Introduction

Life at Greek University

In *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (1994), Mary Pipher detailed the struggles of America's adolescent girls with depression, eating disorders, self-esteem, suicide, sexuality, and a culture that narrowly defines womanhood. In *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys* (2000), Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson similarly discussed the struggles of America's boys with anger, violence, the inability to express themselves emotionally, drinking and drugs, and a culture that narrowly defines manhood.

But what happens when Ophelia and Cain grow up, go away to college, and pledge a fraternity or a sorority, that is, "go Greek"? Do they become better adjusted, happier, and healthier? Are their levels of self-esteem higher and their rates of eating disorders lower? Does college free them from the narrowly defined ideas of femininity and masculinity that caused them so much dissonance in their childhood? Or does this elite learning experience simply reinforce all the previous cultural messages that they have received about sexuality, independence, conflict, violence, aggression, passivity, and their freedom (or lack thereof) to deviate from these ideals?

At its most essential, this book explores the role played by fraternities and sororities at what I refer to as Greek University (GU) in shaping the gender identities of its members. As a college professor who is also a faculty and alumni adviser in the Greek system, I have witnessed thousands of Ophelias and Cains entering college, pledging organizations, falling in (and out of) love, drinking to excess, and, eventually, growing up and starting their postcollege lives. But what kind of college graduates are we producing? Do we have

reason to celebrate or cause to worry? The answer is a resounding both!

Working toward this general conclusion, *Inside Greek U* examines the ways fraternities and sororities both challenge and reinforce traditional conceptions of gender in their everyday practices. Given the disturbing trends on college campuses toward increased aggression and violence among men and eating disorders and victimization (e.g., date rape) among women, understanding how these students conceive of gender, sex, relationships, and power is of significant social importance.

My ultimate goal, however, is to do more than just report on the sensational exploits of decadent Greeks. I want to critically and sympathetically examine the way these students are having their potential limited by a rigid gender classification system that insists that "real men" must be tough, unemotional, promiscuous, and violent and "nice girls" nurturing, passive, nonconfrontational, and domestic.

My hope is that the next generation of Ophelias and Cains will be freer to deviate from the narrow and confining conceptions of masculinity and femininity and to explore the new potential that becomes possible only through increased choices and expanded identities.

Understanding the Greek System?

Because of the highly secretive and protective nature of fraternities and sororities, most Americans, even those non-Greeks who have attended American colleges with Greek systems, know little about the inner workings of these groups—except perhaps for what has been portrayed in movies such as *Animal House, Old School, Revenge of the Nerds, Legally Blonde,* and *Sorority Strip Party.* Consequently, before an investigation of gender in the context of America's Greek system can be undertaken, it is necessary to give an overview of that system, including its history and definitions of key practices, rituals, and terms.

To begin with, "being Greek" has nothing to do with Hellenic culture, Plato, or "big fat weddings." In fact, the only Greek aspect of the Greek system is the letters—Sigma Pi, Alpha Delta Pi, Alpha Delta Pi, Delta Delta Delta, etc.—arbitrarily used to differentiate organizations. Why, then, are Greek letters used? In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when fraternities first appeared on American college campuses, ancient Greek studies were academically in vogue.[1]

However, not all Greek-letter organizations are the same. The institution writ large is actually divided into three categories. There are *professional* fraternities and sororities that bring students together on the basis of their professional or vocational field (e.g., Phi Delta Phi, founded in 1869, is a coeducational fraternity for students interested in the study of law). There are *honor* societies that are composed mainly of students who have achieved distinction in scholarship (e.g., Tau Beta Phi, founded in 1885, is a coeducational fraternity for students who have excelled in the study of engineering).[2] And, finally, there are *social* fraternities and sororities, the organizations that are commonly associated with big parties, pledging and hazing, and communal housing. These are the groups on which my investigation focuses.[3]

The first of these *social* organizations appeared on the campus of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1776. The five white male students who formed Phi Beta Kappa wanted to create a men's club that offered camaraderie, secrecy, and intellectual discussion to its members.[4] Needless to say, beer kegs, toga parties, and goldfish eating were not yet part of the Greek curriculum (Winston, Nettles & Opper, 1987).

In the century that followed, modest numbers of new fraternities, inspired by the high ideas of the Phi Beta Kappas, began springing up throughout the nation. On campuses as varied as Yale, Jefferson College, Dartmouth, Union College, Miami (of Ohio), Virginia Military Institute, Harvard, and the University of Alabama, today's largest and wealthiest white male social fraternities took root. By

1900, such groups as Kappa Alpha (1825), Phi Gamma Delta (1848), Sigma Chi (1852), Sigma Alpha Epsilon (1856), Alpha Tau Omega (1865), and Sigma Nu (1869), were all firmly established and preparing for their subsequent expansion throughout the United States.[5]

As hard as it may be for some to believe, given the contemporary reputation of fraternities, these early Greek-letter societies were considered "valuable adjuncts of student life and, instead of opposing them, most institutions decided that they might be put to work helping run the school, keeping recalcitrant students in line, acting as convenient units of discipline in college life" (Ferguson, 1937, p. 40). As high-minded as they inspired to be, these groups were also segregated institutions, reserved only for wealthy, white, Christian men. Women, blacks, non-Christians, and the poor need not apply.

Consequently, disenfranchised segments of the student body—beginning with a handful of industrious college women in the Midwest—began their own elite and segregated social clubs. By the late nineteenth century, Pi Beta Phi (1867), Kappa Alpha Theta (1870), Kappa Kappa Gamma (1870), Delta Gamma (1872), Alpha Delta Pi (1904), and Phi Mu (1904) sororities were established to give educated white women a forum in which to discuss literature, poetry, and morality.[6]

By the turn of the twentieth century, African Americans also began forming their own Greek organizations. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity (1906), Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (1908), Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity (1911), Omega Psi Phi Fraternity (1911), and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority (1913) were the first to take advantage of the financial, intellectual, social, and networking benefits of elite Greek institutions (Ross, 2000).[7]

Regardless of race or gender distinctions, however, *all* of America's social Greek organizations experienced a period of dramatic transformation in the second half of the twentieth century. With the ending of World War II in 1945—and the subsequent economic/baby boom that followed—men and women began attending college

in record numbers. And, as David Halberstam (1994) has argued, higher education quickly became democratized. Working-class men and women, minorities, and newly arrived immigrants, people who in years past would never have contemplated attending college, were now matriculating—and pledging social Greek organizations.

As a result, new Greek organizations were materializing at an unprecedented rate, old Greek organizations were expanding onto new campuses, membership for both was steadily climbing, and, partially because of the increasing need for university housing, fraternities and sororities began building their own domiciles—complete with bedrooms, kitchens, dining rooms, and "social" rooms. These developments played no small part in precipitating one of the most significant (and troubling) changes to the institution of the social Greek organization: The older organizations, which brought members together for conversation and camaraderie, were transformed into social clubs dedicated primarily to amusement. Poetry readings, literary circles, and dining were replaced with beer, sex, and rock and roll.

In 1957, the University of Chicago administrator and Phi Delta Theta alumni Ray Blackwell politely summarized this new Greek situation: "Perhaps most students would agree that the ever widening expanse of fraternity activities in the past few decades has caused some lessening of the emphasis of earlier days. In some chapters it may be the modern emphasis [i.e., partying] has relegated those ideals of the founders to secondary importance. . . . [Many have been] exceedingly critical . . . of fraternity membership for its failures to live up to the high ideals for which the fraternity has stood since the very beginning of the American nation" (p. vii).

However, not everything from the earlier years was discarded. Many of the older practices and rituals remained steadfast—albeit many ignobly augmented for a *different* generation of students. Fraternities and sororities, for instance, still "rush"—the process of membership recruitment where organizations evaluate potential new members (and vice versa). Those students deemed worthy are

still "bid" or invited to "pledge"—pledging usually being a semester-long activity where new members learn about their organization, its members, activities, and responsibilities. At times, especially for fraternities, pledging involves the secret and now illegal act of "hazing"—behavior that often endangers, abuses, degrades, humiliates, and/or intimidates pledges.[8] Finally, for those who make it through the sometimes arduous and trying pledging process, there is still "initiation"—the secret induction ritual where new "brothers" and "sisters" learn the confidences, codes, passwords, and handshakes of their forefathers and foremothers.

These practices, rites, and rituals have remained relatively consistent over the years, as have two other aspects of Greek life. First, the social Greek system remains almost as segregated today as it was in 1776. No real interest in or commitment to the idea of integration, whether gender or racial, has been demonstrated. It can be argued, in fact, that the social fraternity/sorority remains the most segregated institution in America. Second, while a few Canadian universities have been colonized, fraternities and sororities both black and white have remained a uniquely American phenomenon.

Why Study the Greek System?

Given this contemporary, and often unflattering, description of social Greek organizations, some may wonder why I investigate Greeks—and not, for example, the basketball team, the cheerleaders, or the math club. After all, Greeks constitute a minority of students on most college campuses and are a relatively homogeneous group—namely, white, middle- to upper-class students. The answer to this question is threefold.

First, because of the secretive nature of the Greek system, most studies of it consist of reports from outside observers or quantitative survey research counting number of drinks consumed or parties attended. What has not been undertaken is research conducted from an insider's perspective, research that not only observes the

way these students live their lives but also ascertains their perspectives, beliefs, hopes, and fears about being young in America in the twenty-first century.

Second, while Greeks constitute an average of only 8.5 percent of American college students,[9] they produce from among their ranks a staggering number of American leaders (NIC, n.d.). According to the Center for the Study of the College Fraternity (n.d.), Greeks, especially white fraternity members, dominate the elite realms of politics, law, and business, constituting, for example:

- 76 percent of U.S. senators;
- 71 percent of the men listed in *Who's Who in America*;
- 85 percent of the Fortune 500 executives;
- 120 of the *Forbes'* 500 CEOs, 10 in the top 30 alone (see table 1);
- 63 percent of U.S. presidents' cabinet members since 1900;
- 85 percent of the U.S. Supreme Court justices since 1910;
- 18 U.S. presidents since 1877 (see table 2).

This is to say nothing of the prominent positions held on most campuses by Greeks. As one of my students recently comment

Table 1. The Top 10 Greek CEOs on the *Forbes'* 500 List for 2003

Forbes Rank	Company	CEO	Fraternity
1	Citigroup	Sanford Weill	Alpha Epsilon Pi
4	American International Group	Maurice Greenberg	Sigma Alpha Mu
12	J.P. Morgan Chase	William B. Harrison Jr.	Zeta Psi
19	Goldman Sachs	Jenry Paulson	Sigma Alpha Epsilon
21	Procter & Gamble	Alan Lafley	Psi Upsilon
24	Wachovia	G. Kennedy Thompson	Beta Theta Pi
25	Berkshire Hathaway	Warren Buffett	Alpha Sigma Phi
27	Home Depot	Robert Nardelli	Tau Kappa Epsilon
28	BellSouth	F. Duane Ackerman	Lambda Chi Alpha
29	General Motors	G. Richard Wagoner	Delta Tau Delta

Note: These facts and figures are taken from http://www.forbes.com/2003/cx_dd_0131frat.html.

Table 2. Greek U.S. Presidents since 1877 and Their Fraternity Affiliations

President	Years in Office	Fraternity
Rutherford B. Hayes	1877–81	Delta Kappa Epsilon
James Garfield	1881	Delta Epsilon
Chester Arthur	1881–85	Psi Upsilon
Benjamin Harrison	1889–93	Phi Delta Theta
William McKinley	1897–1901	Sigma Alpha Epsilon
Theodore Roosevelt	1901-09	Delta Kappa Epsilon/ Alpha Delta Phi
William Howard Taft	1909–13	Psi Upsilon
Woodrow Wilson	1913–21	Phi Kappa Psi
Calvin Coolidge	1923–29	Phi Gamma Delta
Franklin D. Roosevelt	1933–45	Alpha Delta Phi
Harry S. Truman	1945–53	Lambda Chi Alpha
Dwight D. Eisenhower	1953–61	Tau Epsilon Phi
John F. Kennedy	1961–63	Phi Kappa Theta
Gerald R. Ford	1974–77	Delta Kappa Epsilon
Ronald Reagan	1981–89	Tau Kappa Epsilon
George H. W. Bush	1989–93	Delta Kappa Epsilon
George W. Bush	2001–	Delta Kappa Epsilon

ed: "Those damn Greeks run everything." It is not uncommon to find sorority and fraternity members who are student government presidents, homecoming kings and queens, student activity chairs, and department and college ambassadors. On all the five campuses on which I have spent significant amounts of time, it is virtually impossible to be elected to a prominent position without either being a Greek or having the support of the Greek voting bloc. At the University of Alabama, this voting bloc has even been given the ominous moniker "The Machine."

Third, 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, they are necessarily and inevitably to be found among our neighbors, our teachers, our police officers, our child-care professionals, our doctors, our school board representatives, our sons and daughters. Far from being an academic exercise, understanding the Greek system is a part of understanding America.

Methodology

The data that inform *Inside Greek U* were obtained through three separate but interdependent methods.[10] First, statistical data from institutional, academic, and government research supplied demographic figures on membership, pledging, GPAs, alcohol consumption, hazing fatalities, and postgraduate occupations and salaries nationwide. These numbers helped establish the scope and influence of America's Greek system.

The book also draws on my extensive involvement with fraternity and sorority life. I have been a part of the Greek experience for over twenty-five years. For the first four of those years, I was an undergraduate student and an active fraternity brother at Brandywine College, Wilmington, Delaware (A.A. 1982–84), and James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia (B.A. 1984–86). I spent the next seven years in graduate school at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa (M.A. 1986–88), and Indiana University, Bloomington (Ph.D. 1988–1993), working toward advanced degrees in rhetoric and communication and, when time and opportunity permitted, remaining active as a Greek alumnus on two very pro-Greek campuses. By the end of those eleven years, I had experienced Greek life from a student's perspective on campuses that ranged from a private college in the Northeast with seven hundred students to public Research I institutions in the Deep South and Midwest with more than twenty and thirty thousand students, respectively.[11]

By 1993, it was time, to quote my mother, "to finally begin my life as a full-fledged working adult." I accepted a professorship in the Department of Communications at GU, an average-size (twen-

ty-five to thirty thousand students) public Research I university currently hosting forty-one Greek organizations (thirty-four white and seven black) with approximately thirty-one hundred active members (around 13 percent of the full-time undergraduate population). The majority of undergraduate students on campus range in age from eighteen to twenty-five and come from white, middle-class families; freshman have an average incoming high school GPA of 3.1 and an average ACT score of 25 or an average SAT score of 1,100. GU is located in the middle of the eastern half of the United States and is a member of a major NCAA sports conference. Consequently, it attracts students from all fifty states searching for a typical college experience, complete with Saturday afternoon football games, great teachers, diverse courses, and, of course, fraternity and sorority life.

Given the nature of this dynamic university and its energetic students, it was only two semesters before I found myself drawn back to the Greek system—albeit this time as an alumni adviser with twenty-twenty hindsight. Fourteen years later, along with being a tenured professor, I am also the chapter director for the GU branch of my own fraternity and the faculty adviser for twelve different white social Greek organizations, one black social Greek organization, and two white social Greek governing organizations.[12]

While the amount of time I spend with each of these organizations as a director or an adviser varies greatly in any given year, depending as it does on the needs and personalities of each chapter, I have generally invested an average of two to three hours per week interacting with, mentoring, eating with, listening to, emceeing for, moderating among, socializing with, and, at times, reprimanding these groups. While university administrators have expressed their appreciation for my participation in student life (an activity that most professors avoid), the real benefit for me has been getting to know the university's thousands of brothers and sisters, both in the formal setting of *my* classroom and, more important, in the informal settings of *their* tailgates, Monday night dinners, chapter meetings, rush functions, fund-raisers, and graduation parties.

The nature of my participation in GU's Greek life was transformed, however, in September 2001, when I began gathering data for this book. Not only did I begin to increase the amount of time I spent with GU's Greeks (from two to three hours per week to four to five), but I also began keeping systematic field notes of my observations of and thoughts about how fraternity and sorority members negotiate their gender roles and identities through their daily performances.

Specifically, I entered salient conversations verbatim and detailed interactions (activities, practices, rituals) that took place at formal and informal Greek events. I also recorded my responses, both intellectual and emotional, to those conversations and interactions. On those occasions where doing so was neither conspicuous nor disruptive (e.g., chapter meetings, campus debates), I took notes on the spot. Most often, however, I recorded my thoughts immediately after an encounter, using a Sony portable digital recorder that, because of its small size (1½ × 2 inches), I was able to carry with me almost everywhere and, thus, capture spontaneous conversations as well.

Finally, this book is informed by focus group and individual interviews with 217 fraternity and sorority members conducted on the GU campus. Since I had worked so closely with the Greek system and was perceived as a pro-Greek faculty member, recruiting students for my videotaped focus group interviews was relatively easy. The real problem that I encountered was managing the logistics of getting large numbers of Greeks from different organizations to the right place at the right time. With the help of two graduate students—Erin (a Pi Beta Phi Sorority alumna from GU) and Amy (a Tri Delta Sorority alumna from GU)—I devised a plan using undergraduate *point people.*

Point people were GU Greek students whom I had previously, and successfully, worked with and trusted (most were either former students or members of a Greek organization that I had helped or advised), who were willing to serve as representatives and liaisons

for their fraternity or sorority, and who were active members of one of the nineteen Greek organizations I wanted to study. The primary responsibilities of these students were to recruit eight to twelve interviewees who represented what *they* thought was an accurate and balanced cross section of their chapter and arrange a time that they could all meet for a two-hour focus group interview.[13] With the support and organizational skills of my nineteen enthusiastic point people, I conducted nineteen different focus-group interviews with five elite and four aspirer fraternities and six elite and four aspirer sororities.[14]

The elite organizations were GU's first-tier Greek organizations. They were well established, influential, wealthy, popular, and large, and their members lived in a fraternity or sorority house. They wielded a disproportionate influence on campus, were unanimously recognized by the Greek community and university officials as GU's top Greek organizations, and had produced the wealthiest, most influential alumni. They were also the most homogeneous groups, composed of attractive, middle- to upper-class, popular, white, Christian, heterosexual men and women who behaved in traditionally masculine and feminine ways.

The aspirer organizations were GU's second-tier Greek organizations. They were not as wealthy, selective, or influential as the elites, and membership in them was not as coveted. Their ranks were often filled with students who *just* missed the elite cut but still wanted to experience Greek life. Consequently, their membership was slightly more diverse: a little less attractive, popular, and wealthy, a little more ethnic,[15] and a little more likely to think and behave androgynously. It is important to remember, however, that they accepted these "differences," not because they were more self-actualized and enlightened (they did, ultimately, aspire to elite status), but because they were forced, by university-imposed quotas and their own financial exigencies, to be less selective when recruiting pledge classes.

Together the elites and the aspirers accounted for nineteen of GU's thirty-four fraternities and sororities. The remaining fifteen can be

classified as the struggler organizations. These Greek pariahs were significantly smaller (many had fewer than twenty or thirty members), did not participate in collective Greek activities (fund-raisers, mixers/parties, talent shows, intramural sports), did not own/lease/rent a communal living space, were much newer (many were less than a decade old), were far less influential and visible on campus, and had virtually no alumni support. Their members were too ethnic, too heavy, too unattractive, too unpopular, too uninvolved, too unmasculine/unfeminine, too uncool, to receive bids from the aspirers or the elites. To highlight how invisible these groups were, most aspirers and elites were unaware of their existence.[16] Since the strugglers were so peripheral to campus life, I decided not to interview their members in focus groups but, instead, to select a representative sample of their membership for dyadic interviews.

Along with choosing which organizations to interview, I also had to decide on the composition of the focus groups. After much thought, I opted *not* to mix and match members from different organizations. I knew from experience that many of these groups had long-standing rivalries and, as a result, would have been far less forthcoming in mixed company. Instead, I interviewed each fraternity and sorority separately, keeping brothers and sisters together. Knowing how intimate and familiar they would be with each other, I was hoping for a more honest and open exchange. The quality of the interviews far exceeded my expectations.

To begin with, there were no periods of awkward silence, trepidation, or mistrust during the early stages of the interviews—a problem that arises when interviewing groups whose members have no shared history. These students, having already established intimacy, jumped into conversation almost immediately once the video recorder was turned on. Next, I discovered that, because of these students' shared history, memories and thoughts expressed by one often triggered memories and thoughts in the others. It was not uncommon for an innocuous topic, such as a party, to snowball into an intensely meaningful group conversation about the excessive drinking, the in-

terpersonal conflict, and the sex that took place there. Finally, these brothers and sisters served as a great source of collective and corrective memory. Sometimes someone would forget key elements of a story; within seconds, the others would join the conversation and share in the story's expansion and development. Other times multiple interpretations of the same event would arise; in these cases, fun but passionate debate would take place over the contradictory perceptions. The important thing for me as a researcher was, not necessarily to work toward a unanimous resolution, but to record the multiple perspectives on a shared event.

Focus groups constituted only part of the interviewing process. In order to check the reliability of the focus groups, reach members of struggler organizations, obtain information about points that had not yet been covered, and seek clarification as new questions arose, I also conducted twenty-seven audiotaped individual interviews with students from twenty different white social Greek organizations. These interviews ranged in length from fifteen minutes to two hours, forty-five minutes. The students who participated in them were selected on the basis of personal insight, organizational affiliation, communication skill, leadership role, and/or diversity (what little there is in the white Greek system).

During both the focus group and the individual interviews, the questions that I asked and the discussions that were thereby generated addressed issues germane to gender. Specifically, the interviews were designed to cover six general, but interrelated, areas: how participants conceived of their own gender, how they conceived of the opposite gender, how their particular Greek organization defined appropriate gender behavior, how they supported and/or challenged their organization's conception of gender, what role they thought the Greek system played in their own conception of gender and in their development as men and women, and what they thought needed to be done to improve the Greek system in terms of gender relations.

Besides the questions of whom and how to interview, there were other significant issues that I wrestled with as a researcher. The most

important of these was how my sex, age, Greek affiliations, and professional position would influence the content and nature of the interviews. Would the men react to me by being competitive and aggressive, the women by being secretive and circumspect? Would both perceive my project as exploitative (as most similar projects have been)? Or would they perceive it as legitimate and worthwhile and, thus, choose to trust me?

With the final interviews transcribed, coded, and analyzed, I feel confident in claiming that both the men and the women who participated in my study were extremely honest and forthright with me. This assertion—which speaks to the reliability and validity of my project—is supported by at least four verifying techniques. First, a cross-referencing of the facts, figures, and narrative accounts supplied by the interviewees uncovered no instances of concealment, deception, or lying. While there were clearly multiple *evaluative* perspectives on issues—for example, whose organization was best—no two interviewees ever supplied contradictory or incongruent *factual* accounts. Second, in the almost eighty hours of taped interviews, I captured no statements significantly contradicting what I had observed in my thirteen years at GU as a professor, chapter director, or faculty adviser. Third, as I began finishing drafts of chapters, I asked interested sorority and fraternity members to read and respond to my interpretations and assertions. In all cases, I was told that both my descriptions and my discussions were accurate and informed, albeit sometimes painful and embarrassing to read. Finally, all my point people claimed—in exit interviews conducted with them—that their groups were "surprisingly honest," "really truthful," and "pulled no punches." They also reported that their members thought that, given my history with the Greeks, I could be "definitely trusted" and that they believed that I would use this research "to help the Greek system get stronger."

This is not to claim, however, that my results are absolute or that my sex, race, age, and professional position did not influence—positively or negatively—what was said (or what was asked) in the in-

terviews. It is inevitable, as Gadamer's (1975) idea of philosophical hermeneutics reminds us, that, regardless of how neutral, objective, and unbiased I strive to be, who I am affects not only how I interact with others and how others interact with me but also how I perceive the problem I am investigating, what questions I ask, what questions I don't ask, and how I interpret the answers I receive. Consequently, the best I can do as a researcher is to be academically responsible and ethical, acknowledge that I can tell only *my* story, not *the* story, and reflect constantly on how my position in this project might affect the story I tell.

Finally, this work is a case study of one public university in America. The goal of this project is not to draw absolute conclusions about America or American college life in general. I do believe, however, that my results are reliable enough to allow readers to draw their own cautious inferences about other white fraternity and sorority systems in America, especially those at large, public universities.

General Overview

I have chosen to allow the organization of this book to be guided by the students who shared their stories and lives with me. Consequently, after a brief discussion of gender identity and theory, I move on to discussions of the five aspects of gender identified by them as most important: sexuality, aggression and competition, body image, relationships, and postcollege careers. More specifically, the book unfolds as follows.

In chapter 1, "Understanding Gender," I discuss the ways in which identity formation, gender construction, and performativity theory function as a critical lens for this study. I also preview the seven most significant conclusions to be drawn from it, conclusions that will serve to unify subsequent chapters and underscore overarching themes.

In chapter 2, "Studs and Virgins," I consider the ways in which men and women conceive of sexuality and relationships. Men, for

example, are encouraged to sleep with as many women as possible, objectify women through both dehumanizing actions and misogynistic discourse, view acceptable relationships within the confines of a fraternity house, and are driven by homophobic fears to eliminate any effeminate or sensitive personality from their organization. Women, by contrast, search for "virtuous" sisters through the rush and pledge process, eliminate any woman with a questionable sexual reputation, redefine oral and anal intercourse as nonsexual activities in order to maintain their vestal identities, prevent pregnancies, and appease their dates, and perform for men (through suggestive dance, provocative dress, and bisexual flirting) to obtain both power and attention. When all is said and done, however, a brother who gets laid is still a stud and the sister who gets laid still a whore.

In chapter 3, "The Tough Guy and His Date (Rape)," I explore how Greek men and women manage their emotions and actions in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships. For example, GU's fraternity men practice a hyperaggressive and competitive masculinity with each other. The most coveted man in any house is the brother who is successful both in the bedroom and on the battlefield. Fighting, however, is not only a way to climb the fraternal caste system; it is also a means of male bonding. As these men testify, there is nothing that brings brothers together like "going to war" with another fraternity. Tragically, aggression also often figures prominently in these men's relationships with women.

In chapter 4, "Her Laxatives, His Steroids," I explore how Greeks today think about body shape and size. I discovered, not surprisingly, that the overwhelming majority of sorority women suffer from what can best be described as an unhealthy relationship with food. They perpetually diet, suffer from eating disorders, obsessively count calories, carbs, and fat, view food as an enemy, exercise compulsively, and no longer enjoy eating. Ironically, fraternity men are becoming just as obsessive about body image as sorority women have traditionally been. More and more are lifting weights, taking supplements, using steroids, shaving, waxing, and tanning

their bodies, and primping, preening, and grooming themselves to death. In the end, the men are never big enough, the women never small enough.

In chapter 5, "Bros before Hos," I examine how Greeks are taught to think about the platonic and romantic relationships in their lives. Interestingly, there is not in this case a split along gender lines. Both fraternity men and sorority women are encouraged to be interdependent, not individualistic. In fact, as most sorority women admit, fraternity brothers are bonded emotionally in ways that non-Greek men, women, and even sorority sisters are not. Unfortunately, this may be the only time in their lives that such a bond exists for them. Masculine individuality and isolation become the norms after men graduate and exit the fraternity house.

In chapter 6, "Soccer Moms and Corporate Dads," I address my subjects' postcollege hopes and dreams. Not surprisingly, fraternity men do not make academics a priority but still dream of high-paying, socially prestigious jobs. They also take for granted that there will be women in their lives who will assume complete responsibility for the domestic sphere. Interestingly, most sorority women envision a postcollege life that privileges the domestic over the professional even though they work harder and earn better grades than most other students on campus.

In the final chapter, "Cleaning Up after the Party," I summarize my major findings and evaluate the Greek system's strengths and weaknesses. Most important, however, I offer concerned faculty, alumni, students, parents, and administrators practical suggestions for moving fraternities and sororities closer to the idealized goals of higher education.