

**An Analysis of the Self-Reports and Perceptions of Greek Life and Non-Greek Life on  
the University of Wisconsin-Stout Campus**

by

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ABSTRACT

In the Fall of 2008, 86 University of Wisconsin-Stout students not involved in a social sorority or fraternity and 174 UW-Stout students who were active members of two fraternities and four sororities, were surveyed about their drinking habits, grade point averages, sense of community at UW-Stout, and their perceptions of other Stout students, both in and outside of the Greek system regarding these topics. The non-Greek and Greek students' self-reports and perceptions were then compared to determine if there were any relationships between the two groups' responses.

The study found that self-reports of drinking habits of Greek students were slightly higher than that of students not involved in Greek organizations. Reported grade point averages were highly similar between the two groups and reported sense of community was higher for Greek students.

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*Background*

Twenty-four United States presidents, 17 U.S. vice presidents, 42% of the U.S. senators, 40% of all U.S. Supreme Court Justices, 30% of all congressmen/women (Seven Advantages to Greek Life, 2008), numerous CEO's and presidents of companies including, Daniel Krumm, CEO of Maytag, popcorn innovator Orville Redenbaker, Elizabeth Dole, CEO of the American Red Cross, and many other notable individuals in history are all members of a fraternity or sorority (Fraternity and Sorority Life, 2000). Even with this caliber of representation, many individuals still believe the only accomplishments of members of Greek organizations are binge drinking, hazing, poor academic performance, and gender stereotyping. Although there are many misperceptions about members of Greek organizations, there also are substantial findings about members' actions. According to Caron, Moskey, and Hovey (2004), "Fraternity and sorority members drink more often and in greater quantities than other college students, putting them at an even higher risk for such things as missing class, poor grades, unprotected sex, violence, and even death" (p. 51).

The University of Wisconsin- Stout is located in Menomonie, Wisconsin. Menomonie is part of Dunn County and is an hour and a half drive east of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The total student count at the time of this writing is just under 8,500 students. There are four social sororities recognized on campus, which include: Alpha Phi; Delta Zeta; Phi Theta Chi; and Sigma Sigma Sigma. The four social fraternities recognized on campus include, Chi Lambda, Phi Omega Beta, and Phi Sigma Phi, and Kappa Lambda Beta. One fraternity, Sigma Tau Gamma, was on probation at the time of this study because of a drinking incident a year ago. They were not a recognized fraternity on the UW-Stout campus because of this incident, but were included in this study because their national affiliation was still intact. Phi Omega Beta and Kappa Lambda Beta members

were not included as members of a Greek organization because their membership was under ten, meaning fraternal activities and responsibilities were not equivalent to the other organizations. The cap for membership in each of these Greek organizations on the UW-Stout campus is 50 members. While some organizations have lower membership than others, most have about 20-25 members. Nationwide, there are 9 million members of Greek organizations and of those, 750,000 are undergraduate members (Spiegel, 2008).

Fraternity and sorority life can be very rewarding for members throughout their lives. Membership in these organizations does not end at graduation but is a life long commitment. Students of Greek organizations learn valuable leadership skills, social skills, time management skills, and have an entire organization to fall back on in time of need. The University of Maryland stated in their publication, *Greek Life: A Foundation for the Future*:

Greek chapters can enhance the quality of life for students on campus by providing a range of opportunities for meaningful individual involvement and growth. Life-long commitment to a Greek organization can in turn result in greater alumni involvement and service to the University (1995, p.4).

Meaningful involvement in chapters varies from member to member. Some see the leadership opportunities as meaningful, while other members view being a big sister or big brother (see definition on p. 7) the most meaningful part of being in a Greek organization. Each member's experience is different from anyone else's, but no matter which carries more meaning to the member, the end result of having a bonded group of sisters or brothers is the same.

Sense of community is a large part of a Greek organization. If current members do not feel part of the organization, retention and future membership will decline.

Sororities and fraternities take a lot of time building their communities by the use of big

brother/little brother and big sister/little sister relationships, bonding events, rituals, and ceremonies. Being involved in Greek life is shown to influence students' sense of community and their intent to return to school (Jacobs & Archie, 2008; Beil & Shope, 1990).

Most Greek organizations have designated national philanthropies for which they actively volunteer or raise money to support. For example, the sorority Alpha Phi supports the Alpha Phi Foundation, which is involved with the fight against women's heart disease among other foundation programs, Sigma Sigma Sigma completes community service projects that place emphasis on therapy programs for children, and, Delta Zeta supports their national philanthropy for the speech and hearing impaired called the *Sound Beginnings Program*, which supports the House Ear Institute, the world's foremost hearing research, teaching, and treatment center (Philanthropy and Service, n.d.). Sigma Tau Gamma has national standards of participating in at least one major community service project or a combination of many smaller projects and at least ten hours of community service per member per semester (Charitable and Community Service, 2008).

Locally, Sigma Tau Gamma has been involved with raising money for "Books for Kids," participating in "Adopt-A-Yard," volunteering during the Winter Daze Parade in Menomonie, and reading books to elementary students in Menomonie. Phi Sigma Phi volunteers at the Ronald McDonald House in Minneapolis, MN, Alpha Phi participates in highway clean-up every fall, and Delta Zeta supports Bridge to Hope, a local shelter in Menomonie, WI. Phi Theta Chi holds an annual health and fitness night to promote a healthy lifestyle and breast cancer awareness, they participate in Relay for Life, canned food drives, and alcohol awareness activities.

Unfortunately, Greek life sometimes has its downsides. Alcohol use within Greek organizations is one of the largest areas researched. Binge drinking has become a

huge problem on university campuses, with college presidents ranking alcohol abuse as the number one problem on their campus (Wechsler, 1996). Wechsler (1996) surveyed over 17,000 students on 140 campuses nationwide and found that 84% of all students drink during the school year, 44% of those students considered themselves binge drinkers, and 19% were frequent binge drinkers. Binge drinking leads to many problems, including getting into arguments, getting injured, engaging in unplanned or unprotected sex, forgetting what they did, and death.

The drinking habits of members of Greek organizations has been the subject of research for years. The same study done by Wechsler (1996) found that sorority members were nearly twice as likely to binge drink as non-members. One can assume this is because of the social aspect of Greek membership. Greek organizations have recognized this problem and have begun taking measures to correct it. An article in the *Alpha Phi Quarterly* written by Christine Spiegel (2008) stated, "Greek organizations, colleges and universities have taken steps toward preventing and combating these risky behaviors, including implementing stronger alcohol and hazing policies at the school and fraternal level, bringing more awareness to both and setting punishments for intolerable behavior" (p. 3).

Greek organizations do not support drinking by collegiate members. All National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) chapters use third-party vendors to serve alcohol to members of legal drinking age at events, and chapters use buses or other safe driving methods for travel to and from events (Spiegel, 2008).

Although research has documented the negative aspects of Greek life, over generalizations may exist, and non-Greek students on individual campuses may be participating in negative activities to a similar extent.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Generalizations about groups of people are likely made every day by college students, faculty, staff, and administration, and by community members. Included among these may be generalizations about members of Greek organizations; their drinking habits, academic performance, and activities within their chapters. Non-Greeks may tend to portray members of Greek organizations more negatively than they do the rest of the student population.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this research study was to compare both behavioral self-reports and perceptions of behaviors between Greek and non-Greek students on the UW-Stout campus. Both non-Greek students and members of the Greek organizations listed earlier were surveyed about their personal drinking habits, grade point average (GPA), and their sense of community on the Stout campus. Perceptions of drinking habits, GPA, and sense of community of both members of Greek organizations and non-members were also assessed. The survey was administered on the UW-Stout campus during the Fall, 2008 semester.

### *Research Objectives*

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine if self-reports of drinking behavior among Greek members are equivalent to the frequency of drinking reported by non-Greek members.
2. Determine if the perceptions of the drinking behavior among both members of Greek organizations and non-members correlates with self-reported drinking behavior.
3. Determine if self-reports of grade point averages among Greek members are equivalent to self-reports of grade point averages by non-Greek members.

4. Determine if the perceptions of grade point averages among both members of Greek organizations and non-members correlates with self-reported grade point averages.
5. Analyze and compare the self-reported feelings of sense of community at UW-Stout of Greek members and non-Greek members.
6. Determine if the perceptions of feelings of sense of community at UW-Stout for both members of Greek organizations and non-members correlates with the self-reported feelings of sense of community.

#### *Importance of the Study*

The following points address the importance of this study.

1. It is important to dispel any misperceptions by both Greeks and non-Greeks regarding drinking and academic performance of Greek and non-Greek students.
2. The degree of sense of community achieved in both groups is important to examine because of the correlations between being actively involved on campus and the intent to return to school (Beil & Shope, 1990). Universities strive for high retention rates; therefore, identifying ways to keep students on campus is important.
3. The results of this study may be important to university administrators, coordinators of university events, and organizations on campus when planning events, selling the university to prospective students, and for shedding light on needed areas of improvement within the student body and student organizations.
4. This study may benefit incoming students who are prospective Greek members. The study's findings may help convince students to join a Greek organization or help them realize that membership is not for them.

### *Limitations of the Study*

The limitations of this study are:

1. The responses to the survey questions about personal behavior are self-reports, with no reliability checks.
2. This study was conducted at UW-Stout with students attending the university during the fall 2008 semester. No generalizations can be made to other universities or to other time periods at this university.
3. The survey used in this study was created by the researcher. Effort was made to create a reliable and valid instrument, but no tests of validity or reliability were performed.
4. The survey does not include many other behaviors of students, both positive, including study habits, community service involvement, or employment status, and negative, including illegal and prescription drug use, tobacco use, or hazing.
5. Greek member participation was limited to members of social fraternities and sororities with ten or more members on the UW-Stout campus.

### *Definition of Terms*

Terms used in this report are defined in this section.

*Big Brother/Big sister.* A mentor to a prospective member of a fraternity or sorority.

*Binge drinking.* Five or more drinks in a row one or more times during a two-week period for men, and four or more drinks in a row one or more times during a two-week period for women (Wechsler, 1996).

*Fraternity.* “1: a social, honorary, or professional group; esp: a men’s student organization” (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1997, p. 304).

*Greeks.* Members of social fraternities or sororities with more than 10 members on the UW-Stout campus.

*Little Brother/Little sister.* A prospective new member of a fraternity or sorority with a close relationship to an older member of the organization (big brother/big sister.)

*National Panhellenic Conference.* An organization that provides support and guidance for its 26 member national and international sororities and serves as the national voice on contemporary issues of sorority life (www.npcwomen.org, 2008).

*Non-Greeks.* Students not affiliated with a social fraternity or sorority with more than 10 members on the UW-Stout campus.

*Philanthropy.* “1: goodwill toward all people; esp: effort to promote human welfare. 2: a charitable act or gift; also: an organization that distributes or is supported by donated funds” (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1997 p. 551 ).

*Sense of Community.* An individual’s perception of belonging to and being accepted by an accessible, mutually supportive social network (Compas, 1981; Sarason, 1974; Schreiner, 1987).

*Sorority.* “A club of girls or women esp. at a college” (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1997 p. 694).

*Standard Drink.* A 12-ounce can or bottle of beer, a four-ounce glass of wine, a 12-ounce bottle or can of wine cooler, or a shot of liquor taken straight or in a mixed drink (Wechsler, 1996).

## Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter includes a review of the literature on drinking habits of college students, both those involved in Greek organizations and those not involved in Greek organizations. The academic performance of both groups of students is also reviewed, as well as feelings of sense of community on campus. Finally, attributes of Greek life are reviewed.

### *Drinking Habits of College Students*

Alcohol consumption has become a norm and culture at many universities. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) wrote, "Customs handed down through generations of college drinkers reinforce students' expectation that alcohol is a necessary ingredient for social success" (2002, p.1). Students draw from their environment and their peers for expectations of alcohol use during the time of establishing their new social identity on campus. Many factors influence drinking habits of college students, ranging from family history, drinking habits in high school, and involvement in different types of organizations in college including sports teams, sororities, and fraternities (NIAAA).

Binge drinking has become a large problem on college campuses. A survey of 17,592 college students in a recent Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study found that 44% of the college students qualified as binge drinkers (Wechsler, 1996). Binge drinking has become such a large problem that the U.S. Surgeon General and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) have identified it as a major public health problem. The federal government has placed binge drinking among college students on the list of health goals for targeted reduction for 2010 (NIAAA, 2002).

College binge drinkers can be categorized into different groups. According to Wechsler (1996), the most prevalent binge drinkers are male, under 24 years, white,

involved in sports, very social, and fraternity and sorority members. Students involved in community service, the arts, or who spend a lot of time studying were less likely to binge drink.

Binge drinking has many consequences, including damage to self, others, and the institution. College students who binge drink may experience blackouts, injuries, illness, missed classes, unprotected sex, academic failure, arrest, and death (NIAAA, 2005). Many college students involved in binge drinking experience negative short-term health problems such as hangovers, nausea, and vomiting (NIAAA, 2005), which can lead to academic problems. About 25% of college students reported academic consequences due to alcohol, including falling behind, missing class, doing poorly on homework or exams, and receiving lower overall grades. Heavy drinking can also lead to unsafe sex practices. It has been reported that 400,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 years had unprotected sex, and more than 100,000 students between the same ages reported having been too drunk to know if they consented to sex (NIAAA, 2002; Hingson & Howland, 2002). Death is a permanent consequence of too heavy drinking. The article, *High-Risk Drinking in College: What We Know and What We Need to Learn*, published by the NIAAA (2005), stated, "The U.S. Department of Education has evidence that at least 84 college students have died since 1996 due to alcohol poisoning or alcohol-related injury" (n.p.). This number is believed to be much higher, but reporting is incomplete, and the number of deaths due to alcohol-related traffic crashes is not included (NIAAA).

Secondhand effects of binge drinking are also a concern for students. The study done by Wechsler in 1996 found the following secondhand problems experienced by students due to alcohol consumption: experienced unwanted sexual advances; was insulted or humiliated; had a serious argument; was pushed, hit, or assaulted; studying or sleep was interrupted; had to "baby-sit" a drunken student; personal property was damaged; and suffered sexual assault or "date rape." Institutions also face effects of

binge drinking by their students in terms of damaged university property and reputation as a school.

Sorority and fraternity membership has been found to be the “single strongest predictor of binge drinking” (Wechsler, 1996, n.p.). Wechsler’s study found sorority members were nearly twice as likely to binge drink as other female students, and 75% of fraternity members were binge drinkers compared to 45% of other male students. The study also found that sixty percent of those who lived in the fraternity houses had been binge drinkers in high school. Though the prevalence of drinking is high in Greek organizations, a study of 508 members of Greek organizations conducted by Caron et al. (2004) found that 95% of those surveyed did not report that they were pressed to drink since joining the sorority or fraternity.

In Spring 2005 the UW-Stout office of Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention surveyed Stout students on their alcohol and other drug use. Fraternity and sorority members were not singled out for questioning, but may have been included in the results as Stout students. Results showed that in the two weeks prior to taking the survey, 21% of participants drank five or more drinks in one sitting and the average time spent during a drinking occasion was 3.6 hours (AOD, 2005, p.3). The survey also showed that the average number of drinks consumed by students was 6.5 during a drinking occasion. Perceptions of students’ drinking habits were also assessed. Students were asked how many days in the last month they thought students drank. The students perceived that 36% of other students at Stout to have drunk 11-15 days of the previous month. The participants estimated that the average number of drinks during an occasion for males was 9.6 and for females was 5.9. (AOD, 2005, p.8)

#### *Grade Point Averages and Greek Membership*

The question of whether academic achievement is affected by student involvement in Greek organizations has been asked by many researchers. The hypothesis

that Greek organization membership will have a negative impact on members' grade point averages has been unresponsive by numerous studies. A study on the effects of college fraternities on grades found that, "The conclusion could not be drawn that Independents achieved higher academically than Greeks" (Porta, 1991, p.26). Another study found that memberships in student clubs and organizations including Greek organizations on campus may promote academic success by providing students the opportunity to create support groups, find study partners, and gain advice from classmates (Huang & Chang, 2004). The study also found that, "An increase in cocurricular involvement is *not* accompanied by a decrease in academic involvement" (p. 401). In fact, according to Cooper, Healy, and Simpson, "Sufficient evidence has been accrued to demonstrate that involvement in campus life has direct, positive effects on student learning both in and out of the classroom" (1994, p. 101).

#### *Sense of Community on College Campuses and Involvement in Organizations*

Sense of community can be generally defined as an "individual's perception of belonging to and being accepted by an accessible, mutually supportive social network" (Schreiner, 1987, p.4). According to McCarthy, Pretty, and Catano, "Psychological sense of community is an important concept for researchers, counselors, and administrators who are concerned about characteristics of university communities as they relate to student well-being" (1990, p.215). Research has indicated that involvement in organizations on campus correlates with increased levels of sense of community (Schreiner, 1982). Enhancement of students' sense of community, therefore, could be accomplished by encouraging freshmen to join clubs, Greek organizations, or other voluntary organizations, to potentially increase retention (Schreiner, 1987, p. 4). According to Abrahamowicz's (1988) study of membership in student organizations including Greek organizations, student involvement in organizations can make noteworthy contributions to students' development. The members of organizations who

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participated in Abrahamowicz's study were found to have greater involvement than non-members with school faculty, the library, course learning, the arts, and with conversations. In fact, the study found that 65% of members compared to 17% of non-members reported that they were enthusiastic about their college. According to a study by Fisher (2007) on college involvement and outcomes "...having more formal (i.e., extracurricular) and informal (i.e., friends) social ties are positively related to college satisfaction" (p. 151). The study concluded that students who fail to form these social connections are considerably more likely to drop out of college than those more connected or involved.

Fraternity and sorority membership is one means for students to become active in their college careers, and carries over into adulthood. According to research conducted in thirteen states with fifteen of them public and eight private institutions, by Lounsbury and DeNeui (1995), students involved in a fraternity or sorority reported higher levels of psychological sense of community (PSC) than students not involved in a Greek organization, and "fraternities and sororities would appear to represent important sub-communities within the college campus for fostering PSC" (p. 274).

UW-Stout completed a Student Organization Leaders Assessment with assistance from the Educational Benchmarking Inc. (EBI) in April 2008. Questions were asked about the participants' involvement in an organization where they have a leadership role and spend the most time and/or devote the most energy. For the fraternity and sorority category, results showed that on a scale from 1 to 7, with 7 being the most satisfied, 30 participants in a fraternity or sorority reported a 6.60 satisfaction rate for the organization improving their sense of belonging on the campus. For the question asking participants in fraternities or sororities to rate their involvement in the organization to improving the value of their education, a mean of 6.10 was recorded on the same scale (EBI, 2008).

*Positive Attributes of Fraternities and Sororities*

Fraternity and sorority life is under constant scrutiny from school administrators, students, and community members in terms of drinking habits, academic achievement, and other aspects of Greek life. Robson (1966) stated, “The good chapters do not make front page news. Yet it is a law of human behavior that when young men seek pleasure as the chief value, they become involved in some misdeed which the newspapers are quick to report”(p. 2). Robson went on to write that the good chapters are “hidden under the bushel” and as far as the newspapers and its readers are concerned, such groups do not exist (1966).

Greek life, however, is a very rewarding part of many students’ lives. Friendship is a large reason many students join a Greek organization. According to Miller (2006), joining a fraternity or sorority gives students an easy way to bond with a group of students of close age in a relatively short period of time. The organizations offer a tightly knit group of friends, an active social life, and a sense of belonging. Fraternities and sororities not only offer students friendships, but as Robson (1966) stated, “The college fraternity adopts the role of a family during the undergraduate years, whether it be in a small school or large” (p. 31). Holly Johnson, a Delta Gamma member at Indiana stated, “Those girls were my foundation, especially through my sophomore year” (cited in Seaman, 2005, p. 188).

Most Greek chapters have missions or principles which they follow. For example, Alpha Phi’s mission is, “Alpha Phi International Fraternity is a membership organization dedicated to promoting sisterhood, cultivating leadership, encouraging intellectual curiosity and advocating service” (Mission Statement, 2008, n.p.). Part of their purpose statement reads, “We seek the highest ideal of womanhood, and we try to gain this ideal by cultivating not only the power and passion for seeking intellectual development, but also the spirit of love and charity.” Sigma Sigma Sigma’s principles

include promoting a bond of friendship, developing strong women, and inspiring high standards of ethical conduct (Our Mission, Vision, and Values, 2008, n.p.). Phi Sigma Phi Fraternity's principles include excellence, wisdom, honor, and justice (Phi Sigma Phi Values, 2008, n.p.). These missions or principles of their founders are what drive the fraternities and sororities to be the best they can be.

Although the social aspects of fraternity and sorority life may often get the most attention, most chapters are involved with community service and participate in philanthropic events year round. Phi Theta Chi's philanthropy is focused on breast cancer awareness. They hold a health and fitness night to increase awareness of breast cancer and all the monies raised at all their events go towards breast cancer awareness. They also participate in various other community service projects such as can drives, alcohol awareness activities, and Relay for Life (Phi Theta Chi Sorority, 2005, n.p.). Sigma Tau Gamma Fraternity's members are required by their national membership to engage in 10 hours minimum of community service per semester and at least one major service project per semester, or a combination of smaller ones to equal one large (Charitable & Community Service, 2008, n.p.).

This literature shows both positive and negative aspects of Greek life on college campuses nationwide. The present study was designed to examine these issues specifically in relation to students at UW-Stout.

### Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter describes the method used by the researcher to obtain and analyze data for this study. Sections addressed include participant selection and description, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, and limitations.

#### *Participation Selection and Description*

Participants included 86 UW-Stout students not involved in a social sorority or fraternity at the time of the survey and 174 UW-Stout students who were active members of the following sororities: Alpha Phi; Delta Zeta; Phi Theta Chi; and Sigma Sigma Sigma; and the following fraternities: Chi Lambda; and Sigma Tau Gamma. Not included in this study were members of Greek chapters with fewer than ten members. Phi Sigma Phi fraternity was not represented because no meeting time could be reached, nor were any of these members present in the general education classes. No surveys were excluded from this research study.

Participants varied by academic year and gender. Males accounted for 101 (38.3%) of respondents, while females accounted for 162 (61.4 %.) Freshman participants accounted for 20.5% (54) of respondents, sophomores accounted for 28.4% (75), juniors accounted for 20.4% (54), and seniors accounted for 30.3% (80); .4% (1) graduate student participated in the research. Students in the non-Greek group were volunteers enrolled in general education classes, including English, Technical Writing, and Speech.

Of those students involved, 45 (25.9%) were in a fraternity and 128 (73.6%) were in a sorority. One (.4%) student was in ROTC, 22 (8.3%) in religious groups, 12 (4.5%) in service groups, 20 (7.6%) in collegiate sports, 78 (29.5%) in intramural/club sports, 7 (2.7%) in international clubs, 3 (1.1%) in media groups, 16 (6.1%) in the arts/theater/music groups, 7 (2.7%) in government groups, 6 (2.3%) in residence hall organizations, 39 (14.8%) in professional/academic groups, and 37 (14%) of the students

surveyed were in “other groups” on campus, including SCA-Construction, National Society of Leadership and Success, SAS, and SRA. Both members and non-members of Greek organizations varied in terms of the number of groups in which they were involved.

### *Instrumentation*

The survey consisted of 21 items developed by the researcher for the purposes of this study. The survey included questions on age, year in school, involvement on campus, drinking habits, grade point average, feelings of sense of community at Stout and perceptions of other students’ activities, including those in social sororities, social fraternities, and non-Greek students. (See Appendix B)

### *Data Collection Procedures*

The researcher contacted the presidents of all of the social sororities and fraternities for permission to ask their members to participate in the research. The researcher attended the beginning of the Greek organizations’ chapter meetings, held in meeting rooms on campus. She explained that the purpose of the study was to compare both behavioral self-reports and perceptions of behaviors of Greek and non-Greek students on the UW-Stout campus. She stressed that the results were to be anonymous, and could be given to campus organizations, administrators on campus, and the coordinators of campus events. Volunteers then received a consent form and survey. (See Appendices A and B.) The researcher instructed the participants to fold the survey in half when finished, and collected them upon completion. The researcher also administered the survey to students enrolled in general education classes of Fundamentals of Speech, English, and Technical Writing, whose instructors granted permission to request volunteers. The same procedure just described was also followed with these participants, in their classrooms. The survey took about 15 minutes to complete.

### *Data Analysis*

Descriptive statistics were calculated. Furthermore, questions containing a yes or no answer were subjected to chi square analysis. T-tests with independent samples were used on score data, with Greek and non-Greek groups as the grouping variable.

Correlations between the perceived behavior scores of Greeks and Non-Greeks were also calculated.

### *Limitations*

The following are limitations of the study.

1. The survey lacks documented validity and reliability.
2. The participants' responses may have been influenced by social desirability.
3. The Greek organization and class sizes varied; therefore there were unequal numbers of participants from the various organizations and classes.

### *Summary*

Participants in this research study included members of the Greek social organizations and non-members of Greek social organizations on the UW-Stout campus. Their identities and affiliations were kept anonymous. A survey of 21 items about their demographics, organizational involvement on campus, drinking habits, grade point average, feelings of sense of community at Stout, and perceptions of other students' behavior on these variables was administered to participants. A series of t-tests, chi squares, and correlations were used to analyze the findings.

This chapter includes the results of the study involving college students attending the University of Wisconsin-Stout in the fall of 2008, which assessed the self-reported behaviors of students who were members of Greek organizations and non-members, and their perceptions of each other's behaviors.

*Research Objective 1*

The first objective was to “determine if self-reports of drinking among Greek members is equivalent to the frequency of drinking reported by non-Greek members.” Questions 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, pertained to this objective using responses to question 20 as the grouping factor.

Question 10 was, “How many days per week do you drink 5 or more drinks on average?” There was a significant difference between self reported days of drinking between the Greek and non-Greek groups,  $t(148.4) = 2.598$ ,  $p = .044$ , two-tailed. The mean number of days that members of Greek organizations reported drinking 5 or more drinks was 1.893 (SD= 1.183), and for the non-Greek group, 1.441 (SD= 1.379).

Question 11 was, “How many drinks on average do you have when you go out?” There was no significant difference in responses to this item,  $t(136.8) = .497$ ,  $p = .001$  two-tailed. The mean number of drinks members of Greek organizations have when they go out was 6.345 (SD=3.611), and for the non-Greek group, 6.058 (SD=4.704.)

Question 12 was, “Is getting drunk usually your main purpose for going out?” There was no significant association between Greek membership/non-membership and whether getting drunk is the main purpose for going out,  $\chi^2(1) = .047$ ,  $p = .828$  two-tailed. Of the participants who answered this question, 87 (33.9%) answered yes, 59 being members of Greek organizations and 28 non-members. One hundred and seventy (66.1%) answered no to the question, 113 being members of Greek organizations and 57 being non-members.

Question 13 was, “How important is drinking to your college experience?” There was a significant difference between ratings on this item between the Greek and non-Greek groups,  $t(146.3)=2.498$ ,  $p=.008$  two-tailed. The mean rating for the Greek group was 3.15 (SD=1.239), and for the non-Greek group, 2.69 (SD=1.473).

Question 14 was, “What is your best estimate of the number of days per week on average the following groups drink 5 or more drinks?” There was a significant difference between perceptions of days per week sorority members drink by Greek members and non members. The average estimation of days sorority members drink by members of Greek organizations was 2.61 days (SD= .969), while the average number of days non-Greeks perceive sorority members drink was 3.30 (SD= 1.039),  $t(253) = -5.205$ ,  $p=.477$ , two-tailed. As with the sorority members, fraternity members had a lower perception of average number of days per week members drink 5 or more drinks. The perceived number of days fraternity members drink by Greek members was 3.90 (SD= 1.306), while the perceived number of days by non-Greek members was 4.33 (SD= 1.201),  $t(249)= -2.482$ ,  $p= .889$ , two-tailed. There was no significant difference for non-members’ perceived number of days of drinking by both members of Greek organizations and non-members for this question. The mean number of days members of Greek organizations perceived non-members drinking was 3.11 (SD= 1.153), while the mean number of days non-members perceive other non-members drinking was 3.23 (SD= 1.063)  $t(247) = -.857$ ,  $p=.906$ , two tailed.

### *Research Objective 2*

The second objective was to “determine if the perceptions of drinking behavior among both members of Greek organizations and non-members correlate to the self-reported drinking behaviors.” Question 14 addressed reports of how much the student drank compared to how much they thought others in their same group drank. The mean perceived number of days sorority members drink estimated by members in general was

2.61 (SD= .969); the mean number of days fraternity members were perceived by members in general to drink was 3.9 (SD= 1.306), and the mean number of days perceived by Greek members in general of non-Greeks was 3.11 (SD= 1.153). The mean number of days sorority members drink as perceived by non-members was 3.30 (SD= 1.039), the mean number of days fraternity members were perceived by non-members to drink was 4.33 (SD= 1.201) and the mean number of days non-members drink as perceived by non-members was 3.23 (SD= 1.063). There was a positive correlation between sorority members' reports of number of days they binge drink and their perceptions of the same behavior of members in general,  $r = .272$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed. There was also a positive correlation between fraternity members' reports of number of days they binge drink and their perceptions of the same behavior of fraternity members in general,  $r = .180$ ,  $p = .02$ . A positive correlation was also found between all Greeks' self-reports and their perceptions of the same behavior of non-members,  $r = .184$ ,  $p = .017$ , two tailed. There was no significant correlation for non-Greeks for each group.

### *Research Objective 3*

The third objective was to “determine if self-reports of grade point averages among Greek members is equivalent to self-reports of grade point averages by non-Greek members.” Question 3 read, “What is your current *cumulative* grade point average (GPA).” The mean GPA for members of Greek organizations was 3.062 (SD= .4412) and for non-members was 3.099 (SD= .4189). There was no significant difference between self-reports of grade point averages between Greek and non-Greek groups,  $t(160.63) = -6.22$ ,  $p = .948$ , two-tailed.

Questions 6, 7, 8, and 9 relate to question 3 as they concern student behaviors that could affect grade point averages. The results from Question 6 and 7 are presented in Tables 1 and 2. The most common response to Question 6, which stated, “Do you believe your involvement in campus activities affects your GPA?” was “no impact on my

GPA.” The most common response to Question 7, “Do you believe your social life affects your GPA?” was “caused my GPA to slightly decline.”

Question 8 stated, “How many classes on average do you skip per week?” The average number of classes reportedly skipped by Greek members was .621 (SD=.885), and the average reported by non-members was .458 (SD=.729). Question 9 stated, “Have you ever missed classes because you are hung over from drinking?” One hundred and twenty-eight (48.5%) participants answered yes to the question, with 100 (57.5%) Greek members and 27 (31.4%) non-members, while 131 (49.6%) of the participants answered no, with 71 (40.8%) Greek members and 59 (68.6%) non members.

Table 1

*Frequency of Responses to how Involvement on Campus Affects GPA*

Responses	Frequency (N=264)	Percentage
Significant Decline	4	1.5%
Slight Decline	30	11.4%
No Impact	103	39.0%
Slightly Improved	89	33.7%
Significantly Improved	14	5.3%
Missing Data	24	9.1%

Table 2

*Frequency of Responses to how Social life Affects GPA*

Responses	Frequency (N=264)	Percentage
Significant Decline	15	5.7%
Slight Decline	123	46.6%
No Impact	87	33%
Slightly Improved	27	10.2%
Significantly Improved	7	2.7%
Missing Data	5	1.9%

*Research Objective 4*

The fourth objective was to “determine if the perceptions of others’ grade point averages among both members of Greek organizations and non-members correlates with the self-reported grade point averages.” There was a positive correlation between non-Greeks’ self-reports and their perception of the GPAs of members of sororities,  $r = .244$ ,  $p = .043$ , two-tailed. No other correlations were significant.

*Research Objective 5*

The fifth objective was to “Analyze and compare the self-reported feelings of sense of community at UW-Stout between Greek members and non-Greek members.” Question 15 states, “Do you feel part of the Stout community?” A scale of 1 to 7 was used with 1 being “not at all” and 7 being “it feels like home”. There was a significant difference between the mean rating of sense of community between the Greek and non-Greek groups,  $t(131.72) = 7.053$ ,  $p = .001$  two-tailed. The mean rating for the Greek group was 5.56 (SD= 1.236), and for the non-Greek group, 4.12 (SD= 1.684).

Question 16 asked, “Do you enjoy going to school at Stout?” A scale of 1 to 7 was used with 1 being “not at all” and 7 being “the best place to be.” The mean score for members of Greek organizations was 5.96 (SD= 1.149), and the mean score for students who were non-members was 5.26 (SD= 1.535). Associated with these questions were questions 17 and 18. Question 17 asked how many weekends per month the students went home. The average number of weekends members of Greek organizations went home was 1.049 (SD= .888), and for non-members, 1.624 (SD=1.060). Question 18 asked for what purposes do the students go away from campus on weekends. The top three reasons for leaving campus were to see family, to see friends, and to work at 211, 160, and 53, respectively.

*Research Objective 6*

The sixth and final objective was, “Determine if the perceptions of feelings of sense of community at UW-Stout for both members of Greek organizations and non-members correlates with the self-reported feelings of sense of community.” There was a positive correlation between how sorority members rated their sense of community at Stout and their perceptions of how other members of sororities feel,  $r = .426$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed. There was no significant correlation between how sorority members rated themselves and how they perceived non-Greeks’ feelings to be,  $r = -.033$ ,  $p = .768$ . There

was a positive correlation between how fraternity members rated their sense of community at Stout and their perceptions of how other members of fraternities feel,  $r = .391$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed. There was no significant correlation between how fraternities rated their sense of community at Stout and their perceptions of how non-members feel,  $r = -.054$ ,  $p = .627$ , two-tailed. There was also no significant correlation between non-members and Greeks;  $r = .107$ ,  $p = .165$ . Finally, there was a positive correlation between non-members' actual ratings and the perceptions of non-members' ratings,  $r = .230$ ,  $p = .035$ .

Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations of Non-Greek Students' Perceptions of Feelings of Sense of Community at Stout by Greek Students.*

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Members of a Sorority	5.57	1.251
Members of a Fraternity	5.56	1.293
Non-Members	4.54	1.092

Table 4

*Means and Standard Deviations of Greek Students' Perceptions of Feelings of Sense of Community at Stout by Non-Greek Students*

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Members of a Sorority	5.91	1.056
Members of a Fraternity	5.90	1.153
Non-Members	4.00	1.250

This chapter addresses the limitations, conclusions, and recommendations for future research concerning the analysis of behavioral self-reports and perceptions of Greek and non-Greek students about each other's behavior, in regards to grade point averages, drinking, and sense of community.

### *Limitations*

There were three limitations in the methodology of this study. The first limitation was that the survey lacks validity and reliability assessment, as it was developed by the researcher for this study. The second limitation is that the participants' responses may have been influenced by social desirability. It is possible that participants may have answered the survey based on what they perceived to be the most positive for themselves and their group. The last limitation is that the Greek organization and class sizes varied; there were differing numbers of participants from the various organizations and classes.

### *Conclusions*

#### Objective 1

Although much research has demonstrated that being a member of a fraternity or sorority is the "single strongest predictor of binge drinking" (Wechsler, 1996, n.p.), the results of this study are only slightly confirmatory. This study showed that members of Greek organizations report on average drinking 5 or more drinks at one event more frequently than do non-members; however, the difference between the groups in the average number of days reported was only .452. The average number of drinks Greek members report having when going out compared to non-members was also higher, but the difference was only .287. This study also showed that the reported importance of drinking during the college experience is higher to members of Greek organizations than to non-members.

The results of these findings can be used by student life coordinators and advisors of student organizations to help better understand how the students at the University of Wisconsin-Stout view alcohol and their drinking behavior. Greek chapters, for example, can create new standards for their members, new activities for members to stay sober, and generally shift the focus from alcohol related events to member growth and bonding events. Additional awareness about alcohol related accidents and deaths can be provided on campus to all students to further educate them on the consequences of binge drinking.

#### Objective 2

The perceptions of non-members towards the amount of drinking done by members of Greek organizations must also be examined. This study found that non-members' perceptions of both members of fraternities and sororities are that they drink more days during an average week than those groups report actually doing.

The perception that Greek members drink more days than non-members may be due in part to a lack of knowledge about Greek organizations. Many non-members' views and beliefs about Greek organizations are based on movies such as *Animal House* and television shows such as ABC Family's *Greek*. These movies and shows mainly portray Greek membership as supporting binge drinking, hazing, and sexual activity, to the exclusion of philanthropic activities, campus community involvement, and academic standards.

#### Objective 3

The self-reported grade point averages for both members of Greek organizations and non-members were highly similar. This finding is consistent with the research done by Huang and Chang, (2004) which found that, "An increase in cocurricular involvement is *not* accompanied by a decrease in academic involvement." Members of Greek organizations are held to high academic standards. When members are falling below the chapter's required GPA for "good standing," membership consequences are given.

Members are also rewarded by having good grades which may include a scholarship pin, awards, and special privileges.

#### Objective 4

The perception of grade point averages of both Greek members and non-members was very similar as well. Both groups perceptions of the other groups were as a whole very close to the actual self-reports. It is encouraging that no negative stereotypes about Greek members' academic performance was found in this population.

#### Objective 5

The strongest finding of this study was that members of Greek organizations had a significantly higher rating of their feelings of sense of community at UW-Stout than did the non-Greek group. This finding was consistent with the smaller number of weekends Greeks report leaving campus. Two notable reasons why non-members reported leaving campus for the weekends were to work and to see friends. Greek organizations often schedule events on the weekends, including sister/brother bonding weekends, philanthropy events, meetings, and workshops. Leaving campus on the weekends to work does not fit into many members' schedules. Members usually work on campus or in the community where schedules can be flexible. Also, Greek membership offers students a tight group of friends within the chapter and a large social network within the Greek community. Therefore, there is less need for Greek members to leave campus multiple weekends a month to see friends back home as many members of these organizations become best friends with their sorority sisters or fraternity brothers.

#### Objective 6

Finally, the feelings of sense of community were reportedly higher for members of Greek organizations than for non-members. This is most likely due to the fact that being part of an encompassing organization, such as a sorority or fraternity, brings

students closer to the university through the wide array of social and community service activities.

### *Recommendations*

#### Methodological Recommendations

Modifications can be made to the current study to enhance future research. One aspect of the data analysis that could be added is to compare the responses of males in the non-Greek group to fraternity members and females in the non-Greek group to sorority members. Another recommendation is to change question number 21, which asks participants if they are a member of one of the following groups: service sorority or fraternity, academic sorority or fraternity, or a co-ed fraternity. This question was discarded from the analysis because of its ambiguity. Many members of the social Greek organizations also checked yes to being in one of these groups, thinking they referred to the same type of membership. Listing the exact names of the service, academic, or co-ed groups would have eliminated this confusion.

#### Recommendations for Students and Administrators

Drinking on college campuses will always be an issue, but with greater awareness about binge drinking and its consequences, students may not participate in it as frequently or to as great an extent. Student organizations can also hold their members to higher standards, focus more on sober events, and educate their members on the consequences of binge drinking.

Perceptions of Greek organizations are influenced by the behavior of the members and chapters on campus and by the media. Non-members often perceive Greeks as being heavy partiers and drinkers. This study found that the reported drinking behavior of Greek and non Greek students on the UW-Stout campus is only slightly different, yet the perception of the frequency of days per week Greek members drink was higher than they self-reported. Greek organizations on this campus should develop plans to try to change

this misperception. For example, they could host an open house night where non-members can visit the Greek chapters and learn what they are about, without the members trying to recruit them. They could also host more philanthropic events on campus and advertise them more, so the students see that the chapters are also involved with useful activities that don't center around alcohol at all. The school newspaper could also take a role in advertising community service events and scholarship awards from the Greek community.

Finally, school administrators could use the information about sense of community found in this study to plan more weekend activities for non-Greek students who normally leave campus on the weekends. Students who leave campus for work may return earlier on Sundays if events are planned. Organizations on campus, including Greeks, could also try to reach out to these students more and get them more actively involved, so that they will feel more connected with the university.

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## Appendix A: Consent Form

### Consent to Participate In UW-Stout Approved Research

**Title:** *An Analysis of the Self-Reports and Perceptions of Greek Life and Non-Greek Life on the UW-Stout Campus*

**Investigator:**  
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262-327-0775

**Research Sponsor:**  
Helen Swanson  
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715-232-2784

**Description:** This research is intended to determine if drinking rates among Greek members is equivalent to the rate of drinking done by non Greek students; determine if grade point averages among Greek members is equivalent to averages of non members; analyze sense of community between Greeks and non-Greeks; and determine if perceptions of each of the above topics from Greeks and non-Greeks correlate with self-reports.

**Risks and Benefits:** The survey will contain questions about drinking habits. This may be seen to some as an invasion of privacy and could cause some discomfort. Precautions have been taken to ensure there is anonymity in the survey. No data on age is being requested to avoid identification of illegal behavior. Participants are reminded they may omit any questions on the survey. The researcher will instruct participants to fold completed surveys in half before collection. The researcher will not keep surveys in groups according to where they were completed. All surveys will be put together in one group and shuffled before reading. The research outcomes will aid student services staff by providing better insight to the student population, what students are involved in, how often they leave campus on weekends, and how well they are doing in classes. The answers to the perception questions will provide information on views students have of each other in each of the categories above. This information will allow college staff to provide appropriate programming for students.

**Time Commitment:** This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

**Confidentiality:** The researcher has taken all steps to ensure anonymity with this survey. Your name and group name, if applicable, will not be on the survey or in the research paper.

**Right to Withdrawal:** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you, at any time during the survey administration.

**IRB Approval:** This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

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**Statement of Consent:**

By completing the following survey you agree to participate in the project entitled, *An Analysis of the Self-Reports and Perceptions of Greek Life and Non-Greek Life on the UW-Stout Campus*.

## Appendix B: Survey

*You may choose to omit any question on this survey.*

This project has been reviewed by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46

1. **Gender**      \_\_\_\_\_ Male      \_\_\_\_\_ Female
2. **Level in school**    \_\_\_\_\_ Freshman    \_\_\_\_\_ Sophomore    \_\_\_\_\_ Junior    \_\_\_\_\_ Senior    \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate Student
3. **What is your current *cumulative* grade point average (GPA)**      \_\_\_\_\_ /4.0
4. **What is your best estimate of the average GPA of:**
  - Members of social sororities      \_\_\_\_\_ /4.0
  - Members of social fraternities      \_\_\_\_\_ /4.0
  - Non-members** of social sororities or fraternities      \_\_\_\_\_ /4.0
5. **Which, if any, campus activities are you involved in? Circle all that apply.**

Fraternity/Sorority	ROTC	Religious	Service
Collegiate Sports	Intramural/Club Sports	International Clubs	Media (newspaper, radio)
Arts/Theater/Music	Government	Residence Hall (IRHA)	Professional/Academic
Other (please specify) _____			
6. **Do you believe your involvement in campus activities affects your GPA? Circle your answer below. (If not applicable, skip to # 7.)**

Caused my GPA to significantly decline	Caused my GPA to slightly decline	No impact on my GPA
Slightly improved my GPA	Significantly improved my GPA	
7. **Do you believe your social life affects your GPA? Circle your answer below.**

Caused my GPA to significantly decline	Caused my GPA to slightly decline	No impact on my GPA
Slightly improved my GPA	Significantly improved my GPA	
8. **How many classes on average do you skip per week?** \_\_\_\_\_ classes
9. **Have you ever missed classes because you are hung over from drinking?**    \_\_\_\_\_ yes    \_\_\_\_\_ no

Below are the approximate U.S. standard drink equivalents. Please use these amounts to answer questions 10-14.

12 oz. of beer or cooler ~5% alcohols  
 8-9 oz. of malt liquor ~7% alcohols  
 5 oz. of table wine ~12% alcohols  
 3-4 oz. of fortified wine ~17% alcohols  
 2-3 oz. of cordial, liqueur, or aperitif ~24% alcohols  
 1.5 oz. of brandy ~40% alcohols

1.5 oz. of spirits (1 shot) ~40% alcohols  
(What's a Standard Drink?, NIAAA, n.d.)

10. How many days per week do you drink 5 or more drinks on average? \_\_\_\_\_ days

11. How many drinks on average do you have when you go out? \_\_\_\_\_ drinks

12. Is getting drunk usually your main purpose for going out? \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no

13. How important is drinking to your college experience? 1= not at all important, 7= why I am here

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

14. What is your best estimate of the number of days per week on average the following groups drink 5 or more drinks:

Members of a social sorority                      1           2           3           4           5           6           7

Members of a social fraternity                      1           2           3           4           5           6           7

Non-Members of a social sorority or fraternity                      1           2           3           4           5           6           7

15. Do you feel part of the Stout community? 1= not at all, 7= feels like home

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

16. Do you enjoy going to school at Stout? 1= not at all, 7= best place to be

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

17. How many weekends per month do you "go home" or otherwise stay away from the Stout campus overnight?

\_\_\_\_\_weekends per month

18. For what purposes do you go away? Circle all that apply.

To work

To see friends

To see boyfriend

To see family

Don't like to be at Stout on the weekends

I live with family in another town

I live with a significant other in another town

19. What is your best estimate of the degree to which the following groups feel a part of the Stout Community:

1= not at all, 7 = feels like home

Members of a social sorority    1           2           3           4           5           6           7

Members of a social fraternity    1           2           3           4           5           6           7

Non-Members of a social fraternity or sorority    1           2           3           4           5           6           7

20. Are you a member of one of the following groups? CHECK YES OR NO; **DO NOT** CIRCLE ANY GROUP NAME.

Alpha Phi  
Sigma Sigma Sigma  
Phi Sigma Phi

Delta Zeta  
Chi Lambda  
Sigma Tau Gamma

Phi Theta Chi

\_\_\_\_\_ yes      \_\_\_\_\_ no

21. Are you a member of one of following groups? CHECK YES OR NO; DO NOT CIRCLE ANY GROUP NAME.

Service Sorority or Fraternity

Academic Sorority or Fraternity

Co-ed Fraternity

\_\_\_\_\_ yes      \_\_\_\_\_ no