

It's all Greek to Me

A survey conducted on Greek-Independent relations at the university produced many surprising results about the social lives of students

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"Get rid of the Greeks — they degrade the intellectual climate at this school."

"The problem does not lie on the Greek side, but the independent. Many are anti-Greek because it is 'trendy' and easy. They close their minds to other possibilities and will never like the Greek system. There is nothing that can be done to convince them."

In mid-April, independent of the *Old Gold & Black*, I distributed 500 surveys randomly to post office boxes. Eighty-five replies were received, many of which came with strong comments. Also, I conducted private interviews with over 25 students. These students were diverse, represented both sexes, and most importantly, represented both independents and Greeks.

The following comments were taken anonymously from the distributed surveys.

The results were very surprising. As a whole, while students do admit there is a problem between these two groups, the majority do not believe the problem is that serious. However, when the results are split into Greeks and independents, the numbers paint a very different picture.

Have you ever walked into a fraternity party and felt completely unwelcome? Have you ever sat down in class only to find out that the row is occupied by a group from a sorority who seem to always have something to say to each other but nothing to you? Have you ever been ignored by a friend who was too busy talking to his *brothers* to say hello to you? These are some of the things that independents on this campus complain about every day.

But independents are not the only ones with complaints. Have you ever worn a sweatshirt to class and have people make faces at you because of the letters on it? Do people automatically judge you because of the company that you keep? Do people assume that just because you happen to belong to a sorority that you automatically are an airhead?

Respondents said that Greeks and independents on this campus have preconceived notions about each other, most of which are totally false. Each group routinely complains about the other, spreading rumors and gossiping. An uninitiated observer would definitely sense a rift between these two groups. Yet when university students are asked this question, many are quick to deny this.

"I have Greek friends" or "Not all of my friends are Greek" are frequent responses to this claim.

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To find an answer to this problem, I conducted a study that began late last year. There were four main questions that I was looking to answer:

- What kind of attitudes do Greeks and independents have toward each other on this campus?
- Does a person who has been exposed to the Greek system before college have a better image of it than

someone whose first encounter was at college?

■ Do students think that there is a problem between Greeks and independents?

■ What, if anything, can be done to repair the rift between the two groups?

Most Greeks do not think there is much of a problem, and are quite satisfied with the present system — with one notable exception. But independents feel almost the exact opposite of this. They feel that relations between the two groups are mediocre at best, and many have an extremely negative view of the sororities and fraternities on this campus. Why is there such a difference between these two groups? Let us look at each segment separately.

By and large, the independents surveyed for this

some of those interviewed in the survey.

By far, the biggest problem non-Greeks have is with the attitudes of members. An independent sophomore female points out one difference, "I really don't think that the girls care all that much. But some of the guys seem to resent independents."

A junior male pledge agrees. "Other than some of the attitudes of the guys, I really don't think Greeks have an attitude towards non-Greeks."

Greeks

Many of those who are Greek have had some introduction to the system before beginning college. However, around 35 percent had no preconceived ideas of what Greek life was all about until arriving at the

independents. A junior female says, "It's horrible. I like my sorority, but every time I walk around wearing my letters, I feel everyone looking at me, as if to say, 'Ick, she's in a sorority.'"

A junior male says, "I don't mind wearing letters if they're on a T-shirt or something, but I don't like them real big on a sweatshirt." These 'snap judgements' can make those affiliated with the Greek system very uncomfortable, and may be one of the reasons why some appear unwilling to break away from the group.

Black Students

For black students, Greek life is not much of an option. "I never really even thought of it," says one black sophomore male. There are two sororities and one fraternity on campus that are historically black, but have fewer members than the other fraternities and sororities. Black students do attend fraternity parties, but very few are actually members. "Some blacks seem to have a problem with that," says one black sophomore female, "but I think that's just closed mindedness." Some tend to think if these fraternities and sororities had their own lounge space, they would be able to increase their numbers.

Social Life

Part of the problem between Greeks and independents is due to the Greek dominance of the social scene. On any particular Friday or Saturday night, many of the parties being held on campus are hosted by fraternities and sororities.

This stronghold on the weekend nightlife can make independents feel downright unwelcome at parties, and leave them with nothing to do on the weekend.

Those who are Greek point out that they are the ones who pay money for alcohol and give it away to those who attend their parties. Fraternities rarely charge admission to their parties. In contrast, many students at large state supported schools must, for example, pay up to \$5 to gain admittance to a fraternity party.

Greeks also point out that compared to other schools, relations between the two groups are warm.

One fraternity member, a junior, says, "There are some schools where Greeks and independents don't ever mix. Compared to them, we're in good shape." Another problem Greeks cite when asked about the social scene is the strong hand the administration has in regulation of their behavior. Many Greeks are tired of this.

The restrictive rules have forced fraternities to be accountable for those at their parties. Fraternities do not want to run the risk of having to face huge lawsuits every time they want to throw a party; thus, guest lists and restrictive access were born. Greeks say if these rules were not in place, they would be able to accommodate many more students; independents are wary of this claim. Many students feel that this is the root of the problem between Greeks and independents.

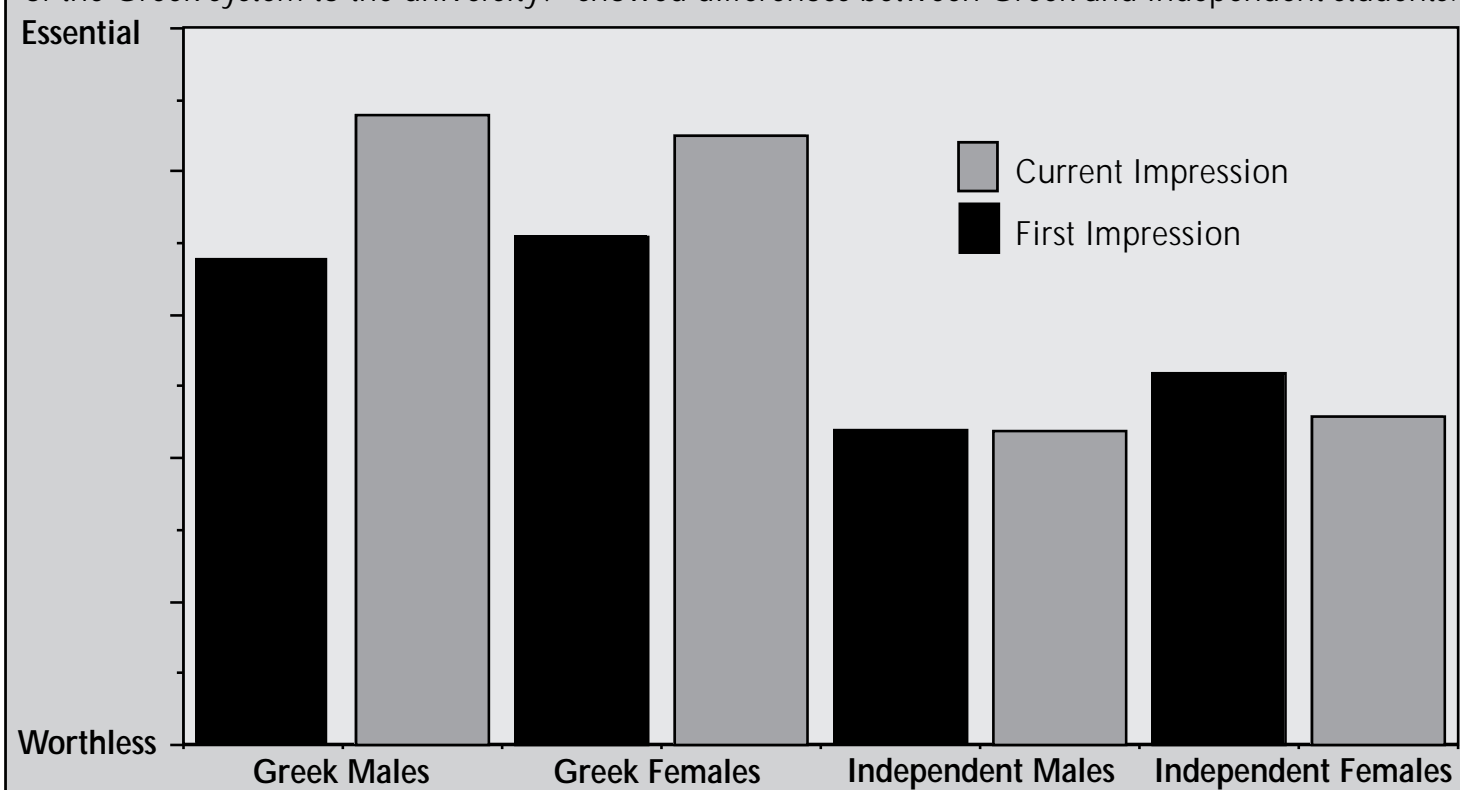
What Can Be Done?

There is no easy solution to a problem that not everyone is ready to admit even exists. A male junior feels that putting all clubs in the "look book" would introduce more social outlets of the university to the freshman.

One thing that both Greeks and independents seem to agree on is that individual communication is the way to solve whatever problem there may be. Most of those surveyed claim to have no problem with people on a one-to-one basis.

Through Others' Eyes

Sophomore Kyle Haden sent 500 surveys to undergraduates at random by campus mail in April. He had 84 respondents, of which 51 listed themselves as Greek students and 33 as independent. The response to the question, "what was your first impression and your current impression of the importance of the Greek system to the university?" showed differences between Greek and independent students.



Source: Kyle Haden

Joe Dobner/Old Gold and Black

study were introduced to the Greek system upon their arrival at college. Most of these people admitted to having a negative first impression of the Greek system, a fact that comes as no surprise.

What is surprising is that their opinion of the Greek system has actually become lower since their arrival on campus. Many of the students see no worth in the system.

Several independents felt all the Greek system was good for was partying and drinking. A few independents even went so far as to advocate banning fraternities and sororities on this campus.

But most of the independents that were interviewed did not have a problem with the system itself; many felt it is just like an extended activity. The problem that they did have is with the tenuous relationship between the two groups.

Whether it is a cold shoulder from a friend between classes or not being denied entrance to a party, independents perceive a definite difference in the way Greeks and independents are treated by those in the Greek system.

There also seems to be a difference in the way males and females are treated by those in the Greek system. Many independent males are bitter that they are consistently denied access to parties. The process of being forced to "name three brothers" to get into a party is standard operating procedure, according to

university. Most of the Greeks that I talked to did not seem to feel any of the animosity that the independents do between the two groups.

Some outright questioned the need for such a study. In fact, most of them have no problem with independents. One of the respondents to the survey said, "(Independents) are welcome at most social events and are the body from which we draw new members."

However, those affiliated in fraternities and sororities do feel bitterness exuding from two other segments of the university: the faculty and the administration. Their feelings can be summed up by the comments of a sophomore affiliated with a university fraternity: "To the administration, we are used as a status symbol, so they can show us off and say, 'Look, we have a Greek system too, just like the other schools.' But in reality, they don't care about us at all. They would be perfectly happy if we didn't exist at all."

Another sophomore male states, "All they think we do is sit around and drink beer all day. No one seems to realize the other things we do for the community."

One male junior seems to have had enough of the anti-Greek sentiment: "It's bad enough that everyone thinks our group is worthless, but when they start telling incoming freshmen that we're nothing but groups of rapists, then they're making up other students' minds for them."

There are also those who feel uncomfortable around



LeeAnn Hodges



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Left: Kappa Alpha brothers junior Luke Johnston, sophomore Woody Rich and senior John Virdin spend quality time in front of their lounge outside of Davis House. Right: Sigma Chi's junior Mike Fronczek, sophomore Sam Wollman, senior Todd Gray and junior Ben Alexander relax with junior Kara Csensich outside on the walkway of Taylor House.

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