

SAMPLE EXAMINATION I

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours and 15 minutes

Question 1

(Suggested reading and writing time—55 minutes.)

(This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

Undergraduate participation in a fraternity or sorority is a long-standing tradition at universities and colleges across America. However, repeated instances of hazing, binge drinking, sexual abuse and other socially unacceptable behaviors have led to calls for the elimination of these organizations. While some believe that fraternities and sororities are themselves the root of the problem, others aver that universities and colleges are also complicit by failing to police the behavior of these campus groups.

Carefully read the following six sources, including any introductory information. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources into a coherent, well-developed argument that persuasively conveys your position on who is to blame for the increased frequency of unacceptable behavior in fraternities and sororities and indicate whether you feel these organizations should be maintained or banned from college and university campuses.

- Source A (McMurtrie)
- Source B (Smith)
- Source C (Wright)
- Source D (Kelderman)
- Source E (Flanagan)
- Source F (College)
- Source G (Pett)

Please remember to:

- Frame a thesis that takes a defensible position on who is to blame for the increased frequency of unacceptable behavior in Greek institutions and on whether these organizations should be maintained or banned.
- Support your thesis with evidence from a minimum of 3 sources.
- Illustrate how the evidence you selected supports your line of reasoning.
- Follow the conventions of standard written English when crafting your response to the question.

Source A

McMurtrie, Beth. "The Fraternity Problem." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 61.42 Mar 7, 2015: A-16–A-21.

From their beginnings, fraternities have often operated in opposition to the colleges with which they were affiliated. Secretive and exclusionary, the groups have bothered faculty members and administrators since their earliest days. But at a time when college life was far more austere, offering little in the way of culture and social events, the first fraternities provided a welcome outlet for students, notes Nicholas
 Line 5 L. Syrett, author of *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities*.

The 20th-century fraternity has gone through many changes. In the 1950s and early '60s, their conservative values and traditions meshed well with the mood on college campuses, although as Mr. Syrett notes, they were also the source of a steady stream of racist and sexist behavior. In the tumultuous 1970s, their traditionalist views stood in increasingly stark contrast to the political shifts on campus.

10 Then came *Animal House*. The 1978 movie touched off a renaissance of sorts, fueled by more relaxed attitudes toward drinking and sex. When the drinking age was raised to 21, in 1984, off-campus fraternity parties became a staple of college life, and the Greek experience changed profoundly. A landmark study conducted in the early 1990s found that 86 percent of fraternity members engaged in binge drinking.

15 "Kegs, party balls, beer trucks with a dozen taps along the sides, kegerators, 55-gallon drums filled with a mixture of liquor and Kool-Aid, ad infinitum. 'Tradition' became a common theme for parties, ranging from 'tiger breakfasts' to 'heaven and hell,' with variations."

That reminiscence comes not from a nostalgic fraternity brother, but from the Fraternal Information & Programming Group, a risk-management organization formed in 1987 by national Greek leaders who watched what was happening inside fraternity houses with growing alarm. An increase in fires, serious
 20 injuries, and sexual assaults led, inevitably, to lawsuits. Phi Kappa Sigma, for one, estimated that it handled 41 claims from 1990 to 2000, paying out \$3.5 million, including more than \$1 million for a house fire at the University of California at Berkeley that led to three deaths. Insurance companies began dropping fraternities, and insurance costs rose rapidly....

25 Whether because of internal disorganization, crackdowns by colleges, or their tainted public image, fraternities began losing their appeal in the late 1990s. By one estimate, 50,000 fewer students were members at the end of the decade than at the beginning.

30 "Fraternities were hemorrhaging from all angles in terms of academics, recruitment, risk management, housing infrastructure, alumni involvement, institutional support, public relations, etc.," Beta Theta Pi writes on its website. "To suggest the whole fraternal community was in a state of disrepair would be a gross understatement. Disarray was more like it, and Beta Theta Pi, in many respects, was no exception"....

Today, more than 15 years after fraternities and their national affiliates began rewriting their rule books, there are signs of progress. Hazing, now illegal in 44 states, is far less of a problem than it used to be, and raucous open-keg parties are also largely a thing of the past, according to college administrators and fraternity officials. Many fraternities require members to take workshops about alcohol
 35 and sexual assault, training that has ramped up significantly in recent years. Five fraternities within the interfraternity conference have banned pledging. National leaders now talk about being in the business of men's development, in which fraternities are living-learning communities....

Source B

Smith, Emily Esfahani. "On Fraternities and Manliness." *New Criterion* 33.9 (May 2015): 61–63. Database: MainFile.

It has been a rough few years for fraternities. In March of 2012, *Rolling Stone* published a much-discussed account of the supposed hazing and binge-drinking rituals of a fraternity at Dartmouth College. Two years later, Caitlin Flanagan wrote a feature article in *The Atlantic*, "The Dark Power of Fraternities," cataloguing their various depravities and concluding that they are a "grossly outdated" institution. In the summer of that same year, Andrew Lohse, the Dartmouth student featured in the *Rolling Stone* article, released a memoir, "Confessions of an Ivy League Frat Boy," which *Publishers Weekly* said shed light on the "tribal stupidity of young men"....

Though writers like Flanagan and Lohse, as well as faculty members—who have historically stood against fraternities and still do—are quick to blame fraternities for many of the problems of campus social life, the issues we see on today's college campuses are not the fault of the fraternity system, which has produced many great leaders in business, politics, and beyond, and which continues to contribute to college communities in positive ways. The problems on campus arise, rather, from a warped ideal of manliness to which fraternity brothers today aspire, an ideal radically different from the one that inspired the original founders of Greek organizations and that guided fraternity behavior until recent years.

Like the band of friends in Plato's *Symposium*, fraternity members came together around two common interests: fellowship and intellectual cultivation. To discipline one's mind, as Syrett notes, was part of living a virtuous life, which is what the fraternity brothers aspired to do. Meeting minutes from the mid-1800s show brothers at schools like Amherst, Yale, and the University of Michigan gathering to discuss Shakespeare, the benefits and drawbacks of the United States admitting New Mexico into the Union, and "the character of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham." Manliness was defined in terms of being intelligent, socially graceful, handsome, and morally upright—that is, being a gentleman. In 1836, a fraternity at Williams College determined whether to admit men into their brotherhood by asking: "Would you want your sister to marry him?"

By the 1920s, the ideal of masculinity changed from the more genteel manliness of the antebellum period to one grounded in physical prowess, athleticism, sexual virility, and aggression. Drinking had occurred previously in fraternities, but the fraternity brothers tried to drink "gentlemanly" quantities—that is, in moderation. But by the post-World War I period, excessive drinking—not self-control—became a mark of masculinity. The more manliness and drinking became intertwined, the more college men drank themselves to the point of oblivion.

Part of the reason ideals of manliness changed, Syrett points out, is women. As women started attending colleges that were traditionally all-male, men not only responded with hostility, but they felt compelled to assert their manliness in new ways. Women, after all, were now equal to men in the eyes of the college....

Source C

Wright, Laura. "My Short, Unhappy Life as a Sorority Girl." *Chronicle of Higher Education*. 10/26/2012: B12. MasterFILE Premier.

Line ...I know, love, am related to, care about, and educate plenty of amazing people who participate
and thrive in Greek life and who exemplify all that's good about humanity. The problem isn't the
individuals, but the operating principle of Greek organizations that if you're in, then you're better than
5 all those schmucks who weren't given a bid. If you're a woman in a sorority, that means that you're
prettier and more charming. If you're a man in a fraternity, then you are an alpha male, the epitome of
all that is lionized.

Before you call me out as some feminazi out to demonize the Greek system, know that I was one
of its members, a sister in a sorority for one year. I joined because my high-school friends, with whom
I went to college, wanted me to. It was weird to feel popular and wanted, because I had never been
10 either. But even when I was rushing, and later when I pledged, I knew that it wasn't for me. I didn't
want to exclude the friends I had made during my first year of college, and I most certainly didn't want
to have to live, as was requisite for sorority members, in Greek housing. But I thought that I would get
used to things. I was wrong.

I de-sistered after two incidents. First, I sat on the other side of rush and listened as these women
with whom I'd linked my fate rated potential pledges based upon their appearance, their past boyfriends,
15 and their connections with current sisters. I got yelled at for refusing to take part, and I gathered my
notebooks and walked right out of the room. I got in trouble for that, too; I was reprimanded by my
sorority's president for my unsisterly behavior.

Then I was nearly raped by a frat boy, some guy whose name I don't even remember now, but
whom I took to a dance out in the middle of nowhere because my sisters let me know, unequivocally,
20 that the guy I wanted to take—who wasn't in a frat—would not be an acceptable date. I was able to
fight the frat boy off only because he was falling-down drunk and I was sober. The next day he trash-
talked me; it was like something out of a movie. And I got reprimanded by my sisters for not putting
out. At that point, I was done.

25 Joining a sorority may very well be the sole thing in my life that I unequivocally regret. When
I de-sistered, I was treated like a leper by women who had once vowed undying love to me. I was
suddenly like a person at once pitiable and grotesque. Every time I saw one of my former sisters, I
received a heartfelt "How are you?" But I never once regretted leaving. Colleges seem disinclined to
ever abandon the embarrassing anachronism that is the Greek system. But the good news is that we can
30 all be individuals and walk away.

Source D

Kelderman, Eric. "Why Colleges Don't Do More to Rein in Frats." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 61.29. 4/3/2015: 1. Academic Search Premier.

...It's getting hard to keep up with the number of shocking incidents attributed to fraternities.

As headlines pile up—racist and sexist speech, sexual impropriety, destruction of property, hazing, illegal drugs, and even the death of a student—there is a growing sense that Greek organizations are out of control.

Line

5 As a result, some colleges have moved to close fraternities, suspend or expel student offenders, and—in cases of alleged criminal activity—open their own investigations.

But the latest spate of bad behavior has raised bigger questions about Greek organizations' place on campuses: Why don't colleges, or the national associations the fraternities represent, hold frats more accountable? Can they, or should they, do more? How?....

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National associations of Greek organizations say their key role is to provide "ongoing education and advice" to their local chapters, which are "self-governing and independent student organizations." And they act quickly to enforce their policies, primarily by closing or suspending individual chapters, according to an email from representatives of the National Panhellenic Council and the North-American Interfraternity Conference.

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"While each chapter is self-governing, it has been educated by its national organization and its local advisers on these topics and should understand its responsibilities, just as each individual member should understand what behavior is expected," the email says.

But the policies often work, first and foremost, to protect the national organizations legally, says Douglas E. Fierberg, a lawyer who has handled numerous high-profile lawsuits against Greek organizations for injuries and deaths related to hazing. In doing so, they leave individual members on the hook....

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Colleges, too, have often avoided the tough decisions to punish fraternities or sororities, often for financial reasons, say several higher-education experts.

One reason is that members of Greek organizations are often reliable donors to the institution.

"There's generally been a fear of responding in a strong way," says Gentry R. McCreary, associate dean of students and deputy Title IX coordinator at the University of West Florida. "If you're upsetting alumni, you're upsetting potential donors"....

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Source E

Flanagan, Caitlin. "The Dark Power of Fraternities." *The Atlantic* 313.2 (March 2014): 72–91.

Line 5 The opposing positions on this matter are held most forcefully and expressed most articulately by two men: Douglas Fierberg, the best plaintiff's attorney in the country when it comes to fraternity-related litigation, and Peter Smithhisler, the CEO of the North-American Interfraternity Conference, a trade organization representing 75 fraternities, among them all 32 members of the Fraternal Information and Programming Group. In a parallel universe, the two men would be not adversaries but powerful allies, for they have much in common: both are robust Midwesterners in the flush of vital middle age and at the zenith of their professional powers; both possess more dark knowledge of college-student life and collegiate binge drinking than many, if not most, of the experts hired to study and quantify the phenomenon; both have built careers devoted to the lives and betterment of young people. But two roads diverged in the yellow wood, and here we are. One man is an avenger, a gun for hire, a person constitutionally ill-prepared to lose a fight; the other is a conciliator, a patient explainer, a man ever willing to lift the flap of his giant tent and welcome you inside. I have had long and wide-ranging conversations with both men, in which each put forth his perspective on the situation....

15 "Until proven otherwise," Fierberg told me in April of fraternities, "they all are very risky organizations for young people to be involved in." He maintains that fraternities "are part of an industry that has tremendous risk and a tremendous history of rape, serious injury, and death, and the vast majority share common risk-management policies that are fundamentally flawed. Most of them are awash in alcohol. And most if not all of them are bereft of any meaningful adult supervision." As for the risk-management policies themselves: "They are primarily designed to take the nationals' fingerprints off the injury and deaths, and I don't believe that they offer any meaningful provisions"....

20 And then there is Peter Smithhisler, who is the senior fraternity man *ne plus ultra*: unfailingly, sometimes elaborately courteous; careful in his choice of words; unflappable...He believes that the fraternity experience at its best constitutes an appeal to a young man's better angels: through service, leadership training, and accountability for mistakes, a brother can learn the valuable lessons he will need to become "a better dad, a better teacher, a better engineer, a better pilot, a better 'insert career here.'" Spend some time talking with Pete Smithhisler, and you can go from refusing to allow your son to join a fraternity to demanding he do so.

30 Smithhisler was honest about the fact that he is at the helm of an outfit that supports organizations in which young people can come to terrible fates. "I wrestle with it," he said, with evident feeling. His belief is that what's tarnishing the reputation of the fraternities is the bad behavior of a very few members, who ignore all the risk-management training that is requisite for membership, who flout policies that could not be any more clear, and who are shocked when the response from the home office is not to help them cover their asses but to ensure that—perhaps for the first time in their lives—they are held 100 percent accountable for their actions....

35 One way you become a man, Smithhisler suggests, is by taking responsibility for your own mistakes, no matter how small or how large they might be. If a young man wants to join a fraternity to gain extensive drinking experience, he's making a very bad choice. "A policy is a policy is a policy," he said of the six-beer rule: either follow it, get out of the fraternity, or prepare to face the consequences if you get caught. Unspoken but inherent in this larger philosophy is the idea that it is in a young man's nature to court danger and to behave in a foolhardy manner; the fraternity experience is intended to help tame the baser passions, to channel protean energies into productive endeavors such as service, sport, and career preparation.

45 In a sense, Fierberg, Smithhisler, and the powerful forces they each represent operate as a check and balance on the system. Personal-injury lawsuits bring the hated media attention and potential financial losses that motivate fraternities to improve. It would be a neat, almost a perfect, system, if the people wandering into it were not young, healthy college students with everything to lose....

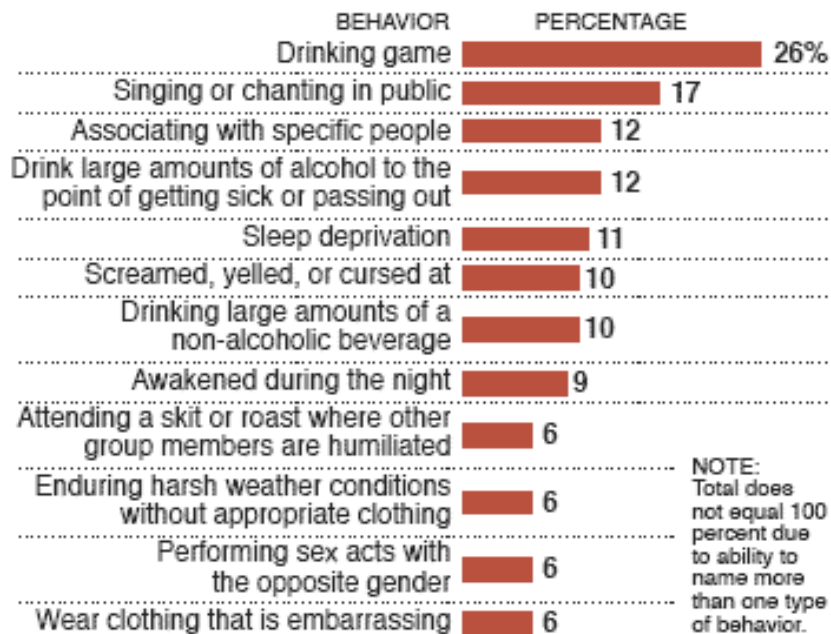
Source F

College of Education and Human Development, University of Maine. “Hazing occurs across campus groups.” nbcnews.com. Reprinted with permission of Elizabeth Allan.

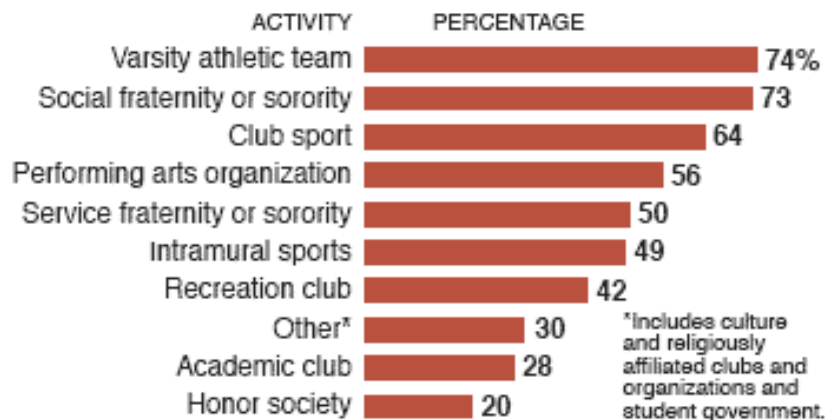
Hazing occurs across campus groups

A recent nationwide study reports hazing occurring in many different college athletic and campus groups, with alcohol a part of the most common hazing behavior.

Most frequently reported college hazing behaviors



Percentage of students in each activity experiencing at least one hazing behavior

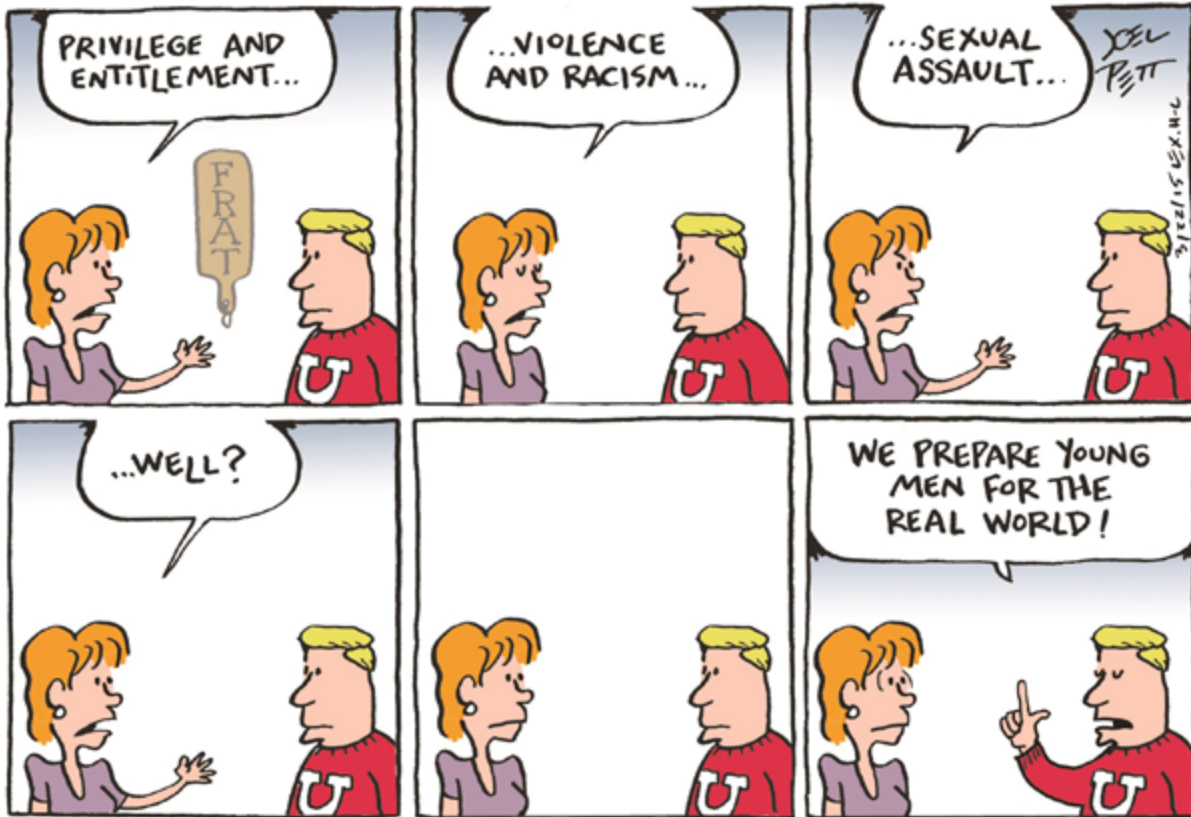


SOURCE: College of Education and Human Development, University of Maine

AP

Source G

“We Prepare Young Men for the Real World.” Joel Pett Editorial Cartoons.



**Précis and Explication of Free Response Question One:
Synthesis Essay on Problems with the Fraternity System**

Free Response Question One asked students to examine six sources that discuss the issue of fraternity (and sorority) behavior on college campuses. They were asked to weigh the merits of fraternal contributions against the repeated instances of misbehavior that have tarnished these organizations' image and, in the worst instances, directly contributed to sexual assaults and fatalities. Students were further encouraged to identify the source of the problem: whether it is the fraternity system itself, or a failure of universities and colleges to police fraternal behavior. Ultimately, students were directed to "synthesize information from at least three of the sources into a coherent, well-developed argument that persuasively conveys [their] position on who is to blame for the increased frequency of unacceptable behavior in fraternities and sororities and whether these organizations should be maintained or banned from college and university campuses."

Source A, taken from Beth McMurtrie's article "The Fraternity Problem," provides a brief summary of the history of fraternities in the twentieth century, observing how in the 1950s and 1960s "their conservative values and traditions meshed well with the mood on college campuses" and how by the 1970s "their traditionalist views stood in increasingly stark contrast to the political shifts on campus." McMurtrie cites the 1978 movie *Animal House* and "more relaxed attitudes toward drinking and sex" for the largest sea-change in fraternal behavior; namely, an increase in binge drinking and more lascivious conduct. She concludes more optimistically by noting the positive gains in recent years, how "Hazing, now illegal in 44 states, is far less of a problem than it used to be, and raucous open-keg parties are also largely a thing of the past."

Source B, from Emily Smith's "On Fraternities and Manliness," briefly acknowledges some of the problems in the fraternity system, but counters with a defense of fraternity values, saying "the issues we see on today's college campuses are not the fault of the fraternity system, which has produced many great leaders in business, politics, and beyond, and which continues to contribute to college communities in positive ways." Smith goes on to suggest that the much celebrated problems in contemporary fraternities derive "from a warped ideal of manliness to which fraternity brothers today aspire, an ideal radically different from the one that inspired the original founders of Greek organizations and that guided fraternity behavior until recent years." She cites minutes from nineteenth century fraternities in which brothers met to discuss Shakespeare and historical events, noting that this "ideal of masculinity changed from the more genteel manliness of the antebellum period to one grounded in physical prowess, athleticism, sexual virility, and aggression." Ironically, she implies that the admission of women to these institutions was a major factor in this change, saying "As women started attending colleges that were traditionally all-male, men not only responded with hostility, but they felt compelled to assert their manliness in new ways."

Source C, a short excerpt from Laura Wright's "My Short, Unhappy Life as a Sorority Girl," focuses on the sense of exclusivity, of elitism that marks these institutions. She notes how "if you're in, then you're better than all those schmucks who weren't given a bid. If you're a woman in a sorority, that means that you're prettier and more charming. If you're a man in a fraternity, then you are an alpha male, the epitome of all that is lionized." She documents unpleasant experiences during her time as sorority member including watching "these women with whom I'd linked my fate [rating] potential pledges based upon their appearance, their past boyfriends, and their connections with current sisters" and nearly being forcibly raped by a drunken frat boy, as well as the exile she experienced upon 'de-sistering.'

Source D, from Eric Kelderman's "Why Colleges Don't Do More to Rein in Frats," shifts the focus from fraternity misbehavior to institutional response to it—or rather, the lack of such. Kelderman indicates that the "National associations of Greek organizations say their key role is to provide 'ongoing education and advice' to their local chapters, which are 'self-governing and independent student organizations,'" implying that they view themselves as mentors not enforcers, leaving the fraternities essentially to police themselves. This protects them from any associative liability for the misbehavior of any school-affiliated fraternity though "In doing so, they leave individual members on the hook...". As for the colleges and universities themselves, Kelderman notes that they "have often avoided the tough decisions to punish fraternities or sororities, often for financial reasons," the main one being that "members of Greek organizations are often reliable donors to the institution."

Source E is taken from Caitlin Flanagan’s article “The Dark Power of Fraternities” and is quite different from the other sources in that it examines the antithetical positions of two lawyers involved with fraternity-based litigation. The first, Douglas Fierberg, is a critic, a man who sees fraternities as “part of an industry that has tremendous risk and a tremendous history of rape, serious injury, and death, and the vast majority share common risk-management policies that are fundamentally flawed. Most of them are awash in alcohol. And most if not all of them are bereft of any meaningful adult supervision.” Moreover, he believes the national fraternal organizations pretty much eschew any responsibility for the misbehavior of their local chapters. The second, Peter Smithhisler, is more of an apologist if not an outright defender of fraternities, believing them to offer “an appeal to a young man’s better angels: through service, leadership training, and accountability for mistakes.” Smithhisler believes that the bad reputation of fraternities is largely due to a few bad apples “who ignore all the risk-management training that is requisite for membership, who flout policies that could not be any more clear, and who are shocked when the response from the home office is not to help them cover their asses but to ensure that—perhaps for the first time in their lives—they are held 100 percent accountable for their actions...”, suggesting that the fraternity experience is “intended to help tame the baser passions, to channel protean energies into productive endeavors such as service, sport, and career preparation.”

Source F, from a study conducted by the University of Maine, provides statistical information on the variety of hazing that takes place on college campuses and the percentage of students in different activities who experience this abusive behavior while Source G consists of a cartoon that sardonically mocks the crass behavior of some fraternal organizations, a frat representative responding to a woman’s delineation of some of this behavior with the lame claim that “It prepares young men for the real world.”

In total, the seven sources examine the scope of the fraternity problem, ranging from the excessive, even criminal behavior itself to the avoidance of responsibility or outright negligence of campus security, the institutions of higher learning, and national fraternal organizations, providing a variety of angles from which students might approach the question.