything positive to be associated with Greek life while most opponents of the proposition used negatively connotated aspects of Greek life as counter-argument (Driftwood Jan 16th 1980). The controversial discussion ended in approval by the UNO board after the Greek life interest group successfully lobbied for the endorsement of the Student Government Association, which was chaired by a fraternity member, the university senate and the dean of students (Driftwood Jan 16th 1980). The last mention of the housing debate tells of the approval of the Louisiana State University's board of directors. It was the task of this board to also arrange the approval of the housing construction with property owners who lived adjacent to the campus and to ensure that everything was legally approved (Driftwood Mar 27th 1980).

It remains unknown what happened to the approved housing plans because, as of the completion of this thesis, there are no lodges or houses built that are recognized by the university and owned and inhabited by Greek life organizations that advocated so strongly for them in 1979. In fact, Greek housing had not been mentioned in the *Driftwood* since the 1979/80 articles, up until 1989. Then, the point of Greek housing was raised once again. The *Driftwood* featured opinions from both faculty and Greek life members saying they would still try to realize the Greek lodging project, thus reducing UNO's commuter university status and making student life more visible and attractive. It is mentioned here once again that Greeks would be able to raise the money through their national organizations and that the faculty would endorse the project (Driftwood Jan 22nd 1998).

While the reasons remain unclear as to why the Greek housing project never took off at UNO, the fact that it was discussed still reveals some interesting insight. The housing debate shows that Greek life organizations at UNO apparently had the financial means to finance their own

housing projects, just as many other chapters across the USA have done. This is also in accordance with how Baird described the funding for fraternity housing on a national scale (Baird 10th edition 26-28). Also, the discussion shows that the UNO administration is involved in decisions about establishing housing for Greek life organizations and some members of faculty and staff had significant interests in establishing a Greek life housing infrastructure. The fact that Greek organizations are able to engage in such debates with the university also shows how serious of a partner Greek life is to the school. Being a commuter campus, more housing would probably have been very beneficial for the university and its students. The power and influence of the Greek system is illustrated well here because they would have had the means to alleviate that problem for the university, thus making the administration partly dependent on the means that Greek life has to offer. This needs to be seen critically because the university also issues the rules that Greeks have to abide by while at the same time needing their means for projects like student housing. This example thus ties in well with the concerns that Syrett raises regarding universities starting to rely on Greek life (Syrett 161-163). The reason why this was never realized might be because that sentiment has changed. Reasons for that could be negative reports from Greek housing at other campuses or other bad publicity as well as logistic problems. Unfortunately, the data is not conclusive on why UNO's Greek housing was not established after initial approval.

Today, one UNO fraternity chapter owns a fraternity house. However, according to UNO president Dr. John Nicklow, the house is privately owned by the fraternity and is not located on university premises and the university has no affiliation with the construction or management of the house (Dr. Nicklow, Interview). The mentioned fraternity house is an off-campus residence that was purchased by the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity chapter in 1972 for eighty thousand dollars. 10% of that amount was paid by their national chapter. Both active members and alumni

of the fraternity had to combine their resources to buy the property. The fraternity at the time said that it would give them an edge over the Greek life organizations and will be helpful to attract new members (Driftwood Sept 22, 1972). It remains undisclosed how the fraternity acquires the funds to sustain the house today, but there are mentions in the *Driftwood* of social events that the fraternity held at the house in order to raise money to sustain it. (Driftwood Nov 10th 1988). Whether or not these social events are the only source of income to sustain the property until today remains unclear.

On the website of the University of New Orleans, housing offered by Greek life organizations is not advertised nor endorsed. According to Dr. Nicklow, a further pursuit of establishing a Greek housing infrastructure at UNO is unlikely (Dr. Nicklow, Interview).

3.4 UNO administration and Greek life today

Looking at the first yearbooks and newspapers that mention Greek life organizations at LSUNO/UNO, there seems to be no major conflict between administration and the Greek organizations when it comes to establishing chapters, organizing events or showing their presence on campus. The many ways in which Greek life organizations have involved themselves in campus activities and university events is proof of this. Additionally, it can be assumed that from early on, LSUNO had a system in place that dealt with the founding and establishment of Greek life chapters. In the first LSUNO yearbook, the *Trident*, every single Greek life organization mentions receiving their initial charter from the university and thus being officially recognized as an official student organization (1962 Trident 132-140). In the case of Delta Gamma Chi fraternity, it is also explicitly mentioned that the fraternity had to ask permission from the university before they were able to petition to be accepted as a colony chapter of Theta Xi national fraternity. This permission

was granted and thus a Theta Xi chapter exists at UNO until today (1962 Trident, 133). All of this is evidence of policies and rules being in place and enforced by the administration of the university.

Even with the controversies listed in the previous chapter, there has never been a ban of Greek life at UNO. Based on the fact that Greek life organizations have existed continually since the founding of the university, as proven by continuous mentions in the Driftwood, it is assumable that faculty and administration have never been diametrically opposed to the Greek system. In an interview conducted in March of 2019 with Dr. Nicklow, president of UNO, he shares not only his personal view on UNO's cooperation, but also gives validity to the claim that faculty and the Greek system have a long-standing history of cooperation. The response to being asked how the involvement of the University of New Orleans is with Greek life organizations, Dr. Nicklow answered as follows:

“We are very involved with Greek life, we approve every charter on campus, so a national organization cannot simply open a chapter on our campus without our approval and likewise we require the national organizations' input. So, it's very much a partnership. Without our approval they cannot be a recognized student organization, they cannot reap benefits like funding for activities on campus” (Dr. Nicklow Interview).

What Dr. Nicklow said in the interview seems to be in accordance with the official position of the university. UNO's website features a list of all resources and policy information in connection to Greek life on campus. These measures require Greek life organizations to fulfill all the requirements that UNO demands in order to be accepted as a student organization. Additionally, there are resources that provide guidance and help in case of possible incidents. It becomes clear that activities organized by Greek life organizations need to be coordinated with the

administration. Additionally, there are official documents that list the rules for possible expansions of chapters and for the admittance of new chapters. Greek life organizations are also required to explicitly comply with anti-hazing rules as well as all other policies that the university has put in place. According to UNO's guidelines, violation of their rules would lead to the chapters being dismissed by the University. This means their charter would be removed and they would no longer be an officially recognized organization that has access to the infrastructure of the university. This would exclude the organization from any representation on campus and deny them organizational or financial support in all their endeavors (Fraternity and Sorority Life Resources, UNO.edu). The policies and resources directed at Greek life that are enforced at UNO today are a definitive indicator that the elaborate history of Greek life at UNO, but also Greek organizations in general, have led to universities such as UNO adjusting to the phenomenon and developing a way to deal with it as responsibly as possible. In a closing statement about the future at the university, Dr. Nicklow remains positive about Greek life. As a Greek life member himself, he sees these organizations as a positive contribution to student life and endorsed further expansion and growth of them on campus. At the same time, he emphasizes that proper conduct of Greek life can only be guaranteed through close cooperation with university administration and a good basis of communication, rules and policy between the school and the Greek organizations (Dr. Nicklow Interview).

4 Conclusion

This thesis has undertaken an attempt at giving an insight into the Greek life system in the United States of America based on its defining features, qualities, history as well as appearance on the local and national scale.

The historic overview offered in this paper clearly shows that today's Greek life system is in many ways deeply embedded into the higher education system of the US. It was proven that many features of the early literary societies that preceded today's Greek life organizations are still featured in Greek life today. Among these features are the continued nature of secrecy within the student groups, as well as their self-governing and self-sufficient nature as independent organizations that exist on college campuses around the United States. Even though every organization has its distinct features when it comes to how they organize their events, rituals, philanthropic efforts, recruitment and other things, the paper has shown that there are many core elements that are shared by all organizations. Thus, it can be concluded that a heterogenous conglomerate of groups has evolved in which homogenic, defining features of them can also be spotted.

The many examples of how Greek life takes shape and operates on US campuses has shown that wherever Greek life organizations exist, they appear to be connected to their higher education institution in some way. Even though they operate as independent organizations, they are connected to campus policies and are subject to special rules that higher education institutions have put in place. These rules that Greek life needs to abide to are often the result of the historical struggle between the organizations and colleges. Also, much of the tension that can still be observed between colleges and their Greek organizations hails from ongoing controversies concerning aspects of Greek life that continue to happen on a national scale and warrant a need for

constant evaluation of policies and discourse. Still, the Greek life system seems to be a staple in the cultural landscape of American higher education as it is hard to find universities in which the Greek life system is not represented in any way.

At the time of the completion of this thesis, the phenomenon of Greek life remains a controversial topic in the media. The discussed controversies and criticisms, that are frequently reported, show that there are plenty of reasons to optimize and evaluate the existing Greek life system. A consensus on what function the Greek life system plays exactly is still hard to come by as many different stances are taken by various parties and outlets.

The evaluation of the Greek life system at the University of New Orleans has shown that several aspects of the national Greek life phenomenon can be spotted themselves on a local scale as well. The establishment of Greek life at the University of New Orleans happened almost simultaneously with the founding of the school itself, showing that the gap in social and student activities of a newly established college had to be filled and Greek organizations were amongst the first to do so. At the same time, it has also been shown that Greek life at UNO did not evolve without a connection to the national phenomenon. Early on, local chapters integrated into national organizations adopted nationwide policies and became representative for many other organizations around the nation.

The detailed look into UNO's Greek system allowed for insight into the phenomenon as a whole and how its structure operates. Many similarities and overlaps were found in the analysis of Greek life across the United States and at the University of New Orleans. It was showcased that these organizations are separate and independent entities that are not part of a university's infrastructure. Greek life manages its own financial funding, member recruitment, philanthropy endeavors and even housing projects. However, the cooperation between UNO and the Greek life

chapters was a necessity in creating the framework in which Greek life could operate. It has been shown that over time Greek life was integrated into UNO's campus life, policies and public discourse. Greek life relies on the college and the college vice versa benefits from these student organizations that contribute to the social life on campus and student involvement. Until today, both Greek life representatives and faculty seem to agree that maintaining Greek life at the University of New Orleans remains a beneficial factor for everybody involved. However, most examples have shown that critics of Greek life at UNO often address matters that are relevant within the general discussion about Greek life as a whole. Thus, it can be claimed that local Greek life also has to deal with the issues surrounding the system they are incorporated within and cannot exist in isolation. Not only are individual chapters often structurally and economically connected to a nationwide network but they also need to be aware that they are seen as representatives of a nationwide phenomenon and can thus not elude the public discourse that surrounds them.

Finally, this paper has proven that it is beneficial to evaluate Greek life from a national and local perspective in order to get a better understanding of it. The survey on the national scale and history highlights the features that encompass organizations nationwide, while the local research provides important and illustrative examples to better understand these features. Issues and discussions about controversial topics like hazing, racial incidents or more general features such as Greek housing, social engagement and philanthropy were all found in the history of Greek life at the University of New Orleans. To understand and evaluate these reports on a local scale, an understanding of the phenomenon as a whole is vital. Many examples of the local research illustrated aspects of Greek life that are also relevant on the national scale. For example, a discussion that flared up several times in UNO's history focused on the issue of overrepresentation of Greek life members and organizations within the social life of the university. It was possible to

better understand the reason for this debate because it was established that this discussion is also relevant for Greek life as a whole and not just on one campus. Thus, the positions of the critics as well as the arguments of Greek life members within this conversation could be understood better and embedded within the discourse about the Greek life phenomenon as a whole. Such a detailed account would otherwise be hard to attain as online research and non-personal research on Greek life will often yield less insightful results due to Greek life's veil of secrecy. As this thesis has shown, in-depth local research of the Greek system is beneficial to a more comprehensive understanding of the Greek life system as a whole.

5 A didactic approach to the social life phenomena in US higher education

This chapter will discuss how the phenomenon of Greek life can be brought into an Austrian classroom. It will be attempted to make the topic and its features palpable for Austrian students who are neither acquainted with the United States American higher education system nor with the culture of student and social life on the college campus. To convey the Greek life phenomenon in some way, a multiple lesson unit is to be presented here that introduces students to the terminology and basic background information on higher education in the United States and what students of similar age in a different country are going through when moving from high-school to college. Thus, the lesson plan will mention Greek life and include its features in the didactic material but the lessons will also revolve around US college life in general as is necessary to cover the context in which Greek life exists.

The lessons are aimed at students between the age of 17 and 18 who have studied English for at least seven years and are in eighth grade of an Austrian AHS, Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule. The language level and demands of the Austrian curriculum for this grade can be equated to the B2 level in the four skills listening, reading, speaking and writing (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, abbreviated: BMBWF). The classification and definition of these skill levels, ranging from A1 to C2, are set by the Council of Europe and presented in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, the *CEFR*. In this document, the overall B2 skill level, that my planned lessons are designed for, is described for all four skills as follows:

Overall Listening Comprehension	
B2	Can understand standard spoken language, live or broadcast on both familiar and unfamiliar topics normally encountered in personal, social, academic or vocational life. Only extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage influence the ability to understand.
	Can understand the main ideas of propositionally and linguistically complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics delivered in standard speech, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can follow extended speech and complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar, and the direction of the talk is sign-posted by explicit markers.
Overall Reading Comprehension	
B2	Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively. Has a broad active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low-frequency idioms.
Overall Spoken Production	
B2	Can give clear, systematically developed descriptions and presentations, with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.
	Can give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on a wide range of subjects related to his/her field of interest, expanding and supporting ideas with subsidiary points and relevant examples.
Overall Written Production	
B2	Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources.

(Council of Europe 55, 60, 69, 75)

The lessons and exercises that are planned for the teaching unit seek to comply with the above descriptors. Furthermore, the lessons aim to be in accordance with the Austrian curriculum and its didactic approach and principles.

5.1 Connecting the teaching unit with the Austrian curriculum

The content of the lessons is to be located within the Austrian curriculum in order to give legitimacy to the teaching unit. Covering the American higher education system and its culture is an intercultural learning experience for students who are about to enter higher education in Austria. Intercultural competence is an important aspect of the Austrian curriculum for foreign

language education (BMBWF 126). Since the difference of Austrian and United States higher education is quite significant, it is important to educate the students on these differences. This means explaining and outlining what the university system in the United States is like. The Austrian curriculum also puts emphasis on teaching students about intercultural topics in a way that will minimize the usage of stereotypes (126). Thus, to properly dive into a topic like Greek life, the framework in which it exists needs to be explained first. This is necessary because topics like Greek life are heavily stereotyped in movies, media and popular culture and thus a more nuanced look at the issue is important. A look at US higher education and its culture is also a look into American society and culture which aligns well with the intercultural education aim of the curriculum (128).

The Austrian curriculum stresses the importance of media competency. To hone this skill students should be required to critically evaluate various sources of information and judge the legitimacy and intention of online as well as print resources. Additionally, understanding the specific language that certain media sources might use and why they do so is an educational goal in foreign language education (125). The thesis already showed that the discourse about Greek life is controversial at times. A critical evaluation of the sources that can be used to learn about the phenomenon is essential. Thus, this important research aspect can be included into the classroom praxis as well which serves to contribute to the fulfillment of the curriculum goals.

Finally, a demand of the curriculum is to use an array of teaching methods as well as materials that require students to hone and apply all skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) as equally as possible. The materials and contents that the students engage with should be as authentic as possible (127). This will be attempted with the planned lessons. Additionally, the

curriculum calls for usage of an array of materials, media and methods (128) which is also the goal for this teaching unit.

The lesson plan will try to make as many connections to the curriculum as possible by approaching the topic of culture within United States higher education and Greek life with various angles, methods and materials. Additionally, some of the sources that were utilized for this thesis, shall also be represented in the lesson plans to put their educational value and authenticity to test.

5.2 Lesson plans

5.2.1 Lesson 1: High-school, what's next?

Time	Content	Aim	Method/Material	Skill
10'	Students are asked to write down what their plans after graduating are. They should write down what interests them, what they might want to study, if they want to move to a different city, what influences their choice of university and what challenges they expect when moving from school to university.	Getting students to think about the upcoming topic without having any input influence their opinion. Make students visualize their expectations and create a source of reference to see if their opinions change throughout the following lessons.	Free writing, students write without hesitation and worry about errors, the focus is on getting the thoughts out as straightforward as possible.	Writing
10'	In small groups of 4-5 students they compare their results and discuss.	Have the students vocalize what they produced in their free-writing process.	Group work, small group discussions	Speaking Listening
10'	In a classroom discussion through specific questions by the teacher the results of the writing	Get students to speak in the discussion. Students are steered towards where the focus of future lessons will be.	Classroom discussion	Speaking

	<p>process and the group talks will be discussed.</p> <p>Questions will include:</p> <p>“How important is it for you to know what exactly you want to study?”</p> <p>“Are you looking for something that interests you or that can guarantee a job?”</p> <p>“What do you expect your social life to be like once you are studying at a university?”</p>			
15’	<p>Students are asked to come to the blackboard and write down words that they associate with United States college/university experience. They should also briefly explain to the class why they chose to write what they wrote.</p> <p>All students are supposed to write down the terms that are on the blackboard.</p> <p>Homework is to pick three terms that are particularly interesting to them and write ~50 words for each term to</p>	<p>Introduce the topic of US higher education and see what students associate with it.</p> <p>The aim is, once again, to have this done with little input by the teacher. That way, some topics that will be discussed later can appear in the discussion naturally.</p> <p>The homework will be discussed in the next lesson and ties in with what follows in that lessons.</p>	<p>Blackboard, writing utensils, Everyone needs to write at least on term.</p>	<p>Writing, Speaking, Listening</p>

	elaborate what they associate with it.			
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5.2.2 Lesson 2: United States college and university

Time	Content	Aim	Method/Material	Skill
15'	Class discussion on the three terms about US college life that individual students have written down. Individual students present/talk about what they have written about.	Reactivating the focus from last lesson. Students find out what others have found out and what they associate with the topics. The teacher can already get an idea of what students associate with the upcoming topic of the United States educational system.	Class discussion Short individual presentations by students	Speaking Listening
7'	A video by the YouTube channel <i>Casually Explained</i> is watched.	The video features a lot of informal and colloquial information and is a light and fun approach to the topic of US college/university life. This is the first time the students receive input on the subject	Projector, Internet access and sound system is needed here. Video: <i>Casually Explained: Guide to College and University</i>	Listening
25'	Students receive a reading exercise (Worksheet 1) on the basics of American higher education and terminology	After being confronted with the input of the video, students will learn the vocabulary that is used for specific things when talking about US college/university life. With this exercise, a basis of understanding is laid so that students can better understand the upcoming lesson contents/materials	Individual work assignment Worksheet 1	Reading Writing

5.2.3 Lesson 3: Social life in college

Time	Content	Aim	Method/Material	Skill
10'	Students receive some time to write down what they associate with the United States college culture and social life on campus. They are allowed to reference the video of the previous lessons but should also try to include some own ideas.	As Greek life is a part of the social culture of college, students need to first be confronted with the social culture in United States higher education. Again, with little input, they are asked to make up their mind and present their own ideas of what social life is like.	Students are free to choose between a freewriting approach or simply take notes	Writing
10'	The teacher will write the categories: Sports, Clubs, College Pride, Partying and Day to day life on the blackboard. The students now are asked to find terms in their notes that fit in one of the categories.	Establish some orientation for the students. The collection of various terms for the categories will allow the students to better guide their research for the upcoming presentations. The categories are given by the teacher to direct the content in the wanted direction.	Classroom discussion, Collecting terms, Mindmap	
25'-30'	In groups of 4-5, the students are assigned on the categories from the blackboard. All categories will have at least 5 terms associated with them. The students are tasked with looking for information online about their assigned category and put the results into a small	Not only will the research provide the students with some information about the topic, they will also be confronted with the various different representations of college life in the US through various sources. With help from the teacher, they learn to navigate these sources and	Every group should have access to at least 2-3 computers. The presentation is to be made in a digital format such as PowerPoint. Group work, research time	Reading, Writing, Speaking

	presentation. The results are to be presented next lesson. Each student should prepare to talk between 1-2 minutes.	critically evaluate the information. To make sure students retain some of the information, they have to break the material down in order to present it.	The teacher overviews the research process and tries to enforce that students converse in English only while they work on their presentations.	
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5.2.4 Lesson 4: Presentations

Time	Content	Aim	Method/Material	Skill
45-50'	Students present their research on the College social life categories from the previous lesson. After every presentation there is time for questions or for further information and comments by the teacher.	Similar to the “expert round” method, the students get to present the results of their research to their peers and the other students receive input on all categories that were established in the previous lesson. The teacher will also have a gradable output by the students. The point of the presentations on college and university college is to create a context for the lessons about Greek life that follow. It is important to let the students find out that Greek life cannot be seen as representative for all of college life but is just an aspect of it. With that, the creation of wrong stereotypes is avoided, as the Austrian curriculum demands (BMBWF 126)	In-class presentations of 8-10 minutes each Projector, Computer	Speaking Listening

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5.2.5 Lesson 5: Greek Life

Time	Content	Aim	Method/Material	Skill
5'	The lesson starts with the teacher asking the students questions about the various topics that came up in the presentations.	Reactivating the knowledge of the previous lesson.	Classroom discussion	Speaking Listening
5'	A list of Greek Life specific terms is handed out. If Greek life was already mentioned in a previous presentation by the students, the presenting students are asked again to expand on what they have found out. If Greek life has not been mentioned before the teacher will introduce the topic and say that it is part of many colleges and their culture in the United States.	In the ideal case, the topic will already have been brought up within a presentation in the previous lessons, thus making the transition to Greek life as a new topic more organic. If not, the teacher has to steer the course of the lesson. The list with Greek life terminology is helpful for the students to be able to follow the next part of the lesson. They don't have to utilize it, it's merely provided as supplemental information.	Classroom discussion List of Greek Life terminology – lists of these terms are easily available online and need to be adapted depending on the content of the lesson.	Listening
20'	Listening Comprehension: The students are being shown a video that explains the basic history, terminology and the cultural aspect of Greek life.	Students get a basic understanding of Greek life. Listening skills are also tested at an appropriate B2 level. A similar exercise could be used for an upcoming test	Projector, Internet access, Speakers Worksheet 2, Listening Exercise	Listening

	A listening exercise is to be completed along with the video.		Video: Stay Tuned: So, What's Greek Life Really All About? (Youtube)	
15'	Two videos are shown about a fraternity and a sorority and how their student house looks like. Afterwards, the impression that students got from the listening exercise and the two videos will be discussed	<p>Students get to know more about how the social aspect of Greek life can look like.</p> <p>The videos can be very strange for Austrian students to see as and thus a discussion on it is important to avoid misjudgment and stereotypes.</p> <p>The videos arguably present the Greek life organizations in a self-glorifying light and serve as a good contrast to the critical articles that will be covered in the next lessons</p>	<p>Projector, Internet access, Speakers</p> <p>Classroom discussion</p> <p>Videos:</p> <p>College Weekly: Trending Houses: Pike – Florida State University</p> <p>College Weekly: Trending Houses: Delta Gamma – Florida State University (Youtube)</p>	Listening, Speaking

5.2.6 Lesson 6: Opinions on Greek Life

Time	Content	Aim	Material/Method	Skills
5'	The students receive two articles. The articles highlight different aspects of Greek life and are very different from each other. One article is rather critical towards the phenomenon while the other is written by a sorority	Make clear to the students what the task is and let them know that the rest of the lesson is still open for questions about content or vocabulary.	<p>Article 1: Buying into Greek life, is it worth it?</p> <p>Article 2: I am in Greek Life and Yes, I Pay for my Friends</p>	

	<p>member in defense of Greek organizations. The students are instructed to read the articles.</p> <p>With the information from the articles and the previous lessons, the students shall write an opinion essay. In their essay, they are supposed to write whether or not they would consider joining a fraternity or sorority if they were college students in the United States.</p>			
40'-45'	<p>Until the end of the lesson, the students are given time to read the articles. The teacher will take this time to elaborate some of the vocabulary within the articles that might be unclear to the students.</p> <p>After reading the articles, the students may commence writing their essays that are to be handed in in the next lesson. Unfinished essays are to be finished at home as homework.</p>	<p>The articles are read in class to give students the option to ask questions and to explain to them vocabulary that might be unclear.</p> <p>The in class reading makes it possible to task the students to write the rest of the essay at home in case they do not finish during the lesson.</p> <p>Despite the feedback that will be given to the students on their written essays, this concludes the teaching unit on United States higher education and college culture.</p>	<p>Blackboard</p> <p>Individual reading and writing task</p>	<p>Reading Writing</p>

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6 Appendix

Worksheet 1: Reading Task (Lesson 2)

The Educational Structure

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL

Prior to higher education, American students attend primary and secondary school for a combined total of 12 years. These years are referred to as the first through twelfth grades.

Around age six, U.S. children begin primary school, which is most commonly called “elementary school.” They attend five or six years and then go onto secondary school.

Secondary school consists of two programs: the first is “middle school” or “junior high school” and the second program is “high school.” A diploma or certificate is awarded upon graduation from high school. After graduating high school (12th grade), U.S. students may go on to college or university. College or university study is known as “higher education.”

GRADING SYSTEM

Just like American students, you will have to submit your academic transcripts as part of your application for admission to university or college. Academic transcripts are official copies of your academic work. In the U.S. this includes your “grades” and “grade point average” (GPA), which are measurements of your academic achievement. Courses are commonly graded using percentages, which are converted into letter grades.

The grading system and GPA in the U.S. can be confusing, especially for international students. The interpretation of grades has a lot of variation. For example, two students who attended different schools both submit their transcripts to the same university. They both have 3.5 GPAs, but one student attended an average high school, while the other attended a prestigious school that was academically challenging. The university might interpret their GPAs differently because the two schools have dramatically different standards.

ACADEMIC YEAR

The school calendar usually begins in August or September and continues through May or June. The majority of new students begin in autumn, so it is a good idea for international students to also begin their U.S. university studies at this time. There is a lot of excitement at the beginning of the school year and students form many great friendships during this time, as they are all adjusting to a new phase of academic life. Additionally, many courses are designed for students to take them in sequence, starting in autumn and continuing through the year. The academic year at many schools is composed of two terms called “semesters.”

THE U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: LEVELS OF STUDY

- **First Level: Undergraduate**

A student who is attending a college or university and has not earned a bachelor’s degree, is studying at the undergraduate level. It typically takes about four years to earn a bachelor’s degree. You can either begin your studies in pursuit of a bachelor’s degree at a community college or a four-year university or college.

Your first two years of study you will generally be required to take a wide variety of classes in different subjects, commonly known as prerequisite courses: literature, science, the social sciences, the arts, history, and so forth. This is so you achieve a general knowledge, a foundation, of a variety of subjects prior to focusing on a specific field of study.

Many students choose to study at a community college in order to complete the first two years of prerequisite courses. They will earn an Associate of Arts (AA) transfer degree and then transfer to a four-year university or college.

A “major” is the specific field of study in which your degree is focused. For example, if someone’s major is journalism, they will earn a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism. You will be required to take a certain number of courses in this field in order to meet the degree requirements of your major. You must choose your major at the beginning of your third year of school.

A very unique characteristic of the American higher education system is that you can change your major multiple times if you choose. It is extremely common for American students to switch majors at some point in their undergraduate studies. Often, students discover a different field that they excel in or enjoy. The American education system is very flexible. Keep in mind though that switching majors may result in more courses, which means more time and money.

Source: <https://www.studyusa.com/en/a/58/understanding-the-american-education-system>

Questions:

Try to find the answers for these questions in the text and answer with four words or less

What do US students need to complete before entering college or university?

What does GPA stand for?

What can be a reason for two identical GPA scores being not equally as valuable?

What do many students do at the start of a semester?

Where can students get an Associates Degree or Transfer Degree?

How many years does undergraduate college education usually take?

What is a major?

What can switching majors lead to?

Worksheet 2: Listening Task (Lesson 5)

What is College Greek life?

You are going to listen to a recording about Greek Life at Colleges in the United States. First you will have 45 seconds to study the task below, then you will hear the recording twice. While listening, select the two correct answers for every question. One of the three answers is wrong.

1. What is true about the history of student's organizations?
 - a. The first one was founded by Thomas Jefferson
 - b. They existed before the United States of America
 - c. They did not always use Greek letters as names

2. Women's Greek life organizations...
 - a. existed also at Syracuse University
 - b. were first founded by a Latin professor
 - c. were called fraternities at first

3. Today, numbers show that Greek life
 - a. is still an attractive option for many students
 - b. has a million new members every year
 - c. has more than 10.000 chapters

4. The process of getting into a Greek life organization...
 - a. Consists of several steps
 - b. Is completely secret
 - c. Is sometime under critique

5. What is true about hazing?
 - a. It always involves drinking
 - b. Students have died because of it
 - c. It is more relevant than ever

6. What are some benefits to Greek life that the speaker mentions?
 - a. No more pledging process
 - b. Making friends for life
 - c. They raise money for good causes

Article 1: (Lesson 6)

Buying Into Greek Life: Is It Worth It?

The price of tuition, books and room and board already make for an expensive price tag on a college education. But for hundreds of thousands of students in the U.S. and Canada, the fees don't end there. Students who choose to join Greek life are going to end up paying more for their undergraduate experience. On over 650 campuses across the U.S. and Canada, students participating in Greek organizations for social opportunities and leadership development are shouldering an additional financial burden beyond the staggering cost of college. It's more than just the price of membership—dues and the add-ons can top out at five figures annually.

More than 725,000 college students are members of social Greek letter organizations. At some universities, Greek participation reaches as high as 80%. It's not just on campuses where a quarter to over half of students are members of a Greek organization (more than 120 schools). Even at colleges where the Greek system is small, it can still dominate the social scene and many students may feel the pressure to join a chapter. Often criticized for its exclusivity, Greek life is becoming an even greater indicator of social status and class. Those who join must be able to pay their way, in addition to their ever-increasing college bill.

Go Greek! Then pay up

The first step in “going Greek” is the recruitment process, where potential new members meet and talk with current Greeks. It often comes with an “application fee,” not unlike the costs of applying to school itself. The cost of going through recruitment varies. At Lehigh University, a potential new member pays \$45, while at the University of Mississippi or UT Austin he or she will pay upwards of \$125. Going through recruitment does not guarantee membership, so students are paying for the chance rather than the ticket.

Once a recruit has been accepted, membership dues kick in. This amount varies both from campus to campus and chapter to chapter. The fees usually range from several hundred dollars to several thousands of dollars per semester. At Washington and Lee University, a 77% Greek school, students who join a fraternity or sorority pay an average of \$11,316 in annual fees associated with membership, including dues, and housing and meals.

Additional mandatory and optional (but strongly encouraged) charges include the price of a membership pin and clothing—sweatshirts with Greek letters, dresses or suits for formal events and more—as well as social activity fees. “On top of dues, my expenses are random shirts, or money for dinners with sisters and costumes for theme parties,” says Hannah Melton, an Alpha Phi sister at Syracuse University. “It can add up to around \$100 extra per semester.” Melton covers her membership fees with money she earns at a campus job. “My parents told me that if it's something I want to do, I have to pay for it myself. Greek dues are more of a luxury, but if it's something you really want, you will figure out how to afford it,” she adds.

Going broke to be Greek?

For students who have to take out loans and use financial aid to afford their tuition, the addition of annual three to five-figure fees associated with Greek life may put membership out of reach. “Students may work part time jobs or pay their own way but the financial responsibility usually falls on parents,” says Robert Kent, program director for Greek Affairs at West Virginia University. “Students nationally are incurring debt and they don't have the financial aid or

scholarship money to cover Greek membership, so they ask their parents for loans, and parents get upset about the extra costs.”

The mother of a recent University of Pennsylvania grad spoke with her son before committing to covering his fraternity dues. “Paying for [my son’s] fraternity dues was definitely a discussion,” she says. “He approached my husband and me asking to help him pay the bill,” she says. “He gave us the impression that it was going to be expensive, beyond the price of his tuition. But we thought about the purpose and benefits, and agreed to fund it.”

As students and their parents budget for rising college costs, luxury items like Greek membership may be no-go. And while individual chapters may offer payment plans, stand-alone scholarships, or waive certain fees for students in need, these stipends are not given to all cash-conscious students and do not comprehensively cover all the costs of going Greek.

At West Virginia, dues, and social, insurance, and risk management fees for Greek involvement average \$750 per student each semester. This fall, tuition and fees at West Virginia are undergoing an 8% hike. “Once going through new member recruitment, there will be some fall out in participation when students see the costs of joining a fraternity or sorority,” Kent says.

“I think [Greek] experience remains relevant across time, we’ve seen it develop from the past and see students joining in the future,” says Peter Smithhisler, president and CEO of the North-American Interfraternity Conference when asked if the number of Greeks will fall because of rising college costs. “Greek life will continue to be part of the college experience.”

Source:

Forbes Magazine

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nataliesportelli/2014/06/19/buying-into-greek-life-is-it-worth-it/#558bd52349c3>

Article 2: (Lesson 6)

I am in Greek Life and Yes, I Pay for my Friends

Amid bid day and the start of the new member season, it's time to talk about everyone's favorite subject: dues. As far as you're probably concerned, they serve no purpose other than to drain your bank account and allow your classmates to not-so-subtly whisper "She's in Greek life so she's paying for her friends" behind your back. Yes, Greek life is expensive, and yes, we are technically paying to be surrounded by and engage with a group of similarly-minded women, but paying dues and being a part of an organization is so much more than that.

Every high school senior dreams of going off to college for independence, freedom, and the ability to hang out with their friends wherever and whenever they want. The problem is, for many people (including me), that last part is not necessarily guaranteed. College is not a fairy tale. Your freshman roommate will not always become your best friend and your floor mates will not always become the ones to replace the friend group that you left at home. For some people, navigating the hallowed halls of a university for the first time is doubly as terrifying, because they have to do it alone. And that's where Greek life comes in.

There's this subconscious notion within society that there is safety in numbers. Part of the reason why Greek life is so appealing to people is that they know they will be gaining lifelong friends, a group of sisters that are always there for support, and a place to call home, when for some, their real home may be many miles away. But at what price?

I cannot speak for every organization, but my dues go towards a wide variety of things. They go towards our nationals, they contribute towards supplies needed for our philanthropic and fundraising events, they pay for our officers to attend workshops that help them (and, subsequently, us) to grow as leaders, and they contribute to a few new t-shirts a semester so that we can appear unified and presentable as an organization (and who doesn't love new clothes?). The price and allocation of dues may vary greatly for each organization, so don't be afraid to ask questions about what exactly you will be paying for. No one likes getting hit with a giant bill at the end of the semester with no way to pay for it.

It is important to note, however, that many Greek life members are able to pay their dues on their own, either by holding an on-campus job or using the money saved up from a summer job. If you are really interested in joining Greek life but absolutely cannot afford dues, feel free to reach out to your potential chapter's president, treasurer, or even membership recruitment director before or during rush. Most likely, they will be able to work out some kind of payment plan for you, or you may be able to obtain a special considerations status. Your new sisters will be just as excited for you to join their organization as you are to join them, and they should be more than happy to sit down and have this conversation with you.

So you just survived the whirlwind of recruitment, were just able to scrape together the last of your allowance and summer camp money to pay for your dues, and now you're anxiously awaiting the start of a new journey with your sisters. But the real question is, will it be worth it?

My phone is currently filled with pictures from past chapter events; I will go home later tonight to the apartment that I share with two of my sisters, and next year, to a house that I will share with four more. I can name at least three sisters off the top of my head that I know I can always go to for advice, and as I'm writing this, I am sitting across from a sister, doing homework in the library.

The money that I have paid for these friendships and experiences is trivial. Ultimately, when you join Greek life, you are paying to be a part of something that is deeply rooted in history and tradition. You are paying as a way to promise to live by the same standards of the group of women who founded your organization long ago, for a very unique and special purpose. You are paying to be surrounded by a group of women who take these same values to heart, and wish to use them to learn, lead, and grow both together and for others in need.

So yes, to some, I am paying for my friends. But to me, I am paying for an opportunity unlike any other.

Source: <https://www.freshu.io/alexandra-mauriello/i-am-in-greek-life-and-yes-i-pay-for-my-friends>

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