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Examining the Influence of Whiteness on the Group of Socialization Process of College Men in the Traditionally White Fraternity System

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EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF WHITENESS ON THE GROUP
SOCIALIZATION PROCESS OF COLLEGE MEN IN THE TRADITIONALLY
WHITE FRATERNITY SYSTEM

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
S. Brian Joyce
August 2016

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

Recent national examples demonstrate the incongruence between the traditionally White fraternity system and race. A 2014 racially and sexually suggestive email led to the suspension of a Kappa Sigma fraternity member at the University of Maryland (Associated Press, 2015, March 14). In December 2014, the Clemson University chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon hosted a gang-themed and racially offensive party, titled “Cripmas”, near the holiday season (WYFF, 2014, December 9). Members of Sigma Alpha Epsilon at the University of Oklahoma chanted racist songs on a bus in 2015 (Associated Press, 2015, April 3).

The purpose of this study is to understand how racial attitudes are socialized within members of traditionally White fraternities through a critical examination of participants’ narratives on race and the concept of fit within fraternity membership. This study was constructed as a qualitative phenomenological multiple case study of students’ experiences with race specifically bounded within two separate traditionally and predominantly White fraternity’s new member education processes. This study used institutional theory as a theoretical framework through a critical constructivist lens to add to the body of knowledge on how White men use normative, regulative, and cultural-cognitive structures to perpetuate Whiteness.

Narratives from all eight participants were presented in this study. From those narratives, ten subcategories were identified and divided into four major themes for analysis. The four major themes from this study were as follows: (a) *Student Self-*

Governance, (b) the Minimization of Race and Racism, (c) Normalizing Whiteness, and (d) the Role of Racially Segregated Environments in Perpetuating White Supremacy.

The findings from this study provide student affairs practitioners insight into how men in traditionally, predominantly White fraternities experience race. Fraternity members' explanations of how they determine fit for fraternity membership can help illuminate the access issues inherent in homogenous, privileged environments. The critical constructivist approach used for this study can deconstruct the ways in which Whiteness is perpetuated in hegemonic White spaces.

DEDICATION

To those, like me, who still believe in the positive power of fraternities and sororities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to share my appreciation to those who helped make this dissertation possible. First, I want to thank my committee chair and advisor, Dr. Tony Cawthon, for your mentorship and guidance throughout this process. You were always encouraging, incredibly timely in your feedback, and always provided an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Your confidence in me gave me the reassurance to keep moving forward, and your guidance helped me grow professionally and academically.

I am truly grateful to my committee, Dr. Cynthia Deaton, Dr. James Satterfield, and Dr. Kendra Stewart-Tillman, for each providing something essential to the completion of this study. Your support and encouragement was exactly what I needed, but your expertise in areas of this study helped greatly improve this research. Dr. Deaton's proficiency in methodology, Dr. Satterfield's knowledge of and gentle nudging toward institutional theory, and Dr. Stewart-Tillman's experience and understanding of race and inclusivity was the perfect blend of resources and care I needed throughout this process.

I want to thank the eight participants who took time out of their busy schedules to share their story with me. I enjoyed getting to know each of you, and your contributions helped us all better understand the intersection of race, Whiteness, and fraternity membership. Your insights and experiences are the backbone of this work, and I appreciate you spending your time and energy with me to make it happen.

I want to give a special thank you to Lambda Chi Alpha, without which none of this would be possible. My experience with Lambda Chi and my fraternity brothers

showed me that fraternity is not a commitment expiring after four years of undergraduate work, but a commitment that spans a lifetime. Lambda Chi's principles and values, and those brothers who exemplify those in their daily lives, continue to inspire me to be a better fraternity man.

Last but not least, I want to express my gratitude to my family. To my mom, Sally, my dad, Steve, and my brother, David, you all have supported me throughout all of my personal and academic pursuits. You have been there with me no matter what, and I owe where I am today to you. Most importantly, I am eternally grateful for the sacrifices, patience, support, and encouragement of my son, Cameron and my wife, Brittney. I know how much you both personally sacrificed to allow me to pursue this dream. We have moved our family all around the country, multiple times, to put me into the best possible situations for my career and education. I will never forget that. Brittney, you often said I made PhD work look easy, but I only successfully navigated the rigors of academia because of your love and support. Thank you both for providing me with the time and resources I needed to do this work. I could not have done this without you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, predominantly White fraternities have garnered negative reputations on many college and university campuses for discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, fraternities were scrutinized for racist attitudes (Hughey, 2010; Muir, 1991; Patton, 2008). Increased media attention on recent racist incidents has brought racism in the college fraternity system to the forefront for educators and scholars (Associated Press, 2015, March 15).

Race and racial inequity are important topics on college campuses today because the college student population is more racially and ethnically diverse than ever. Schnoebelen (2013) reported in *The Chronicle* that college enrollment data indicated an increase in the number of underrepresented populations on campus. The number of Hispanic students is projected to increase by 42 percent, Black students by 25 percent, Asian/Pacific Islander by 20 percent, and White students by only 4 percent. The demographics of the American college and university are quickly changing, thus impacting the country and world in which we live. As Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, and Terenzini (1996) suggested, “future college graduates will be challenged by a society that is increasingly diverse in terms of race, culture, and values” (p. 174).

Despite a changing demographic in colleges and universities, many traditionally White fraternities have remained largely homogeneous (Park, 2014), and much of the interpersonal and intrapersonal development experienced by college students involves how they viewed their racial identity (Helms, 1990). White students who segregated

themselves based on racial identity were slower to develop racial awareness (Tatum, 1997). This phenomenon can be problematic, as Wise (2005) hypothesized regarding the experience of being White in America, “if you wanted to, you could construct a life that would be more or less all-White” (p. 27). At institutions of higher education, constructing such a world should not be desired nor possible given the changing scope of college campuses and the necessity that diverse racial interactions have on the learning experience.

Statement of the Problem

Fraternities were closely associated with dangerous climates for students of color, as Van Dyke and Tester (2014) indicated that racial bias and hate crimes were more common on predominantly White campuses and institutions with large and influential fraternity and sorority systems. Acts of racial violence or terror have become somewhat commonplace in today’s fraternity environment as recent national incidents highlight.

Fraternities are socially powerful dynamics on college campuses, as represented by the almost 100,000 male students who join a national/international fraternity annually (NIC Website, n.d.). One unique quality of social fraternities is that they have the ability to self-select students for membership, providing students with sole ownership of who is granted membership into the organization. White students often possessed negative stereotypes of students of color (Sedlacek, 1999). As a result, the fraternity/sorority communities were the most racially isolating environments for White students. In a study by Park (2014), 97.1 percent of White fraternity and sorority members indicated that their

organizations were majority White. Even on racially diverse campuses, traditionally White fraternities and sororities have remained largely homogeneous (Park, 2008).

Recent qualitative narratives on racial attitudes in traditionally White fraternity members outlined a pattern of socialization in which fraternity members are indoctrinated with notions of fit that align with fraternity values and individual member experiences (Morgan, Zimmerman, Terrell, & Marcotte, 2015). Additional research is needed to examine the impact that Whiteness has on in-group socialization of college men in a traditionally White fraternity as it pertains to race and racial attitudes.

Purpose of the Study

To better understand how racial attitudes are socialized within members of traditionally White fraternities, this study was constructed as a qualitative phenomenology case study of students' experiences with race specifically bounded within two separate traditionally, White fraternity's new member education processes. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen (1999) suggested focusing diversity efforts on environments that perpetuated exclusion in the past to improve campus racial climates for the future. Focusing on privileged identities and those who control access to a powerfully influencing force in higher education can help guide student affairs and fraternity and sorority life professionals in better understanding the complex climate of race in a traditionally and predominantly White fraternity setting.

The purpose of this research is to critically examine socialization within narratives on race and the concept of fit from male fraternity members in traditionally White fraternities using a qualitative phenomenological multiple case study approach.

This study utilized a critical constructivist lens using institutional theory as a theoretical framework.

Definition of terms

- Color-blind racism - Color-blind racism is a dominant racial ideology in which race is espoused as no longer significant in United States culture (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Specifically, color-blind racism is a justification of racial inequalities based on non-racial dynamics (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).
- Diversity – Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) suggested two definitions of diversity. Structural diversity is the “numeric representation of diverse groups” (Gurin, et al., 2002, p. 333). A second definition was needed that “involves both the *frequency* and the *quality*” of meaningful intergroup interactions during college (p. 333). Informal diversity interactions can occur inside and outside of the classroom in environments such as residence halls, campus events, and social activities (Chang, 1996).
- Fraternity – This study specifically refers to traditionally and predominantly White social fraternities belonging to the Interfraternity Council (IFC), unless otherwise noted.
- Group socialization – Group socialization refers to the ways in which individual identity is influenced by intergroup contexts (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Individuals placed themselves and others into social categories which impact those in the group and the larger structures in which the group operates.

- Interfraternity Council (IFC) – The Interfraternity Council is a programming and governing board which exists on campuses with multiple social fraternities (NIC website, n.d.). IFC fraternities are typically one of the 74 International and National men’s social organizations belonging to a trade association known as the North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC website, n.d.). ABC fraternity recently resigned its membership from the NIC, but is still active in the IFC community and participates in IFC governing rules on campuses where the fraternity exists. XYZ fraternity is a current IFC fraternity member.
- Pledging – described by Cokley and Wright (1995) as the process of becoming a member of a fraternity or sorority. The pledging process “seeks to acquaint or orient the prospective new member as to the rules, cultures, and beliefs of the group or organization” (p. 4).
- Racial microaggressions - described as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007, p. 271).
- Racism – Racism is defined as a system of advantage based on race (Wellman, 1993). This definition moves beyond prejudice to an overall system of racial privilege and institutional power.

- Traditionally White fraternity system -- The traditionally White fraternity system refers to the collection of IFC fraternities that make up the fraternity community on a given campus.
- Whiteness – Whiteness is a privileged social identity (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Reason & Evans, 2007). Whiteness does not refer to White people, but rather an ideology of racial oppression and a way of protecting White supremacy (Cabrera, 2012).
- White supremacy - Bonilla-Silva (2006) defines White supremacy as a system of racial inequality that favored White people at the expense of people of color.
- White spaces – Areas known as “White spaces” were the formation of environments in which White students were surrounded almost exclusively by other White students (Cabrera, 2014).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because of the importance that diversity has on the higher education environment. Despite dominant discourses that diminish the significance of race, researchers demonstrated that race matters for college students (Johnston, Pizzolato, & Kanny, 2015). Numerous scholars have documented the significance of race on students’ personal and cognitive development (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin, 2002; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Pascarella et al., 1996).

Racial and ethnic diversity is essential in creating the best possible higher education environments because of the desire to place students in situations to learn among peers with different worldviews and diverse life experiences. As Bollinger (2003)

stated, “a diverse learning community is a better learning environment” (p. 433). Even though racial diversity is increasing in higher education, campuses have difficulty maintaining positive racial climates (Dalton, 1991).

This research is needed to better understand and analyze the potential ways in which Whiteness permeates in-group socialization in predominantly White settings, like those in traditionally White fraternities. More specifically, an analysis of White fraternity members’ narratives on the salience of race in group norms, processes, and membership selection in the traditionally White fraternity membership education process can add to the body of knowledge on ways in which Whiteness is normalized. This study is significant in that it attempts to name the ways in which Whiteness and White supremacy influence group socialization processes by critically evaluating the White fraternity system culture in United States higher education.

Theoretical Framework

This study incorporated an institutional theory approach to explore how two fraternities operated as smaller organizational units within the larger institutional context of the university setting. Scott (2003) defined organizations as systems that are influenced by their environments to produce meaning, stability, and order. An institutional theory lens provided a better understanding of social behaviors in organizational contexts. Institutional theory further explained organizations as comprised of three distinct pillars: normative, regulative, and cultural-cognitive (Scott, 2001). The basis of institutional theory and the three pillars of organizational context is explained in the literature review in chapter two and a more thorough explanation of the theoretical

framework is described in the methods section in chapter three.

A social identity approach was also used to better understand group socialization processes (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Social identity theory can explain how groups can impact individual identity, including thoughts and behaviors (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). This lens also incorporated self-categorization theory to explain the impact of race on internalized views of White hegemony and how that affects prejudiced views of people of color (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Research Questions

This study examined the narratives of recently initiated fraternity members with a phenomenological multiple case study approach to better understand how fraternity members are socialized on race and sense of belonging specifically bounded within two fraternities' member education processes. Participants were fraternity members initiated into the fraternity within the previous twelve months from the time in which this study was conducted. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

- 1) How do fraternity men explain the salience of race in fraternity group socialization?
- 2) How do fraternity men describe the notion of fit within their organization?
- 3) In what ways does Whiteness permeate group culture for college men in traditionally White fraternities?

Challenges and Boundaries

The qualitative nature of the data limits the generalizability of this study. Furthermore, the study was conducted at a large, public university in the Southeast region

of the United States. The worldviews on race and the racial history of the institution are unique to this geographic region and this setting, limiting the findings to this environment, at this particular point in time.

Given the salience of race in this particular study, my identity as a White male could provide me with access to information that White fraternity students might not be comfortable telling others, particularly scholars of color, but students, particularly those who are White, often initially deny personal prejudices (Tatum, 1992). If the participants in the study are uncomfortable speaking about race or continually deny any negative attitudes regarding race, then the study could lack the rich data expected. Honesty will be important, so establishing rapport with the participants is crucial to the study.

Whites' racial attitudes are underestimated based on a desire to appear non-racist (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000). Many White men and women in the United States claim to live in a post-racial society, an environment and context in which race is no longer significant (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Through what Bonilla-Silva (2006) described as color-blind racism, White individuals often criticize and express resentment toward people of color through covert and institutionalized systems rather than name calling or overt ways of the past. These *semantic moves* as Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) called them, enable individuals to say something like, "I am not racist, but..." followed with a negative statement about people of color. Interpreting what Bonilla-Silva (2006) referred to as the "rhetorical maze" of color-blind filled *semantic moves*, could be a challenge in analyzing the data.

Research Design and Methods

The current study employed a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is work focused on the words and observations of its participants (Glesne, 2011). Merriam (1998) further defined qualitative inquiry as research that helps us understand and make meaning of lived experiences. Qualitative research studies are helpful when existing theories fail to explain a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological multiple case study approach to focus on understanding group socialization and how racialized definitions of fit perpetuate White supremacy through the bounded system of two separate traditionally White fraternities' new member education processes. Phenomenology focuses on understanding participants' lived experiences through a phenomenon while exploring the meaning behind those experiences (Patton, 2002), while case study research illuminates a specific action through the analysis of a bounded system (Yin, 2014). This study combined elements of both phenomenology and case study research.

Research Site Description

This study was conducted with two traditionally, predominantly White international fraternities, which were given the pseudonyms of ABC fraternity and XYZ fraternity. ABC fraternity is one of the largest men's fraternities with more than 280,000 initiated members with active chapters at 194 colleges and universities. XYZ fraternity was founded in 1848, and exceeds 180,000 initiated brothers at almost 150 chapters.

ABC fraternity was chosen for this study primarily because of its robust member education program, and its long history at the institutional site. ABC fraternity prohibits the process of pledging, a process by which prospective members join a fraternity. Rather

ABC fraternity recruits prospective members into the fraternity as associate members, members who have all the rights and responsibilities of initiated members, reducing the power dynamics and hazing associated with the traditional pledging process. The fraternity website listed seven core values for which the fraternity teaches during its four year member education program. The seven core values are loyalty, duty, respect, service and stewardship, honor, integrity, and personal courage. ABC fraternity was colonized at the research site in 1990 and provided its charter in 1992. A fraternity colony is an organization that is on probationary status until it is fully recognized by its national or international headquarters office and the college or university in which it is colonized (Colony Wiki, n.d.). A charter is permission from the national or international headquarter office to signify that the organization is a fully recognized chapter of the fraternity.

XYZ fraternity was chosen because of its limited history at the research site, and more traditional pledging period for new members to compare and contrast with distinctive features of ABC fraternity. XYZ fraternity was colonized at the research site in Fall 2015, and has yet to receive its charter by the publishing of this study. Its lack of institutional history at the research site provided the researcher with the opportunity to further explore the significance of history and tradition on organizational behavior. The fraternity possessed a traditional pledging period where prospective new members navigated through an eight week pledge education process in order to eventually initiate into the fraternity with full membership benefits. The pledge education manual listed friendship, knowledge, service, morality, and excellence as values of the fraternity. The

colonization of XYZ fraternity in Fall 2015 meant that all participants in this study were recruited by a team of full-time professional staff members from the XYZ fraternity headquarter office, rather than the traditional recruitment process of ABC and other fraternities where current members of the chapter choose prospective members.

The institutional site for the study was given a pseudonym of Southeastern University. The University website described Southeastern University as a public, non-profit, predominantly White, land-grant institution in the southeast, founded in 1889. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.) further described it as a large, four-year, primarily residential, more selective, high research, doctoral granting institution with over 19,000 students.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction to the study. Chapter one outlines the purpose of the research, the significance of the study, the research questions, the limitations, a brief outline of the theoretical framework, a description of the research design and methods, and description of the research site. Chapter two is the literature review. The literature review includes a comprehensive review of the origin and intent of fraternities, the impact of fraternity involvement, campus racial environments, understanding Whiteness, the relationship between fraternities and race, and an overview of the theoretical lens. Chapter three is the methods section, which outlines the research design, research question, the data collection procedures, the role of the researcher, and the data analysis. Chapter four addresses the results of the study. Chapter five presents conclusions and implications.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To conduct the literature review, I utilized empirical research in peer-reviewed journals, with a preference for finding more recent literature. For this study, I utilized the Clemson Library, as well as the search databases of Academic Search Complete, ERIC (Education Research Complete), Lexis Nexis, Academic OneFile, Google Scholar, and PsycINFO. Following a full literature review, I utilized references from relevant studies to further guide the research.

The search terms utilized for this study were:

- Fraternity racism
- Fraternity race
- White fraternities
- Campus racial environments
- Racial microaggressions
- White privilege
- Whiteness
- Critical Race Theory
- White supremacy
- White spaces
- White hegemony

In this section, literature is reviewed thematically as it is relevant to the study.

First, the literature that addresses the origin and intent of fraternities, then the impact of

fraternity involvement, a review of campus racial environments, understanding Whiteness, the relationship between fraternities and race, and a review of the literature relating to the theoretical lens is discussed.

Origin and Intent of Fraternities

Fraternities continue to be one of the oldest and most common forms of student involvement on college campuses. The earliest Greek letter organizations were founded to support the mission of the institution, reinforcing the highest ideals of academia (Earley, 1998). Both cultural and academic needs emerged on campuses that developed a need for various subcultures to form student organizations known as fraternities and sororities (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998).

Fraternities were originally created to provide students with like-minded goals, ideals, and values to develop a close social relationship in college (Newsome, 2009). These student groups allowed men an opportunity to engage socially and intellectually with one another, in an environment that bridged the classroom experience very closely with the co-curricular path to create an educational and collegial setting outside of the classroom (Gregory, 2003).

Fraternities continued to be unique to North America, existing only in the United States and Canada. The first fraternity, Phi Beta Kappa, was formed in 1776 at the College of William and Mary (Boschini & Thompson, 1998). Today's fraternities maintain many similarities to Phi Beta Kappa, including names comprised of Greek letters, secret rituals and cultures that are unique to each group, and a badge or pin that is reserved only for initiated members (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998).

Historically, fraternities were established on campuses at a time when students were predominantly White (Boschini & Thompson, 1998). Fraternities abolished racial discrimination clauses, found in their membership selection criteria, in the late 1960s, but Black students were reluctant to accept bids to join (Tillar, 1974). The elimination of discrimination clauses enabling Black students to join traditionally White fraternities did not necessarily suggest that bias and discrimination did not play out informally in the membership selection process (Maisel, 1990). Despite a changing demographic that has diversified the student body on today's college and university campus, historically White fraternities remained predominantly White.

Impact of fraternity involvement

A rewarding college experience draws from student experiences both inside and outside of the classroom (Astin, 1985). Student involvement refers to the amount of time a student studied, spent time on campus, participated in student organizations, and interacted with faculty members (Astin, 1999). As students become involved in campus organizations, such as fraternities, growth in student learning and personal development occurred (Astin, 1999; Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Fraternities, in particular, have numerous positive effects on the involved student. Fraternity members were more involved on campus (Astin, 1993), worked more effectively in groups (Pike & Askew, 1990), possessed increased leadership development skills (Kuh and Lyons, 1990), possessed greater ties to the college or university (McClure, 2006), facilitated increased levels of volunteerism (Hayek, Carini, O'Day, &

Kuh, 2002), and developed increased learning and intellectual development (Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005).

Joining a fraternity provides students an opportunity to join an exclusive network of successful members and alumni. The North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC), the trade organization for 74 International and National men's fraternities, highlighted these networking opportunities as one of the primary benefits of membership (NIC website, n.d.). Fifty percent of the Top 10 Fortune 500 CEOs are fraternity men. Fraternities also lay claim to 44 percent of all US presidents and 31 percent of US Supreme Court justices (NIC website, n.d.).

While the positive effects on the student experience are undeniable, fraternities are highly scrutinized and debated facilitators of student involvement that simultaneously encourage skepticism on their true value toward student growth and development. For example, fraternity members did not experience the same gains in cognitive outcomes as compared to non-Greek peers (Martin et al., 2011), even contributing negatively (Pascarella et al., 1996) in some cases, particularly in the first year of college. Pike (2003) demonstrated that fraternity members eventually made positive gains in the senior year of college, but these gains were often in spite of the fraternity culture, not because of it.

While Greek students have higher self-efficacy than non-Greek peers, which normally has a strong link to positive academic achievement, fraternity members' academic performances suffered. Thompson et al. (2011) compared self-efficacy, academic effort, GPA, and test scores between 186 Greek and non-Greek students

enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses. While membership in a fraternity indicated higher self-efficacy and greater academic effort, academic performance did not significantly differ.

There has been significant debate about the overall value of fraternities in the academic environment (Kuh, Pascarella, and Wechsler, 1996, April 19). Hevel, Martin, Weeden, and Pascarella (2015) found no statistically significant general effects on critical thinking, moral reasoning, inclination to inquire and lifelong learning, and psychological well-being. On a positive note, fraternities and sororities did not negatively influence students' educational outcomes, but the findings do not bode well for supporters, who claim fraternities were effective facilitators of student educational outcomes (Hevel, et al., 2015).

Understanding and measuring fraternal brotherhood can help scholars develop a better understanding of the value of fraternities. McCreary and Schutts (2015) conducted focus group interviews with 14 fraternity undergraduates about brotherhood. The authors identified four themes of brotherhood including solidarity, shared social experiences, sense of belonging, and accountability (McCreary & Schutts, 2015). The need to belong is a valuable and essential component of fraternal life.

In general, students who attend more racially diverse institutions had more racially diverse friends (Park & Kim, 2013), but membership in a fraternity indicated a negative net gain in the value of openness to diversity (Pascarella et al. 1996) and rates of interracial interaction and friendship (Park & Kim, 2013). Fraternities and sororities promoted close personal friendship through tight bonds and activities for members only.

In terms of creating racial diversity, the selectivity and exclusive nature of the fraternity selection process made creating a racially diverse environment a challenge.

Campus racial environments

Outright racial violence is not the only way in which campus environments are dangerous for students of color. Racial microaggressions, while ranging from extremely hostile to slight, can be detrimental to the experiences of students of color. Racial microaggressions were more subtle than overt racism, making them difficult to identify and therefore challenging to address (Crocker & Major, 1989).

Racial microaggressions had a significant effect on the experiences of students of color, while transforming the overall campus racial environment (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Students of color who experienced microaggressions reported feeling isolated, self-doubt, and frustrated. Microaggressions occurred in both academic and social spaces, causing many students of color to feel discouraged and unwanted in social situations, and discouraged many from seeking out these experiences (Solorzano, et al., 2000).

The perception of the campus racial climate was often vastly different depending on race (Ancis, Sedlacek, and Mohr, 2000). Loo and Rolison (1986) found that the majority of White students perceived the institution to be supportive of students of color, while only 28 percent of Black and Chicano students agreed. The White spaces created by homogenous White environments separated White students from the realities of the experiences of students of color.

White students often perceived increased racial tension on campuses with an increased enrollment of students of color (Hurtado, 1992). Students of color were even more likely to perceive prejudice and discrimination on campus (Cabrera & Nora, 1994), but predominantly White campuses cultivated racial bias and even hate crimes for students of color (Van Dyke & Tester, 2014). Traditionally White fraternities, in particular, were inextricably linked with racist incidents (Hughey, 2010; Muir, 1991; Patton, 2008).

Sense of belonging can be a particularly salient issue for students of color on predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Black students at PWI campuses reported higher levels of alienation and social isolation than White students (Allen, 1992). Black males, in particular, reported higher levels of isolation than their female counterparts. McClure (2006) found that membership in historically Black Greek-lettered organizations was important for Black students' social support. Substantial research exists on the reasons students of color join traditionally and predominantly White fraternities and sororities and the experiences within (Hughey, 2010), but little research exists on White fraternity members' beliefs and perceptions as the ones who reinforce hegemonic White culture.

Understanding Whiteness

This section of the literature review is devoted to understanding Whiteness, including the emergence of color-blind racism, a review of White racial identity development, and finally an overview of White privilege as it relates to racial segregation into White spaces, the hegemony of White culture, the minimization of racism in White

culture, and the perpetuation of White supremacy in higher education. This section helps develop the framework that Whiteness is important to understand and deconstruct to critically analyze this issue.

The Emergence of Color-Blind Racism

An explanation of a post-racial America has emerged after the civil rights era, one scholars call color-blind racism. Bonilla-Silva (2006) defined color-blind racism as a dominant racial ideology in which race is espoused as no longer significant in United States culture. A color-blind ideology is problematic in that it actually reinforced racist thinking (Wise, 2010).

To fully understand color-blind racism and its use, it is helpful to understand the central themes associated with the ideology. Bonilla-Silva (2001) explained four dominant frames in which the ideology of color-blind racism is used by White respondents in a study on White racial attitudes. The first major theme is that of abstract liberalism, or the push for equal opportunity. In this color-blind frame, meritocracy is used to explain racial inequities or race based contradictions. The second theme is the “biologization of culture.” In this explanation, people of color have different cultures and values that can explain inequities of race. For example, Bonilla-Silva (2001) described one participant as saying that Black men and women are lazy to explain why there are deficiencies in income levels as compared to white individuals. The third frame is a naturalization of the effects of White supremacy. In this frame, segregation based on race was described as being natural, therefore housing and school segregation are easily explained away as a natural tendency to be expected. The fourth dominant frame in color-

blind racism is a minimization of racism. This finding is consistent with other literature (Cabrera 2014b) that Whites often believed discrimination was no longer present in American culture and most racial issues are the cause of inequities in the individuals themselves (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Meritocracy was used in color-blind ideology to explain disparities among races as the result of deficiency or inferiority, but not racism (Wise, 2010).

White behaviors were often contradictory to their stated beliefs (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Bonilla-Silva (2001) found that whites answered survey questions in ways that suggested tolerance or even support for diversity, but their actions suggested a different story. Whites interacted infrequently with people of other races, moved from neighborhoods populated with people of color, and opposed school integration efforts (Bonilla-Silva, 2001).

White Racial Identity Development

White men and women initially became aware of their White racial identity through their first cross-racial interactions (Tatum, 2003). As Sedlacek (1999) suggested, White students possessed negative stereotypes of Black students, and often felt uncomfortable around other races. Some White students felt victimized by “reverse racism,” therefore continuing patterns of segregation learned prior to college (Cabrera, 2012).

The Helms and Cook (1999/2005) model of White racial identity development helped to explain the developmental stages of White cultural identity. The Helms and Cook (1999/2005) White racial identity model contained seven stages of White racial

identity development. In the first stage (contact), White individuals often lack awareness of any type of racism or their own White privilege. They frequently deny the existence of racism. During the second stage (disintegration), White individuals typically disassociate with race or racism altogether, but acknowledge that racism exists (Helms & Cook, 1999/2005).

Moving along the continuum, the third stage (reintegration) is characterized by blaming people of color for issues or challenges, while succumbing to societal pressures of White superiority (Helms & Cook, 1999/2005). In this stage, White individuals typically deny any personal responsibility for racism by refusing to acknowledge current racism in society. The fourth stage (pseudo-independence) is marked by an acceptance of Whiteness and a desire to help people of color act more like White people (Helms & Cook, 1999/2005).

In the immersion stage many White individuals seek cross-racial interactions as they search for an understanding of Whiteness. They often try to develop positive relationships with people of color. During the sixth stage of emersion, White individuals will often seek out other White people who are trying to understand Whiteness. Finally, in the seventh and final stage (autonomy), White individuals may no longer be plagued by feelings of guilt or fear, and are now increasingly knowledgeable about diversity and race. An individual in autonomy may begin to confront racism, actively engaging in anti-racist behavior. This stage is characterized by a desire to combat racism by confronting systems of oppression (Helms & Cook, 1999/2005).

Prior to coming to college, many White students physically separated themselves from students of color, even when racial minority students were the majority in that setting (Cabrera, 2012). It is only in the most advanced stages of Helms' White racial identity model that White students were comfortable interacting with people of color (Helms, 1997). Thus, it is likely that when White students are given the chance to segregate with other White students into social groups such as fraternities, they do so.

White Privilege

The privilege of not having to think about race is one of the many unearned advantages of being White in America. Peggy McIntosh (1992) described examples of White privilege in her article of the 46 unearned privileges she experienced on a daily basis because she is a White woman. McIntosh (1992) described such examples as being able to be in the company of people of her own race most of the time, being sure her race would not work against her in any situation, and even knowing she could choose flesh colored bandages that matched that color of her skin. White privilege and the emergence of color-blind racism, served to perpetuate White hegemony in United States higher education culture (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

Bonilla-Silva (2001) stated that White supremacy is maintained in United States culture through "the sophisticated racial practices of the new racism and the even more complex ideology of color blindness" (p. 199). These behaviors were difficult to address or disrupt because they were more covert and difficult to identify. Bonilla-Silva (2001) suggested that the next step in what can be done about this reality is developing new

research agendas on White racial attitudes, specifically in exploring Whiteness from within.

The behavior of White students within White spaces on college campuses is often vastly different when students of color are absent from the environment (Picca & Feagin, 2007). Cabrera (2014a) analyzed 29 White student narratives on racial joking, which were almost always told in homogenous White environments. A consistent theme from the findings described jokes as simply humorous, not racist, and they were largely rationalized as harmless (Cabrera, 2014a). Because White students did not find racism in the jokes, those who did were overreacting and overly sensitive (Cabrera, 2014a).

Understanding the ways in which individuals of privileged identities reacted and understood privilege is important to unpacking it in a particular setting like higher education. Privilege can be difficult to acknowledge, and even more of a challenge to deconstruct within one's identity. Watt (2007) discovered the privileged identities exploration model (PIE) as an explanation of typical responses associated with privileged identity development. The model identified eight defense modes associated with behaviors individuals display when engaged in difficult dialogues about social justice and their own privileged identities. The PIE model assumes that engaging in difficult dialogue is a difficult, natural, highly variable, and a necessary component of unlearning social oppression (Watt, 2007).

The defense modes within the privileged identities exploration model are described here. Within the PIE model, those in the recognizing phase begin in *denial*, a defense where individuals deny the existence of privilege (Watt, 2007). Those in the

denial defense may acknowledge injustice, but have difficulty accepting it as reality (Watt, 2007). Many move on to deflecting oppression toward a different, less threatening target as the cause. In the *deflection* defense, individuals deflect blame toward others while refusing to acknowledge the reality of injustice or oppression (Watt, 2007). Some may move to developing alternative reasoning or *rationalization*. In the rationalization defense, individuals provide a logical alternative response that avoids further analysis on the discussion at hand (Watt, 2007). Individuals may move to the *intellectualization* defense, in which they bring in data or stats to intellectualize their arguments (Watt, 2007). Watt (2007) stated within the *principium* defense mode, some may avoid exploration based on religious or personal values. The principium defense may be a way to avoid conflict or explain conflicted feelings on a subject. Individuals may develop *false envy*, indicating that they wish they could be a different race, for example (Watt, 2007). The false envy defense can serve as a way to avoid deeper reflection on race. The *benevolence* defense is a way individuals demonstrate sensitivity by displaying overly charitable behavior and acts of kindness (Watt, 2007). Finally, the *minimization* defense is a way to reduce the importance or minimize one's culture into a few select facts (Watt, 2007). In this defense, individuals shift the focus on to a small number of minute details about race or ethnicity rather than a larger system of oppression.

Fraternities and race

Recent national examples demonstrate the incongruence between the traditionally White fraternity system and race. A 2014 racially and sexually suggestive email led to the suspension of a Kappa Sigma fraternity member at the University of Maryland

(Associated Press, 2015, March 14). In December 2014, the Clemson University chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon hosted a gang-themed and racially offensive party, titled “Cripmas”, near the holiday season (WYFF, 2014, December 9). Members of Sigma Alpha Epsilon at the University of Oklahoma chanted racist songs on a bus in 2015 (Associated Press, 2015, April 3).

Traditionally, White fraternities and sororities have remained largely homogeneous, even on racially diverse campuses (Park, 2008). Fraternities and sororities have been known for determining membership based on an exclusionary nature, actively demonstrating bias on the basis of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Chang, 1996). Most Greek-lettered organizations eliminated formal exclusionary statutes banning non-White members in the 1960s (Lee, 1955), but despite changes in policy, changes in recruitment practices failed to occur. Over 97 percent of traditionally White fraternity and sorority members indicated that their organizations are a majority White (Park, 2014).

The tendency to minimize racism and feelings of victimization from multiculturalism often go unchallenged when White students exist in racially segregated environments (Cabrera, 2014b; Sidanius, Van Larr, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004). Traditionally White fraternities, in particular, created social comfort and insulated White men from overt racial conflict through the creation of White spaces. Astin (1993) noted that a strong commitment to promoting racial understanding was a negative predictor for joining a fraternity or sorority. He wrote that “the existence of pervasive racial conflict on

the campus tends to balkanize the student body, such that students seek out social organizations whose membership is partly racially based” (Astin, 1993, p. 179).

The formation of predominantly White environments perpetuated by traditionally White fraternities were one of the two ways Cabrera (2014b) outlined how the traditionally White fraternity system recreated White supremacy in higher education. White men secluded themselves from interactions with peers of a different race (Cabrera, 2014b). Because they were protected from overt racial conflict, White men minimized racism in the college environment and even framed themselves as victims (Cabrera, 2014b).

The second way in which White supremacy was recreated was through the social comfort exhibited by being surrounded by other members of the same race (Cabrera, 2014b). The formation of environments where White students were surrounded almost exclusively by other White students normalized Whiteness and served to perpetuate views where White students saw little evidence of racism, strengthening skepticism about the racialized experiences of students of color (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Without regularly interacting with students of color, Whiteness and the White experience were normalized for many White students (Cabrera, 2012).

Participation in a fraternity or sorority has been negatively related to students’ openness to diversity, and rates of interaction and friendship with someone of a different race (Park & Kim, 2013; Pascarella, et al., 1996). In particular, White fraternity/sorority members have significantly fewer interracial friendships than their unaffiliated White peers (Stearns, Buchmann, & Bonneau, 2009). In slightly different terms, Park (2014)

found that participation in a fraternity or sorority was a negative predictor for having at least one close friend of a different race or ethnicity. As Astin (1993) pointed out, “the student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (p. 398).

Recent studies on fraternity and sorority members’ levels of intercultural competence conflicted with the notion that membership in a Greek-lettered organization led to negative deficits in this area. Separate studies by Martin, Hevel, Asel, and Pascarella (2011) and Rubin, Ainsworth, Cho, Turk, and Winn (1999) indicated that fraternity and sorority membership was not associated with measures of intercultural competence. In other words, fraternity and sorority members were neither advantaged nor disadvantaged when compared to their peers. A more recent study by Martin, Parker, Pascarella, and Blechschmidt (2015) agreed that fraternity and sorority membership had no significant impact on levels of intercultural competence. Further studies, specifically those utilizing qualitative measures, are needed to better understand the impact diversity has on group socialization for fraternity and sorority members and the myriad ways in which students interpret racial consciousness in deciding who should be allowed access into their peer group.

Past studies on racial attitudes in traditionally White Greek systems on southern campuses indicated that fraternity and sorority members were significantly less accepting of Black students than non-Greek members (Muir, 1991). White fraternity and sorority members were more likely to hold stereotypes of Black students than non-Greek members, but fraternity members were significantly more likely to possess negative

attitudes than their sorority counterparts (Muir, 1991). This research suggested that racial attitudes could be gendered.

Schmitz and Forbes (1994) interviewed sorority members who blamed Black students for any racial segregation existing in Greek-lettered organizations. Asian American women participating in a study by Park (2008) described the recruitment process as one relying more on fit, denying any association with race as a factor. White participants in this qualitative study described sorority recruitment processes as race-neutral (Park, 2008), but there is a dearth of research on the salience of race in fraternity recruitment practices.

A recent study interviewed 20 senior, White fraternity members on White racial attitudes (Morgan, Zimmerman, Terrell, & Marcotte, 2015). Four themes emerged from their views on race including the minimization of race, the creation of one dimensional views of students of color, a reliance on traditions and history to negotiate and justify the future, and the perception that their fraternities were diverse in comparison to other predominantly White chapters. Within the theme of history, group socialization emerged as a potential category for future research. Participants commented on the notion that there was a particular fit for each chapter. Members exhibited signs of socialization on racial fit through chapter traditions and ideals taught by other members (Morgan, et al., 2015). The socialization of race and racial attitudes among in-group members specifically in traditionally White fraternities is the focus for this study.

Theoretical Lens

Institutional theory

Institutional theory is the theoretical basis for this study. Institutional theory is enacted to understand how two fraternities operated as smaller organizational units within the larger institutional context of the university setting. Institutions are systems comprised of three pillars, known as regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive, as components that achieve meaning, stability, and order (Scott, 2003). An institutional theory lens provided a better understanding of individual social behaviors in organizational contexts.

Institutional theory helps explain how social structures, like organizations, are influenced by their environments. Scott (2001) further described institutions as “multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources” (p. 57). In this case, Southeastern University, ABC fraternity, and XYZ fraternity are all organizations, each with their own unique cultures.

Giddens (1979) and Sewell (1992) described how interrelated the three pillars of institutions are with one another. Effective rules and norms are often supported in regulative structures like sanctioning, and cultural beliefs are encapsulated in the resources of the organization. The regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive pillars are interconnected, “contributing, in interdependent and mutually reinforcing ways, to a powerful social framework” (Scott, 2001, p. 59).

The Regulative Pillar

The regulative pillar emphasizes rule setting, monitoring, and sanctioning in maintaining the social status of institutions (Scott, 2001; 2003). All institutions constrain and regularize behavior (Scott, 2001). Behavior in the regulative sense is governed

through coercion, formalized sanctioning, or shaming (Scott, 2001). The process of establishing rules and supervising compliance influences future behavior in the organization (Scott, 2001). Rules can involve both formal or informal processes. Formal processes can incorporate police or other formalized regulative authority, while informal processes may simply involve shaming or shunning individuals (Scott, 2001).

For fraternities, the regulative authority comes in several different forms. The University has a code of conduct, and an office that deals specifically with student violations to the moral or ethical standards of the policies and procedures. There is also a Fraternity and Sorority Life office that directly manages fraternity expectations. Federal, state, and local law obviously also applies to govern fraternity behavior. Finally, the fraternity standards can govern itself internally as well, with some fraternities going so far as to implement standards boards that oversee violations of fraternity policies.

The Normative Pillar

The normative pillar emphasizes values and norms as ways to provide a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life (Scott, 2003). Values are defined as “conceptions of the preferred or the desirable together with the construction of standards to which existing structures or behaviors can be compared and assessed” (Scott, 2001, p. 64). Norms, on the other hand, “specify how things should be done; they define legitimate means to pursue valued ends” (Scott, 2001, p. 64). Behavior in the normative pillar is governed through internalized social obligations and the desire to be appropriate through the eyes of other accepted members of the group (Scott, 2003).

In some cases, values and norms are applicable to all within the institution, but in other cases they only apply to select groups or individuals (Scott, 2001). Because of this, norms and values give way to certain actors performing specific roles with expectations distinguishing how those individuals are supposed to behave. Scott (2001) states that “the central imperative confronting actors is not ‘What choice is in my best interests?’ but rather, ‘Given this situation and my role within it, what is the appropriate behavior for me to carry out?’” (p. 65). The norms and values of the college or university setting could impact how the major actors interact regularly with the fraternities or sororities, and vice versa.

The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar

The cultural-cognitive pillar revolves around shared conceptions and beliefs that are taken for granted or subconscious (Scott, 2003). The cultural-cognitive label “emphasizes that internal interpretive processes are shaped by external cultural frameworks” (Scott, 2001, p. 67). In the cultural-cognitive, social order is maintained through collective sense-making created by the group (Scott, 2003). Symbols, like words, signs, and gestures, shape the meaning we assign to objects and activities (Scott, 2001). In other words, the shared conceptions created by institutions constitute the nature of social reality, justified simply as the ways things are done (Scott, 2001).

Culture is often seen as uniform across institutions, but individuals can interpret situations differently depending on the circumstance (Scott, 2001). Differing cultural beliefs are more profound in times of change and social disorganization (DiMaggio, 1997). A differing experience causes actors to construct a different meaning, and those

who do not align with group culture are often not welcomed in the organization (Scott, 2001).

Each of the three pillars can be found in the larger institutional culture of the college or university setting, which in turn, trickles down to student organizations like fraternities. Simultaneously, each of the three pillars operates within a separate and sometimes unique fraternity culture.

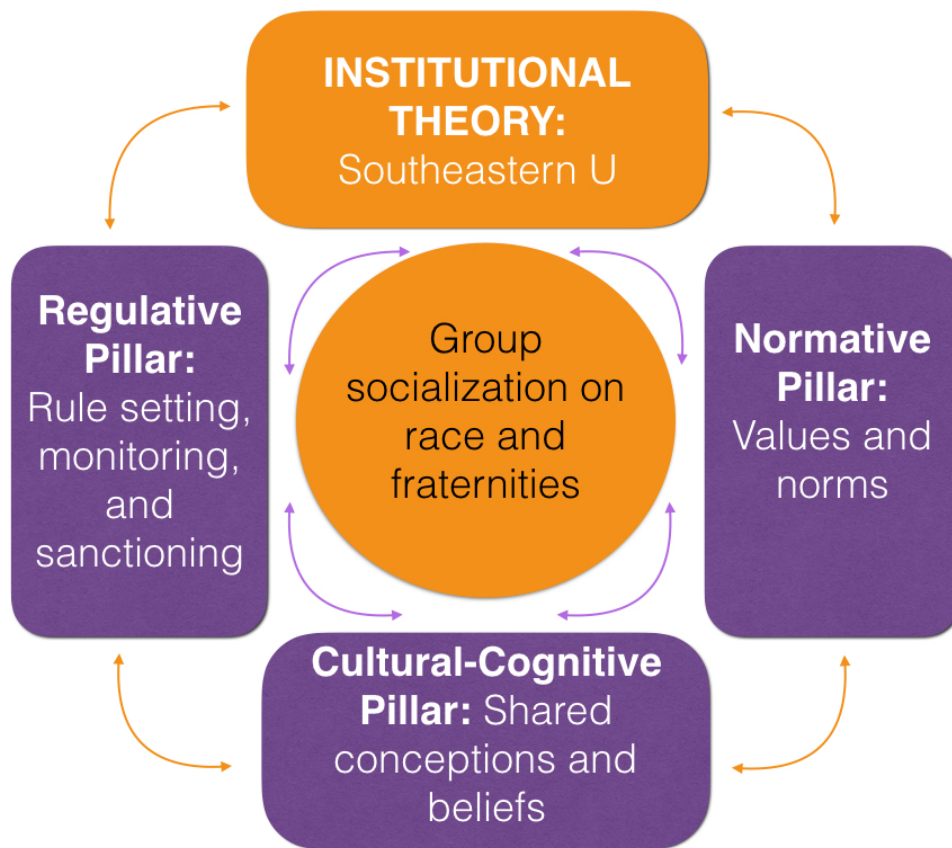


Figure 2.1. Theoretical framework of group socialization on race

Group Socialization

This study also incorporated a social identity perspective to further analyze individual behavior within the larger group process to identify group socialization

patterns. Tajfel and Turner (1979) introduced social identity theory as a way to analyze how individual identity is influenced by intergroup contexts as a way to define one's own standing in society. Individuals placed themselves and others into social categories to explain the world around them. In turn, the process impacted those in the group and the larger structures in which the group operates. Self-categorization theory evolved from social identity theory to explain cognitive processes of social identity development (Abrams & Hogg, 1999).

Self-categorization theory further explained the in-group versus out-group categorization process of behavior. Individuals placed themselves and others into prototypes based on attributes (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Positive in-group attitudes created a normative ideology of one's self and other in-group members, but a unified and stereotyped view of out-group members as a whole. These prototypes represented defining characteristics or stereotypes that are applied to all members of the group (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Race was a significant measure of social identity by which individuals categorized themselves, therefore race was a significant mechanism for self-categorization (Goar & Sell, 2005). Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of habitus, Bonilla-Silva (2006) described how White habitus can create a "racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites' racial tastes, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters" (p. 104). Whiteness led White identified individuals to view White as normal, correct, valued, and the standard for beauty, intelligence, and worth (Di Angelo, 2012). Prejudiced views of other races

developed more from normalized views and admiration of Whiteness as opposed to any hatred or disdain of others (Blumer, Lyman, & Vidich, 2000). The White habitus that reinforced hegemonic White ideals validated a constant prejudice of people of color (Bonilla-Silva, Goar, & Embrick, 2006). A social identity perspective added to the institutional theory approach as an additional lens with which to view this study, with specific attention to the impact of Whiteness and White habitus.

The group socialization process is important to understand the psychological transitions through which individuals in small groups undergo. Abrams and Hogg (1990) argued that conformity, the process of “private acceptance of a norm which defines a group in which subjects include themselves and others with which they identify” (p. 270), is an essential component of group socialization. Levine and Moreland (1994) asserted that there were three psychological processes that determined group socialization: evaluation, commitment, and role transition. Evaluation occurred during the recruitment phase where current members and prospective members evaluated one another on the benefit of the relationship. Prospective members are assessed based on how much they can contribute to the group’s goals. The commitment phase is based on the outcome of the evaluation phase, where a new member determines how rewarding the relationship can be for the future and the group considers the same about the new member, and both individual and group decide on the future of the relationship. The group and individual commitment levels can change over time, representing the role transition phase. Role transitions occur when an individual member’s position is relabeled, typically signified by a special ceremony (Levine & Moreland, 1994). Newly initiated fraternity members

occupy the role transition phase as their commitment has reached a new level, and the fraternity initiation represented the special ceremony of transition.

In a study of 250 Canadian military officers, Guimond (2000) demonstrated that group socialization processes have a significant effect on intergroup perspectives. In particular, dominant and hierarchical groups tend to promote dominant ideological beliefs (Guimond, 2000). Students at the university level are especially susceptible to socialization on intergroup attitudes and beliefs (Guimond, 1998).

Group socialization processes are helpful in understanding group recruitment activities (Levine & Moreland, 1994). Groups that have relatively low membership numbers tend to become more “open” in their recruitment of new members. Overstaffed groups, or groups that feel adequate or above the standard membership numbers, may decide to become more “closed” as they already have the members they need (Levine & Moreland, 1994).

Chapter Summary

Chapter two reviewed the literature as it related to the negative past between traditionally, predominantly White fraternities and race. Fraternities began as a way for college men to network intellectually and socially, but began at a time when students of color were not admitted to predominantly White institutions. Results from studies on involved fraternity men show that, in general, there are positive effects for engaged members, but interactions with non-White students and openness to diversity are some of the areas that fraternities fall short. Campus racial environments can be negative or even dangerous for students of color, but particularly at institutions with large fraternity

systems. The history between fraternities and race is often a negative one, reinforcing Whiteness. In prior studies related to racial attitudes within fraternities, the group socialization process emerged as an area that requires further study.

Institutional theory represented the theoretical lens for this study. Institutional theory was enacted to understand how two fraternities operated as smaller organizational units within the larger institutional context of the university setting. Institutions are systems comprised of three pillars, known as normative, regulative, and cultural-cognitive, as components that achieve meaning, stability, and order (Scott, 2003). An institutional theory lens provided a better understanding of individual social behaviors in organizational contexts. Social identity theory used group socialization processes to explain how groups can impact individual identity, including thoughts and behaviors. This lens also incorporated self-categorization theory to explain the impact of race on internalized views of White hegemony and how that affects prejudiced views of people of color. To provide an understanding of how fraternity men use Whiteness within the group socialization process of the fraternity education process, a phenomenology case study will be used to better understand those experiences.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This chapter addresses the rationale for a phenomenological case study approach to this research question. The chapter outlines the research design utilized in the study. The research site is described in detail. The research question is established. Proposed methods for the study are described including the theoretical framework, the participants, the data collection process, data analysis procedures, and trustworthiness measures. The chapter concludes with the role of the researcher.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is work focused on the words and observations of its participants (Glesne, 2011). Merriam (1998) further defined qualitative inquiry as research that helps us understand and make meaning of lived experiences. Qualitative research studies are helpful when existing theories fail to explain a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

Traditional survey research or quantitative methods often underestimate the racial ideology of White participants because of a simple dichotomy of “yes” or “no” answers (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). White racial attitudes were often depicted as tolerant, or even supportive on race issues in quantitative studies, but because of what Bonilla-Silva (2001) described as a color-blind racial ideology pervasive in White culture, qualitative research is an important and effective strategy for a more accurate analysis of Whites’ racial views.

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological multiple case study approach to focus on understanding how group socialization shapes prejudiced views, racialized definitions of fit, and perpetuate White supremacy through the bounded system of two traditionally White fraternities' member education processes. This study combined elements of both phenomenology and case study research.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology focuses on understanding participants' lived experiences through a phenomenon, while exploring the meaning behind those experiences (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) identified the foundational question in phenomenology work as, "what is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomena for this person or group of people?" (p. 104). The various definitions of phenomenology all share a commitment to exploring how people make sense of their experiences (Patton, 2002). To adequately engage in phenomenology work, researchers have to engage in detailed interviews with people who have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, descriptions of one's experience and one's interpretation of that experience often become so intertwined that it is impossible to separate, making only one subjective experience (Patton, 2002). In short, phenomenology researchers look to capture the essence of an experience by grouping together several different people's experiences with a phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

There are three types of phenomenology research: (a) transcendental, (b) existential, and (c) hermeneutic (Patton, 2002). Transcendental phenomenology is the meaning of individual experience (Patton, 2002). Existential phenomenology is the social

construction of group reality (Patton, 2002). Finally, hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on the language and structure of communication (Patton, 2002). This study utilizes transcendental phenomenology because the researcher attempts to understand the essence of meaning from individual fraternity members' experiences with race in a traditionally, predominantly White fraternity.

Case study

A case study “is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 6). Yin (2014) further described a case study as a method that attempts to highlight a certain decision or set of decisions, while helping to explain why the decision was made, how it was implemented, and what happened afterward. Case study is a popular educational research method because of its effectiveness in understanding “individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena” (Yin, 2014, p. 5).

The member education processes of two traditionally, predominantly White fraternities were chosen to bound the case so that the researcher could analyze fraternity members' narratives on the socialization of race. The first fraternity chosen was given the pseudonym of ABC fraternity, and the second fraternity was given the pseudonym of XYZ fraternity. This study was conducted with two fraternities in the same institutional setting, providing additional context for the selection of these cases. To understand fraternity members' experiences with socialization, race, and how White supremacy is reified in traditionally White fraternity culture, analyzing the fraternity education process

within the larger context of fraternity and higher education culture provides the justification for the bounding of this case.

Yin (2014) suggested multiple over single case study designs whenever possible. This study utilized a multiple case study approach by analyzing how two fraternities with very different member education processes practiced group socialization in the same institutional culture. I utilized a comparison-focused sampling strategy to identify the two fraternity member education programs to compare and contrast. The first case was a chapter of ABC fraternity chosen because of the robust member education program devoid of the traditional pledging process centered on values based recruitment and education, and its long history at Southeastern University. The second case was a chapter of XYZ fraternity, a fraternity chosen for its traditional pledging program and education process, but short institutional history at Southeastern University. The use of contrasting cases helped highlight the differences in the cultures of the two environments. The multiple case study design supplemented the data, creating a more robust and compelling case study.

Phenomenological Multiple Case Study

This study combined elements of both phenomenology and case study research to develop a more holistic understanding of this case. Case study allows researchers to “retain a holistic and real-world perspective” while aiding in the understanding of complex social phenomena (Yin, 2014, p. 5). Phenomenology focuses on understanding the meaning behind participants’ lived experiences through a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). A phenomenological multiple case study approach was used to better understand

the salience of race in group socialization and how fraternity men describe fit in the fraternity new member process.

Research Questions

This study examined the narratives of recently initiated fraternity members with a phenomenological multiple case study approach to better understand how fraternity members are socialized on race and sense of belonging specifically bounded within two fraternities' member education processes. Participants were fraternity members initiated into the fraternity within the previous twelve months from the time in which this study was conducted. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

- 1) How do fraternity men explain the salience of race in fraternity group socialization?
- 2) How do fraternity men describe the notion of fit within their organization?
- 3) In what ways does Whiteness permeate group culture for college men in traditionally White fraternities?

Research Site

This study was conducted with two traditionally, predominantly White international fraternities, which were given the pseudonyms of ABC fraternity and XYZ fraternity. ABC fraternity is one of the largest men's fraternities with more than 280,000 initiated members with active chapters at 194 colleges and universities. ABC fraternity was chosen for this study primarily because of its robust member education program and its long history at the research site. ABC fraternity prohibits the process of pledging, a process by which prospective members join a fraternity. Rather ABC fraternity recruits

prospective members into the fraternity as associate members, members who have all the rights and responsibilities of initiated members, reducing the power dynamics and hazing associated with the traditional pledging process. The fraternity website listed seven core values for which the fraternity builds its four year member education program. The seven core values are loyalty, duty, respect, service and stewardship, honor, integrity, and personal courage. These core values are the qualities sought in new members during the fraternity recruitment process, and are at the core of all ABC fraternity teachings. My status as a member and national volunteer with ABC fraternity afforded the opportunity to make initial contact with fraternity members. ABC fraternity was colonized at the research site in 1990 and provided its charter in 1992.

XYZ fraternity was chosen because of its limited history at the research site, and more traditional pledging period for new members. XYZ fraternity was colonized in Fall 2015, and has yet to receive its charter by the publication of this study. Its lack of institutional history at the research site provided the researcher with the opportunity to further explore the significance of history and tradition on organizational behavior. The fraternity possessed a traditional pledging period where prospective new members navigated through an eight week pledge education process in order to eventually initiate into the fraternity with full membership benefits. The pledge education manual listed friendship, knowledge, service, morality, and excellence as values of the fraternity. The colonization of XYZ fraternity in Fall 2015 meant that all participants in this study were recruited by a team of full-time professional staff members from the XYZ fraternity

headquarter office, rather than the traditional recruitment process of ABC and other fraternities where current members of the chapter choose prospective members.

The institutional site for the study was given a pseudonym of Southeastern University. The University website described Southeastern University as a public, non-profit, predominantly White, land-grant institution in the southeast, founded in 1889. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.) further described it as a large, four-year, primarily residential, more selective, high research, doctoral granting institution with over 18,000 undergraduate students and over 4,500 graduate students. The researcher selected this site due to previously established relationships with university administrators who agreed to serve as gatekeepers, granting the researcher access to participants, data, and resources to conduct the study.

77.65 percent of Southeastern University's total students (graduate and undergraduate) identified as White. Meanwhile, 6.96 percent of Southeastern's students identified as a non-resident alien, 6.25 as Black, 3.02 as Hispanic, and 2.07 as Asian. Less than one percent identified as American Indian or as Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The remaining students were marked as unknown. This information and the exact wording were taken from the university website.

Fraternity and sorority life has been an integral part of Southeastern University's campus life since its inception in 1959. Over 3,000 Southeastern students are members of a fraternity or sorority, or 23 percent of the overall student body. The Interfraternity Council (IFC), which I worked with specifically for the purposes of this study, has 22 chapters. This case study required IRB approval at Southeastern University, which was

granted, as well as the cooperation of the Fraternity and Sorority Life office staff for access to students, documents, and demographic data.

Demographic data was obtained from the Fraternity and Sorority Life office to provide additional details on race within IFC and within each fraternity. Table 3.1 contains a breakdown of ABC and XYZ fraternity by race. The demographic breakdown of race is as follows:

<u>Fraternity</u>	<u>Mixed</u>	<u>Native American</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
ABC	2	0	0	1	2
XYZ	0	0	1	2	3
<u>Fraternity</u>	<u>Pacific Islander</u>	<u>Non-resident Alien</u>	<u>Unknown</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Total</u>
ABC	0	0	1	76	82
XYZ	1	0	0	46	53

Table 3.1. Demographic data for ABC and XYZ fraternities

Citation: data source and wording came directly from the Fraternity and Sorority Life office

The total fraternity demographic information for ABC and XYZ fraternities, including percentages, is presented in table 3.2 as follows:

<u>Fraternity</u>	<u>Total students</u>	<u>Percentage of students of color</u>	<u>Percentage of White students</u>
ABC	82	7.3%	92.7%
XYZ	53	13.2%	86.8%

Table 3.2. Racial demographic percentages for ABC and XYZ fraternities

A table presenting the total students and percentages of racial breakdown within all IFC fraternities at Southeastern University is presented as follows:

<u>Fraternity</u>	<u>Total students</u>	<u>Percentage of students of color</u>	<u>Percentage of White students</u>
ABC	82	7.3%	92.7%
XYZ	53	13.2%	86.8%
D	53	0%	100%
E	87	8.1%	91.9%
F	109	4.6%	95.4%
G	97	6.2%	93.8%
H	48	6.3%	93.7%
I	29	3.5%	96.5%
J	75	2.7%	97.3%
K	63	4.8%	95.2%
L	28	17.9%	82.1%
M	92	4.4%	95.6%

N	135	0.7%	99.3%
O	104	8.7%	91.3%
P	92	12.0%	88.0%
Q	94	4.3%	95.7%
R	59	10.2%	89.8%
S	90	1.2%	98.8%
T	40	7.5%	92.5%
U	22	27.3%	72.7%

Table 3.3. Racial demographic percentages for all IFC fraternities at Southeastern

Southeastern University experienced a number of racially biased incidents over the last several years. The first occurred within the fraternity and sorority community when a fraternity planned a racially charged theme party in 2014. The fraternity was “indefinitely suspended” following the party. A list of student grievances following the incident included the assertion that the President of Southeastern was inadequate in his response. In 2015, a debate over whether or not to change the name of an iconic academic building named for a founding father of Southeastern and former politician who was well known for his racism and hatred toward people of color took its toll on campus race relations. In 2016, another racially charged bias incident occurred when a student hung a bunch of rotten bananas on an African American history banner on campus. Following the incident, Southeastern University students held a peaceful protest and sit-in in the main university administration building. Racial tensions continued to remain high on

campus, and race was a popular discussion topic for many students as a result. Several participants referenced both incidents throughout the narrative of their experiences with race in interviews for this study, and the events may have impacted the way students experienced race on this campus.

Participants

The participants were male fraternity members who initiated and participated in the new member education process of either ABC or XYZ fraternity within the last twelve months as chosen through a comparison focused sampling strategy. Male students were chosen to match the gender of the researcher, and because fraternity men are the population of interest. Muir (1991) reported that members of fraternities were more likely than sorority members to possess stereotypes of students of color. The research invitation to participate in the study is attached (see Appendix A).

Careful attention was given to choosing the population that would provide the most information rich data for this study. Newly initiated members were chosen because they recently completed the new member education process, thus are likely to show the strongest signs of group socialization. They are also most likely to be heavily involved in selecting and educating the incoming class of new members. Newly initiated members would also have very few concerns of repercussions from other fraternity members in comparison to newer prospective members, as they are already initiated into the fraternity. Newly initiated members served as a benchmark between freshmen and seniors to demonstrate where patterns of group socialization occur. In addition, newly initiated

members may take on more leadership in the educational process of freshmen than senior members do, and may be more instrumental in shaping racial attitudes.

Sampling Procedures

The researcher chose the cases based on a comparison focused sampling strategy. Patton (2002) stated that comparisons can illuminate differences, thus strengthen qualitative inquiry. I worked with the Fraternity and Sorority Life office to identify fraternity chapters that might serve as cases for this study.

Eight fraternity chapters were contacted to participate, and two agreed to distribute the research invitation to its new members. The fraternity leaders contacted for this study, whom all identified as White, were reluctant to participate in a qualitative study on race. Four of the fraternity leaders never returned my email, and two stated that they were not interested in discussing race.

The two fraternity leaders who agreed to participate represented ABC and XYZ fraternities. ABC fraternity agreed to participate, in part, because of my status as a member of ABC and current faculty and staff advisor of the Southeastern chapter. XYZ fraternity agreed to participate primarily because of Zach's interest and passion for the topic. His involvement in importance in gaining access to XYZ is discussed in the participant profiles.

Participant Profiles

The participants consisted of newly initiated members in ABC fraternity and XYZ fraternity at Southeastern University. The research invitation for this study was sent to all recently initiated new members of ABC and XYZ fraternities. Participants were defined

as new members if they initiated within the previous twelve months prior to the time of the study. There were eight total participants. Two additional participants from ABC fraternity responded to the research invitation, but the researcher was never able to schedule an interview time. Both participants agreed to participate initially, but after several interviews were conducted with other ABC participants they began to avoid communication and cancel meetings.

There were four participants from ABC fraternity and four participants from XYZ fraternity. I assigned each participant a random letter (i.e. Student X) as a placeholder while they reviewed the transcripts during the member checking process. After all participants reviewed the transcripts, I eliminated the letter assignment and assigned each participant a pseudonym. They did not choose their pseudonym and the participants are unaware of the name I chose for them. Names beginning with a letter at the beginning of the alphabet were assigned to participants in ABC fraternity, while names beginning with a letter at the end of the alphabet were provided for participants in XYZ fraternity. This was done to make each participant easily identifiable for the reader. Table 3.4 provides a profile for each participant. The participants were as follows:

<u>Name*</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Year in school</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Fraternity</u>
Alan	19	Freshman	White	ABC
Ben	20	Sophomore	White	ABC
Chad	18	Freshman	White	ABC
Dave	20	Sophomore	White	ABC
Todd	20	Sophomore	White	XYZ

Victor	19	Freshman	White	XYZ
Wes	19	Freshman	Black	XYZ
Zach	24	Graduate student	White	XYZ

* Name is a pseudonym for the participants' actual name

Table 3.4. Description of participants

The researcher made attempts to find participants that represented the general fraternity population at Southeastern, but Zach, while fitting the terms of participation, was a unique participant for this culture. Zach was a graduate student in the Student Affairs master's program at Southeastern University with a graduate assistantship in the Diversity and Inclusion office. He was significantly more educated and had participated in more training on diversity and inclusion efforts than average fraternity men, and possessed a passion for this work that was absent in other participants. Because of his interest in the research subject, Zach was instrumental in gaining buy-in for XYZ's participation. Zach reached out to fraternity brothers to encourage their participation, and used the interviews as a way to encourage other XYZ members to continue inclusion efforts within the fraternity culture.

Protection of participants

The protection of participants is important to any study. Glesne (2011) stated that by agreeing to interviewing and observation, participants have a right anonymity and confidentiality. I made every effort in this study to preserve the protection of each participant and organization. Prior to their participation, participants were provided with a consent letter outlining their participation and measures of privacy and confidentiality

within the study. The letter explained how interview data and documents would be protected. Confidentiality was especially important considering the nature of the topics discussed during data collection.

The researcher took every measure possible to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Each participant's name, university attended, and fraternity was fully protected through the use of a pseudonym. All audio files and transcribed interviews were stored on the researcher's personal cloud storage account. To protect the anonymity of the participants, the transcribed interview files and audio files were saved with a pseudonym that was changed again prior to the publication of this dissertation in order to make the best effort possible to protect the identity of the participants. Each participant was asked to be sensitive to the privacy of others in the group by keeping all shared information private.

Theoretical Framework

This study incorporated an institutional theory approach to explore how two fraternities operated as smaller organizational units within the larger institutional context of the university setting. Scott (2003) defines organizations as systems that are influenced by their environments to produce meaning, stability, and order. An institutional theory lens provided a better understanding of social behaviors in organizational contexts. Institutional theory further explained organizations as comprised of three distinct pillars: normative, regulative, and cultural-cognitive (Scott, 2001).

This study attempted to understand the ways in which White supremacy is normalized in White fraternity culture, but utilizing an interpretive approach to the

narratives of White students would only serve to normalize White supremacy rather than disrupt it. As Leonardo (2004) described, “even when critical analysis takes white experience as its unit of analysis, this must be subjected to the rigors of the analytics of the oppressed” (p. 141). The Whiteness approach to this study must critically examine and deconstruct the oppressive structures maintained by White hegemony in higher education, which will be attempted through a critical constructivist perspective.

A critical constructivist epistemology employs an emancipatory agency toward deconstructing dominant structures (Watts & Jofili, 1998). Anderson (1990) described the use of a critical constructivist approach in educational administration as a way to make invisible structured and privileged social actions visible. Invisible social interactions may even be seen as non-events, since power and control can often be difficult to measure or even know that it exists (Anderson, 1990). A critical constructivist approach can serve to challenge White supremacy in higher education through the critical analysis of ways in which Whiteness is normalized and White supremacy perpetuated in traditionally White fraternity members’ narratives on racial socialization.

Constructivist epistemology assumes that people construct their own subjective realities, denying objective reality (Charmaz, 2008). Guba and Lincoln (1989) asserted that “realities are social constructions of the mind, and that there exist as many such constructions as there are individuals” (p. 43). In other words, there are multiple individual realities for the researcher and participant to construct meaning.

Data Collection

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with individual participants, follow up focus group interviews for all participants from each chapter, and the collection of documents including fraternity bylaws, policies and procedure manuals, pledge or fraternity education manuals, and newspaper articles. Patton (2002) advocated for more than one data source to develop a better understanding of a single phenomenon. I conducted initial individual interviews to gather baseline data from selected participants from each fraternity chapter, chosen based on purposive sampling techniques, which often leads to selecting information-rich participants (Glesne, 2011). A typical case sampling method was used to select participants whose voices represented the general membership of the organization (Glesne, 2011). Focus groups were conducted separately for members of ABC fraternity and XYZ fraternity to eliminate any power dynamic as much as possible and to increase comfort levels. The focus group data was collected to gather additional information on how each individual member discussed issues of race when they were around their fraternity brothers versus when they were alone with the researcher.

The initial individual interviews were conducted using the individual interview protocol attached (see Appendix C). The literature on race and fraternities guided the interview structure. The semi-structured interview approach allowed flexibility in asking follow up questions when appropriate, while the informal, interactive process gave the researcher the ability to develop rapport with the participants. One on one interviews provided significantly more depth than group interviews, and allowed for an opportunity to expand on issues relevant to the study (Glesne, 2011). Interviews were conducted in a

private, quiet, and comfortable space on campus, so that participants felt at ease in the environment (Glesne, 2011). All interviews were recorded using a digital recording device and transcribed by the researcher. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

Focus group interviews were conducted using the focus group interview protocol attached (see Appendix D). Focus groups are defined as facilitating a discussion with a group of people about a particular topic (Glesne, 2011). Focus groups can be useful to “better understand how a group would discuss some issue” and to “elicit multiple perspectives in the process” (Glesne, 2011, p. 131). Focus groups provided members an opportunity to speak more openly and comfortably, to gain access to how they might speak about the topic if I were not present. In this situation, the focus group provided a means to see if individuals changed their stated opinions on race when they were around other fraternity brothers. Glesne (2011) advocated for keeping focus groups to smaller groups of six to ten participants to avoid break out conversations, and stated that focus group interviews were most effective when scheduled for around 60 minutes. Each focus group consisted of four members, and every effort possible was taken to keep the interview to under 60 minutes.

In addition to interview data, documents were gathered as an additional data source to strengthen the information gathered about each unique culture. Documents provided an in-depth understanding of the context in which the fraternities operate. The documents obtained from each fraternity were fraternity bylaws, policies and procedures manuals, pledge or fraternity education manuals, and newspaper articles. Yin (2014)

reported it was crucial that the researcher consider the context and the audience for which archival records were produced.

I conducted direct observations of the participants during both individual and focus group interviews. Direct observations occurred in real time and covered the context of each unique case (Yin, 2014). Glesne (2011) suggested that researchers make notes of everything they observe, not just a description of what happened. She reminded researchers to describe the setting, the participants, and the events. Participants reveal much by who they are, with whom they interact with, what messages they send verbally or non-verbally, their gestures, their posture, and their movements (Glesne, 2011). I looked for these non-verbal cues in my observations to critically analyze the inclusiveness of each fraternity culture. I was a passive participant, to the extent possible, along Dewalt and Dewalt's (2002) continuum of participation. I attempted to play more of an observer role during focus group questioning, but it should be noted that my presence during the conversations could elicit a response from the participants or prohibit them from speaking about topics in the way in which they might under normal circumstances.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study followed Creswell's (2014) six steps for qualitative data analysis. Step one included organizing and preparing the data for analysis (Creswell, 2014). I began step one of data analysis by transcribing interview data verbatim. During the transcription process, I listed participants' statements considering each of equal value to the next. Repeating or overlapping statements were removed to reduce redundancy

(Creswell, 2007). Step two was to read and review all of the data (Creswell, 2014). The data was reviewed to gain a general idea of how the participants talked about their experiences.

Step three involved coding the data (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) defined coding as “the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text and assigning a word or phrase to the segment in order to develop a general sense of it.” The data was analyzed manually, or in other words analyzed by hand rather than by computer, with particular attention given to topics found in past literature. Saldana (2009) confirmed that manual coding gives the researcher more control and ownership, particularly for novice researchers.

Step four was to use the coding process to generate categories, known as themes, for analysis (Creswell, 2014). During the coding process, I made notes on printed hard copies of the interview transcripts to begin organizing potential themes. An emergent coding technique was used to identify key themes in the transcribed interviews. The comprehensive list of participant data and the researcher’s observations were identified and compared to determine and allow for key themes to emerge as is consistent with qualitative data coding and analysis (Creswell, 2007).

The themes developed during coding were also analyzed using a pattern matching technique to recognize categories of data already identified in previous literature. Yin (2014) described a pattern matching technique as one where the researcher compares patterns from the findings of the case study with a priori patterns decided upon prior data collection. The pattern matching technique was used with particular attention to how

focus group and individual interview data compared with recent literature on the socialization of Whiteness, with specific attention to the examination of White supremacy in higher education. The themes specifically found in literature on Whiteness that related to this study were *the minimization of race and racism* (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Cabrera, 2014b; Morgan, Zimmerman, Terrell, and Marcotte, 2015), *normalizing Whiteness* (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Cabrera, 2014b), and *the role of racially segregated environments in perpetuating White supremacy* (Cabrera, 2014b; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004). *Student self-governance* emerged as a theme representing how fraternity participants established rules and order in regulating behavior based on race and racism.

Step five included deciding how to represent the themes from the study (Creswell, 2014). For this study, I presented a detailed discussion of the themes complete with a total of ten subcategories divided under each primary heading in the results section or chapter four. Step six involved interpretation of the results (Creswell, 2014), which was summarized in the discussion section of chapter five.

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Subcategories</u>
Student Self-Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of racism • Public relations • Rule setting
The Minimization of Race and Racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color-blindness • Reframing and relative diversity

Normalizing Whiteness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance • Norms and values
The Role of Racially Segregated Environments in Perpetuating White Supremacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tradition and regional influence • (lack of) Engagement with diversity • Perception that people of color are combative

Table 3.5. Thematic Analysis

Trustworthiness

The common concerns or limitations frequently cited in case study research include the lack of rigor, confusion about what actually constitutes a case study, an apparent inability to generalize findings, case studies can take too long and/or have unmanageable amounts of data, and an unclear comparative advantage or lack of intervention or control (Yin, 2014). I addressed these concerns by adhering to the criteria for rigorous qualitative methods. The four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research are: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Yin (2014) recommended addressing these elements of trustworthiness in phenomenology and case study research.

Credibility involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are believable or credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A method used for this study to address credibility was to triangulate sources in both focus groups and individual interviews to

see if conversations shifted or if the data were consistent. This data was triangulated with field notes from observations and the documents collected during data collection.

Credibility was also achieved through a process of member checking, a practice of preserving the participants' explanation of their actual experiences (Creswell, 2007). I checked with participants after each interview and observation to ensure credible sources. I emailed each participant a transcribed copy of the interview for their review. They were asked to review in full detail for accuracy and respond back to me with any comments or suggestions.

Transferability was the extent to which the results can be generalized or transferred to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A researcher can enhance transferability by adequately describing the research setting, the participants, the assumptions, and any other information pertinent to the study so that it can be replicated in other environments. I have achieved this in the methods section of this study.

Dependability was how the researcher accounts for changes within the context of the study. Dependability was achieved through using the case study protocol as advocated by Yin. Yin (2014) defined the case study protocol as the "procedural guide" to a study (p. 250). A case study protocol should have four sections: an overview of the case study, data collection procedures, data collection questions, and a guide for the case study report (Yin, 2014). The protocol is designed with a single case study in mind, but can be replicated for the multiple case study format chosen for this study. The case study protocol can be interpreted as a guide and the rationale for this study. Stake advocated

that the case study protocol is detailed enough to define the research questions, adequately define the case, and prepare sufficient data sources.

Confirmability referred to the degree to which the results can be confirmed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researchers can document procedures to allow for other researchers to review. Results are strengthened through the triangulation of data through using various and multiple data sources to confirm assumptions (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, I practiced reflexivity in my work to make biases known, to the extent possible. I documented my reflexive process throughout the study, which can serve to both enhance and limit the study.

Role of the Researcher

There is a significant amount of subjectivity in qualitative case study research as the researcher carries biases, assumptions, and tacit knowledge to any researchable inquiry. It was important to acknowledge the subjectivity in my work, specifically regarding my own experience as a fraternity member and a previous fraternity and sorority life advisor. Reflexivity creates a level of transparency, deconstructing the researcher's privilege as an authority (Pillow, 2003). Through the act of honest reflexivity and exposing my own beliefs and biases, I believe I can best tell the story of the participants through their own words (Hsiung, 2008).

I joined a social fraternity during the first year of my undergraduate academic career. I had an extremely positive experience, and continued to advise, serve, and devote portions of my personal and professional time to working with fraternity men. My experience as an undergraduate fraternity man led to my interest in a career as a fraternity

and sorority life professional. I believe fraternities are effective vehicles through which to develop students in positive and transformative ways. I see fraternity culture as highly influential on most college campuses, but fraternities choose whether or not they have a positive or negative influence on the campus racial environment.

It is important to note that I am a member of ABC fraternity, and the current faculty and staff advisor of the Southeastern fraternity chapter. In large part, my relationship with the undergraduate men and fraternity leaders led to their agreement to participate in the study.

My experience as a fraternity and sorority life professional and a current advisor for one of the fraternity chapters provided advantages in gaining access and eliciting a response from participants during this study. Pritchett (2007) provided a list of several advantages to her close, personal relationships with interviewees and experience in the world of sports. Among others, she lists access, a tacit knowledge of events and situations, and a greater comprehension of sports vernacular (Pritchett, 2007). Students involved in fraternities and sororities, similar to student athletes, possessed a shared and unique lingo and are distrustful of outsiders. My experience as a fraternity member during my undergraduate experience and my former professional position as a fraternity and sorority advisor gives me a great deal of trust and access in working with this population of students.

Perhaps of most salience to this project was my identity as a White male. I was able to utilize my privilege as a White male to speak with fraternity students, particularly those who identify as White, to gain valuable access to data not afforded to scholars of

color. It is crucial that I acknowledge these opportunities as Pritchett does within her work.

My identity as a White male made the participants more comfortable in speaking to me about race. Scholars who study race are typically scholars of color, which would prohibit White identified participants from speaking openly about their racial experiences. I identified myself as White prior to each interview, and informed the participants that my objective was to learn more about race and how race is experienced within predominantly White fraternities.

My personal journey unpacking my own Whiteness was a challenging process. I first studied race and learned of White privilege over 10 years ago in graduate school. My first encounter with the subject was one of denial and anger. Over the years, I have continually unpacked the privilege I carry with me as a product of my skin color, and through that constant examination, I have learned to deconstruct mine and other White folks' attempts to deny or defend the privilege we unjustly receive. This study is an attempt to further deconstruct the Whiteness I view in a fraternity system I am passionate about improving and reforming.

Chapter Summary

Chapter three consisted of the methods and research design for this study. A qualitative research design was chosen to assist in making meaning of lived experiences. A phenomenological case study approach was utilized, to blend elements of phenomenology and case study. Phenomenology focused on understanding participants' lived experiences of the group socialization process, while exploring the meaning behind

those experiences. Case study allowed the researcher to examine the group socialization in depth to determine what, if any, impact race had on initiated new members of both ABC and XYZ fraternities at Southeastern University. The phenomenological case study approach was the most effective in analyzing two specific fraternity new member recruitment and education programs to determine if race was a salient factor in the group socialization process during introduction to the organization.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to critically examine group socialization and Whiteness within narratives on race and the concept of fit from male fraternity members in traditionally White fraternities. This chapter presents the results of the current study. The results were divided into four major themes: (a) *Student Self-Governance*, (b) *the Minimization of Race and Racism*, (c) *Normalizing Whiteness*, and (d) *the Role of Racially Segregated Environments in Perpetuating White Supremacy*.

Themes

Participants were asked about their experiences with race within their fraternity. All of the participants' statements were analyzed into 10 subcategories that were divided among four major themes. The ways that the participants discussed how they established rules and governance for their organizations was a major theme from the results of the data not found in prior literature. This theme was known as (a) *Student Self-Governance*. The next three major themes were based on literature on race in homogenous White environments and were as follows: (b) *the Minimization of Race and Racism*, (c) *Normalizing Whiteness*, and (d) *the Role of Racially Segregated Environments in Perpetuating White Supremacy*.

Student Self-Governance

Participants spoke at length about attempted methods to govern individuals within the fraternity when it came to race related incidents. The participants valued the ability to address issues internally, but often had vastly different interpretations of the type of

behavior that constituted regulation as compared to the college or university administrators and their peers who identify as students of color or other marginalized identities. This section explores the areas that impacted the students' ability to self-govern their fraternity by addressing three subcategories of *Student Self-Governance*: (a) *levels of racism*, (b) *public relations*, and (c) *rule setting*.

Levels of racism

The participants consistently spoke of racism as having at least two levels. Participants differentiated between behaviors that they deemed as actually harmful, such as using racial slurs or violent behavior, and behaviors they saw as harmless, such as racial jokes or cultural appropriation for which they felt members of marginalized identities should disregard. Many participants pointed to the idea of liberal politics and political correctness as a sign of the changing times within the current society and their university culture, and the primary reason for additional external regulation on racially charged speech.

Participants spoke at length on the perception that overt and direct racism is lacking in their predominantly White environments. Some participants even explained that racism had not reached a point where it needed to be regulated. When talking about race and racism in the college fraternity culture, Wes, an XYZ fraternity member who identifies as Black, argued that, "I don't feel like it's that large of an issue yet." The notion that participants perceive at least two levels of racism (a harmful and more direct form of racism and a more covert and subtle form that is deemed harmless) impacted the

way that participants spoke about their own self-governance of the fraternity, and how seriously they took allegations of wrongdoing.

When talking about the ABC fraternity culture, Alan suggested that “Nobody is really openly racist or anything like that,” indicating that there may be some underlying racial bias that is not spoken of or acted on in public. Chad differentiated between levels of racism as well, stating, “I’ve never seen anybody get like super racist other than like a little joke.” The idea that a racist joke is not “super racist” implies that there are certain behaviors that are deemed appropriate so long as they do not cross the imaginary line that Chad drew. Alan further drew a line between jokes and what he perceived as actual hate speech. When talking about his interactions with a Black member of ABC fraternity he said, “I don’t know, we don’t really call him out for anything that’s like actually racist.”

Chad also spoke about members of ABC joking about race, even referring to them as “racist,” but he delineated between joking around and the intention to cause harm. He said:

I don’t know, people tell like racist one liner jokes or stuff like that. Nothing, no one will really say anything really offensive or have any ill will toward someone of a different race. I guess every now and then you’ll hear a racist joke, but it’s not mean spirited or anything. I wouldn’t say in the fraternity that I hear that any more than I did at home or any other social situation. (Chad)

However, Chad addressed the concept of racial microaggressions when he explained that he saw racism in institutional culture at Southeastern. He said, “I mean, at (Southeastern) specifically, people have been graffiti-ing (an academic building at Southeastern) a lot (with racial slurs). And if you look, like, every building is named after an old racist senator.” He further added that “There’s no real victim of racism in that scenario, but it’s

kind of messed up that every building is named after some horrible slave owner.” Chad expressed an understanding that covert, subtle forms of racism can be harmful or “kind of messed up,” but he did not see a victim in that scenario of racial bias.

Alan discussed the frequency of racial joking in ABC fraternity culture, but he spoke of his willingness to intervene in situations where speech crossed the line. He said, “If it’s in really poor taste, I would definitely say something like, ‘yeah that’s really messed up to say.’ I mean, we joke around with each other all the time about race, religion, we always mess with each other about that kind of stuff anyways.” Chad claimed the racial joking was insignificant, even admitting that students of color overheard. He said, “Whenever there’s been people of a different race around, they’ve just taken it lightly. Nobody has ever been really mad or gotten in a fight about it. It’s just been lighthearted. It’s never been a big thing, I guess.” Both Alan and Chad assumed that everyone who overheard the racial joking was accepting of it because of the lack of objection in those scenarios.

Alan insisted in the individual interview that he would intervene in extreme cases, though he asserted that the racial joking in ABC fraternity rarely ever reached that level. He claimed, “If it’s something that’s really mean and pretty terrible to say then I would say something, but that’s usually not the case if there is any kind of joking going on.” However, in the group focus group Alan defended the actions of an individual at Southeastern University when we discussed a recent racially charged event where a student hung a bunch of bananas on a Black history sign on campus. Alan stated:

I mean, the way I see it is had it been a White person, I guess it’s not really known exactly who did it, even though somebody came forward. Say it was a

White person putting bananas on that sign as an open act of racism, I don't know the law exactly, but I know freedom of speech and I think that would be something that deals more with (Southeastern) reprimanding the student than anything having to do with the police. You know, obviously that's a bad thing, open racism, and pretty much interjecting negativity upon like minorities at (Southeastern) is not a good thing, but at the same time, I don't know, how far can it go? (Alan)

Chad also defended freedom of speech when he explained his thoughts on the banana incident. He deferred to law enforcement as the ultimate authority, and did not understand the university's attempt to intervene. Chad said:

Regardless though, like if the cops looked at it and it wasn't illegal, nothing about it is illegal, then why should they be persecuted? That's what the law is. I don't understand why we would make up new laws, because people get pissed off about people putting a banana on a banner. It's stupid. (Chad)

Chad admitted that he has never intervened in a situation regarding race, and probably would not. "I've never like stepped in and stopped someone making a racist joke about another race, I guess you could say," Chad stated.

Chad also reacted to the racially charged party planned by a fraternity at Southeastern University in 2014 when he stated that, "I don't necessarily think that having a party theme is a racist thing to do, but it's just that's the way it is now." Chad saw nothing wrong with the cultural appropriation from the party theme, but explained that the reactions were more of a result of political correctness. He stated:

It's like knowing the way it is now, and how like kind of liberal everyone is, it's a bad idea to do stuff like that, but I don't think it's really wrong. Nothing about their party theme suggested Black, other than that's a gang. There's nothing offensive about a gang, whether you're White or Black. (Chad)

Ben was confused about the presence of students of color at the party. He struggled with the juxtaposition that some students of color were active in the cultural appropriation, while a larger majority denounced the party. Ben stated:

There were Black people at the party. Black people were in the pictures. They were dressed like gang members too. But then a lot of the Black community at (Southeastern) decided that that was wrong and they were literally associating themselves with gang life. Like I didn't understand it at all. (Ben)

When talking about the party, some of the participants assumed the fraternity members responsible for the planning and execution of the theme meant no ill will toward students of color. The assumption that individuals had no intention to harm others with hate speech or cultural appropriation was a consistent theme in the data. Alan claimed:

You know, it probably wasn't a smart idea to have that kind of theme for a party, but like at the same time, I doubt that it was done in what was meant to be offensive by anyone. I've heard of parties where people dress up in the golf gear and the tennis outfits and stuff like that, and so you could say that's like making fun of White people but it is different, but I think everything that was done was probably not meant to be harmful. (Alan)

Victor of XYZ fraternity had similar thoughts, stating that inappropriate theme parties were more about a lack of awareness by the party planners than an intentional racist action:

I think it's less individuals actually thinking it's okay to be racist and more people not realizing that certain things have racial significance to them. Like gangs which are typically African American. And there's a lot of, I know that's still a topic, but there's a lot of slight debate around what constitutes as racism and all that. But I think in cases like that there are probably just a lot of people in the fraternity that didn't even think of that as a racist thing. (Victor)

Participants of both ABC and XYZ fraternities spoke of two forms of racism: a subtle, covert form that was deemed as unintentional and harmless; and a more harmful, overt form that participants claimed to rarely, if ever witness.

Public relations

Fraternities have a history of being portrayed negatively in the media, particularly with recent racial incidents that have made national news. The participants spoke about the need to actively address the social media of individuals within the fraternity to ensure positive public relations with both the university and the outside community. Participants expressed the desire to be portrayed positively as an influencing factor in their behavior. Participant narratives revealed the assertion that public perception on issues around race has changed, thus fraternity behavior has responded accordingly to comply with what is now considered acceptable behavior.

ABC fraternity discussed the image of fraternities as a whole and what can be done to improve that negative portrayal:

Well there's been a lot of stuff on like social media, with the whole SAE at Oklahoma. That just went viral and I think it kind of, everybody thought that was what fraternity life was about, because there's not really anything else coming out in the media with fraternity life except for something bad that's happening. I feel like that has a big pull in the media. (Dave)

Um, well the one thing is, overall I feel like society as a whole has been portraying fraternities as racist with the thing that happened at Oklahoma, the (fraternity) here when they had a (inappropriately themed party), I don't know, I feel like people want to make all fraternities into some White institution that's there to exclude other races and be racist, and what not. And I guess by recruiting people of different ethnicities you can fight that stereotype, so I'd say that's a positive for recruiting minorities. (Chad)

They say anything you ever say is going to offend somebody in some way. But I mean, if you blatantly are going out there and try to harm, especially to someone, that's where I think you draw the line. As a fraternity, I can't speak to anyone's personal beliefs, but we definitely want our image to be good with the university, with people. We want people to come out and rush and join us. And we also want people on campus when they see our letters to agree with them and be happy that we're on their campus. So I don't think like, if any issue that would bring up racial boundaries, I think it would be addressed pretty quickly. So a lot of being in the Greek system, especially here at (Southeastern) unfortunately, is people's perception of you. So I think, whether or not everyone personally agreed or disagreed with that, we would try to make the move to be as politically correct as possible. (Ben)

I don't know, it's kind of hard to do that. To go out of your way to try and you know fight the implication that you're racist because it's not like we're doing anything that's racist that we need to stop doing. You know what I mean? So it's kind of hard to fight that image when you really haven't done anything to deserve it. But I mean, I don't know, I guess stuff you're associated with you have to be really careful now. (Chad)

Dave felt that it was unfair to cast all fraternities as being similar, which he felt the media did following the racist incident at Oklahoma. He said, "I'd also like to say that now in today's climate, of course it's a dumb idea to do that, but I feel like everybody tries to brand all fraternity life like they did SAE. And all SAEs are a bunch of shithheads. I don't know. That just seems wrong to me to blame everybody for that, which is pretty much what happened."

Participants from XYZ fraternity stressed that fraternities are in the spotlight more than ever when talking about how they regulate the public image of their fraternity, while also acknowledging the need to hold themselves to a higher standard:

We're just making sure that everyone is being smart about the matter, especially in the last few years with how big this has come up as a situation on college campuses especially when that's when young adults are really starting to develop their own political views. That we need to make sure our members are smart with what they say on social media, and what they say in the community. That way, as

a member of this fraternity, even if they're not in a leadership role, they represent the fraternity and what they say, even if it's not a general view of the fraternity, it can be taken as that. (Todd)

Fraternities get a lot of big, national attention. And I think to some extent that's maybe a potential thing that we can harness positively because it means we should be raising fraternity men to a higher standard because being in that group and knowing that you are on the radar, you should hold yourself to a higher standard than you know Johnny student out there who him and ten of his friends can get together and throw their own racist party and nobody is ever going to find out about it. (Zach)

I think that's one thing that we kind of stress on, going back to how things represent us, is if someone says something, even in a joking manner, it could come back on the fraternity. So we kind of stress on watching what you say even if it's in a joking manner. (Todd)

You also, as human beings, have to call out harmful attitudes when we see them. So yes, I would say that if, in the case of SAE, a national conversation arose where people were saying are fraternities like this and in that case when people are asking those questions then I would say your fraternity should step up and say we don't hold these opinions, and we condemn that, and we don't want to be associated with that. (Victor)

Rule setting

Participants discussed the formal and informal ways in which they monitored and established rules for members of the fraternity regarding appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

XYZ fraternity participants talked about a formal process established within their organization to deal with violations of the fraternity code of conduct. Todd, in particular, described this process as he has direct involvement as a leader of the fraternity.

Todd discussed how an issue would be regulated in XYZ fraternity:

We've realized, and seen from incidents like Oklahoma, and even other fraternities here at (Southeastern), how fast something can break down. So I think

everyone, especially at (Southeastern), is realizing how fast a ship can sink. I think a lot more people are taking these matters a lot more seriously. (Todd)

I think it would depend on the extent of the situation, but in a normal situation we would bring them through our judicial board process. We have brothers from leadership positions within the fraternity and just from the general student body from all four grade classes, they all come together and think of a sanction against them. A lot of the times the sanctions would be community service, withholding any extracurricular events like brotherhoods or social outings, so it really depends on the extent of the situation. Obviously, if it is something very, very serious, then we would usually report it to the school, especially if it something that could impact the school and not just ourselves. (Todd)

While Todd emphasized that XYZ fraternity would regulate member behavior in regards to race, Zach described the process as reactive rather than pro-active. Zach discussed a specific situation with a member who exhibited racist tendencies. Zach indicated that other personality issues with this particular member made it difficult to know whether or not the fraternity would sanction or remove a more popular brother who exhibited similar behaviors. He explained that process:

If race impacts the fraternity it comes up, but it's not a pro-active conversation. So I don't know if this will come up later, but they might have mentioned that one of the members we removed had some racist tendencies, but I think there was also some bigger issues about people not really liking him in general, and him not being super positive for the fraternity, but like other members of the fraternity would call him out when he would say things that were pretty blatantly racist. He did not use derogatory words, but he would say things like, 'I hate my Indian professor. I can't understand a word she's saying.' She's Indian, and I was with him and one other person and the other person, you know because I check myself on when I do and do not correct them, and the other person said like, 'dude, that's racist. You can't say that.' And there were some times where he's made comments even during rush this semester, he kind of interacted strangely with some people of color who were at our rush events, and kind of like, 'oh, where are you from? You look different.' That kind of stuff. And people would be like, '(name redacted), you can't say this about him just because his skin is a different color.' And I think that compounded with his already like lack of social awareness, made it pretty easy for people to feel like they could correct him when he was being inappropriate, especially around race. (Zach)

Participants in ABC fraternity spoke of a more informal process for sanctioning member behavior. Several participants found it hard to believe that racial bias could come from within ABC fraternity, but insisted that the membership would punish someone who committed an incident by removing him from the fraternity.

If something actually happened, and one guy actually did something then we would (remove him) and get him out of here. That's what I would do, personally.
(Alan)

I'm sure not every guy in (fraternity with inappropriately themed party) is racist and thinks every Black guy is a gang member, but you have to do your best to stay away from events like that. Like stupid things that can make you seem racist, even though you're probably not. So I guess we're just careful with events we're a part of, making sure we're inclusive and don't violate any rules or what-not.
(Chad)

There was an argument once, the kid grew up with old traditional grandparents who grew up when things weren't racially equal in the south, and he just said an old saying that he grew up hearing. He didn't really find it offensive, but someone else did. That was like resolved very quickly. That's the only instance I can think of, like he just kind of said something that he grew up with, didn't think of it as a racial slur, but it, I guess it could be in a certain context. That's also because we're such a geographically diverse fraternity, somebody didn't see where he was coming from. And somebody said, you can't be saying that dude. (Ben)

The institutions' willingness to sanction racial incidents and bias was an element that several participants talked about as an influencing factor for their own internal policing of behavior. Chad described that when he said that, "(Southeastern) especially is cracking down on Greek life for everything, so we just have to just be really careful and not do anything stupid." He mentioned the self-interest involved in avoiding racially suggestive themes, even if he did not necessarily agree. Chad stated, "People look at everything as like targeting another race, and you just have to be really careful. Like just

looking out for yourself. So yeah, I don't know, I would try to steer clear of any racial overtones in a party theme, I guess.”

Participants were hesitant when talking about the use of “force” to regulate behavior. XYZ fraternity participants discussed problems they saw with imposing a resolution of education or training onto fraternity culture to address race related issues:

For example, just regarding music, we have people that hate country music, love country music, can tolerate it, can't. And the same goes for rap music, and things of that nature. So I don't know, I feel as if you can't really form that, I don't really know how to word it. It's not really something that you can force. (Wes)

If you could somehow get a culture where people didn't value race as much, and there weren't as many stereotypes. Where things were more economically mixed. Stuff like that. Then I think that would be the ideal situation, you know. Where you could have a more mixed group, when you look at your friend group you don't really see people as Black or White, you just have a mix of people. But the country at large isn't like that currently, so I don't know a way to make a rule or make a system that changes that without doing something that's going to negatively impact the organic, natural way that people form relationships. (Victor)

I mean it's hard, because I mean, it's a concept that you would think that you don't necessarily need to train someone on, just not looking at someone for their skin color. Personally, I don't feel like it's become that large of an issue yet. I'm not saying that it couldn't or anything like that, but I don't feel like it's that large of an issue yet to where we need to necessarily do that. (Wes)

Chad also indicated his opposition to diversity training or education within ABC fraternity because it was not an issue that he saw as prevalent in today's society:

It's not something that needs to be taught as much. People don't really grow up racist as much as they used to. It's not like you need to be taught not to be. I don't know, it hasn't really been a problem, I guess.

The Minimization of Race and Racism

Participants minimized race and racism in two significant ways. The first way was to utilize color-blind tendencies to explain their lack of bias against students of color,

particularly during the recruitment portion of fraternity operations. Participants repeatedly mentioned that race was not a salient issue in their experience or a significant topic of conversation within their fraternity. The second way in which participants downplayed the significance of race was the view that their fraternity is relatively diverse when compared to comparable organizations or the larger institutional or societal diversity numbers. These two methods make up the second major theme, which is *the Minimization of Race and Racism*. The two subcategories under *the Minimization of Race and Racism* theme are (a) *color-blindness* and (b) *reframing and relative diversity*.

Color-blindness

The subcategory of *color-blindness* fits into *the Minimization of Race and Racism* theme because of the way that participants spoke about the perception of race as a non-issue in their fraternity operations. When asked about racial attitudes, White individuals tended to describe discrimination as no longer present in American culture by explaining away most racial issues as the cause of inequities in the individuals themselves (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Many participants in this study spoke about racial issues as non-existent. Chad spoke about the sense that race does not matter in his lived experiences in ABC fraternity. Chad stated, “Um, it’s like, it’s just not really an issue at all within the fraternity.” Ben pointed out that race has never been salient to him, “Honestly, I can’t say that it’s ever been an issue in my past experience.”

Many participants hinted at notions of color-blindness when specifically discussing their recruitment of students of color. Alan expressed an indifference to recruiting new members of races other than White to the fraternity:

I mean I really have no biases as far as that goes. I've had friends of different races my entire life. So if you're of any different race and you want to join a fraternity, you know, go for it. (Alan)

Alan expanded on the notion of fit within ABC fraternity while also indicating the insignificance of race on recruitment for the fraternity:

I mean, if there's a good guy that is Black and we all like him then, yeah absolutely, he can be in the fraternity. It's not about, 'yeah we should get someone because we want the fraternity to be more diverse', it's about people, you know, that we like. (Alan)

Chad spoke about a similar level of indifference regarding race and his experience with ABC fraternity. Like Alan, he indicated that diversity is not a desired trait for ABC fraternity. Chad described whether or not diversity is valued in ABC recruitment:

I mean, I don't know. It's not really something that matters. I just wish everyone in it was cool and I liked them, and that's pretty much the way it is now. If it happens to be people of different races then it would be people of different races. But it's just not something I really think about a lot. I don't think it matters what race they are as long as they're guys that I like to hang out with. (Chad)

Chad expanded on the lack of attention given to race during the recruitment process, saying, "It's all about whether we like him and whether we think he'll be a good fit in our fraternity. Race isn't really brought up at all." Todd spoke about the pursuit of other values in XYZ fraternity's recruitment of potential new members, but he also indicated that race was not a factor:

We just take whoever we think is best regardless of race, nationality, background, or anything like that. We just take who fits our ideals, who we think would blend into the fraternity well, who would be beneficial to us improving as an entire group, and who would be part of a brotherhood that we're all proud of. I don't think we really look at who we recruit based on nationality or anything like that. (Todd)

When asked if he wished ABC fraternity would be more racially diverse than it currently was, Dave expressed no desire to change. He said, “Honestly, it doesn’t really matter to me. I like everybody who’s in it. I don’t really have a problem.”

The lack of a specific focus on recruiting students of color and the indifference to diversity in general have left both ABC fraternity and XYZ fraternity as largely White. Zach indicated that conversations about race and diversity were limited in a largely homogenous environment. When thinking about the impact of diversity on XYZ fraternity, he stated:

I think that there is a conversation about diversity, but not to the extent of what it really means and how it impacts us as a group. I think they know that some people are different, you know we have a Black guy, there’s a few gay guys, not everyone gets along and thinks about the world differently. Their idea of diversity is that we don’t all look at everything the same. I don’t know that they look at it from a standpoint of how it impacts any way we function other than that there are people who are different from themselves in the group. (Zach)

Reframing and relative diversity

The subcategory of *reframing and relative diversity* is the perception that one’s organization is diverse compared to the rest of the institution or compared to other organizations. Despite a lack of racial diversity, participants described their members as possessing diverse viewpoints on multiple issues, and applauded diversity in these settings. For several participants, diversity was reframed to allow the organization to fit within those new parameters. This follows Watt’s (2007) defense mechanisms in which privileged identities find ways to refocus the conversation on diversity to fit their personal agendas.

Several participants mentioned Southeastern's racial diversity numbers as a justification of the homogenous environments within their fraternity. When asked to describe the racial demographics of ABC fraternity, Ben pointed out the relative racial diversity of ABC fraternity in comparison to the low racial diversity at Southeastern University:

Yeah, I'd say predominantly White, but I think that goes along with the percentages here at (Southeastern) at the current time. I think we're only six percent African American at this point. But in the past three years, or four or five years, I know going from who just graduated in December and in May of last year in the last four or five years we've had three African Americans in our fraternity. Who all of them I've loved and had a great time sharing a brotherhood with. But overall, I would say we are predominantly White. (Ben)

Chad concurred with Ben's point about the racial makeup of the school:

We kind of fit the demographic of the school and Greek Life as a whole. It's not like we're excluding other races, there's just not that many other races that come out to rush or go to (Southeastern) at all. It's not known for its diversity. So I mean yeah, we have people of every race but it's primarily White. (Chad)

In comparison to other fraternities, Ben pointed out that ABC's recruitment of students of color exceeded the numbers recruited by other fraternities, with which he compared:

In the past four or five years I've only seen three African American brothers, but that's a lot more than a lot of other fraternities on this campus. Sure, for numbers, I would like to see more African American brothers, but like, compared to others that is significantly more. (Ben)

Victor admitted that XYZ fraternity was primarily White, but he countered that they possessed a diverse group of White identified individuals. Victor said, "It's a diverse group of White people, so to speak. They're from all over the country and what not, but

they're all White.” Ben also spoke about the diversity in his brothers’ backgrounds when he was asked if his views on race were different than other ABC fraternity members when he said, “My fraternity in particular is very, very diverse from the entire eastern seaboard to the entire country to the west coast. We have guys from everywhere.”

Normalizing Whiteness

Homogenous White environments have the tendency to normalize Whiteness in a variety of ways. Whiteness and the White experience are normalized for many White students on college and university campuses when they are insulated from students of color on a daily basis (Cabrera, 2012). White becomes the standard for which others are compared when students in predominantly White environments are largely removed from the experiences of students of color. Whiteness is normalized in settings like predominantly and traditionally White fraternities through the acceptance of only those students who assimilate into the already established culture, and through the continued reinforcement of norms and values that contribute to the fraternity culture. The two subcategories under the *Normalizing Whiteness* theme explored here are (a) *acceptance* and (b) *norms and values*.

Acceptance

Several participants spoke of the acceptance their fraternity culture breeds for all students, including students of color, if they assimilate into the already established culture of the organization. Ben spoke about the type of fit that he looks for in a potential ABC member when he said, “I think a lot of what we look for in a guy is like one if they mesh

with the current guys that we have, you know.” Wes caught himself when talking about meshing with everyone within XYZ fraternity:

If you can kind of connect with, ah, it’s so hard to talk about because, I can’t say if you can connect with the majority of us, because there are tons of people who can’t connect with every single person. And there’s obviously cliques between every single large group of people. I don’t know. (Wes)

Participants discussed the combination of attributes they look for in a new member. Ben talked about what he looks for in a potential ABC member while acknowledging the difficulty in determining fit in the short amount of time fraternities have during the recruitment process known as rush. Ben spoke about relying on first impressions and appearance:

When you come out to rush it’s all about first impressions unfortunately. We only have those two hours for two days at smokers before we give you a first round invite so it is like all about first impressions, you know. Part of it, you want to hold yourself to a certain standard, you look nice, look presentable, coming out and you can hold a conversation with the brothers. We want guys there who can get along with us. It’s not necessarily like oh he hunts, I hunt, that’s great, you’re in. The way we say it during voting is I would invite this guy over to my house to hang out. If you can’t come over, have a conversation, and just hang out, and we don’t feel like he will represent our chapter well, then we don’t want him. It’s all a combination of moral standards, stuff like that. Can we invite this kid in, trust him to uphold our values, and keep our image going? (Ben)

Dave relied primarily on gut feelings when determining fit for potential new members in ABC fraternity. He said, “Just someone who’s not really over the top. Just a nice, friendly person who doesn’t seem too weird to me.” Victor admitted the incongruence between selecting new members based on fit when the majority of the established fraternity members are homogenous in identities when he talked about the qualities XYZ fraternity looks for in recruitment:

So I would say that we strive for, when you're selecting people to be in the fraternity, you're looking for each individual person and how they fit in the fraternity, you know. It's a social group, it's a group of friends, so you're looking at a person and saying do I want to be friends with this person and hang out with them. And so to a certain degree, I guess, you are going to choose people more similar to you because that's how people work. So there's that aspect, which can get in the way of diversity a little bit. (Victor)

Victor explained that he expects each new member for XYZ to contribute to the fraternity, regardless of identity. Victor stated, "So I'd say yeah, we like diversity, but we're not specifically striving for it, we're just striving to have good, you know each member that we look at letting in we look to have each member be a good part of the group." However, Wes talked about the difficulty in navigating fit as a person of color in a predominantly White fraternity when he was asked if racial diversity was something that XYZ fraternity sought in its membership. Wes said, "I mean, me personally, being Black, I don't want to, being a person of color, I don't want to be given something just because I'm a person of color, that's not what I want. I mean I want to be the man for the job." Zach wondered out loud during the XYZ focus group interview if he would have been an accepted member of the group if he did not contribute as much as he did in his role with the fraternity. Zach claimed, "I proved myself as a valuable member of the group by getting involved and helping people out and doing those things, so I don't think that that was an issue, but I think if I wasn't it might have been more of an issue, I don't know."

Participants had a more difficult time discussing building inclusive cultures versus being inclusive in their membership criteria. Even when the researcher asked participants to avoid discussing the number of students of color in their fraternity when they were

discussing inclusivity, the participants' conversations always came back to numbers.

Zach articulated this difference:

I think that it has to do a lot with, and my perspective I think is very different, but to me I think that you have to understand what inclusivity means first. I don't think people fully understand what that view of inclusivity is. You could be a fraternity that doesn't have any diverse identities and be more inclusive than one that has 25 Black people in it. That doesn't make a difference, in my opinion. That's why I said I think it's good to point out that the numbers are different. Just because there are people of color in the room or people that are gay or whatever other identity you want to talk about, doesn't mean you are being inclusive.
(Zach)

Todd, of XYZ fraternity, equated the lack of bias incident reporting and the strong synergy he saw among members as a sign that XYZ was building an inclusive culture:

We've never had anything reported where they felt uncomfortable from another member of the fraternity. And from what I can tell from a leadership standpoint, I think everyone has meshed together as one big brotherhood, I don't think they're being isolated out or anything like that. (Todd)

While Todd saw an extremely cohesive unit, Zach called out how excluded he felt within the XYZ fraternity culture because of his intersection of identities:

I think honestly, I feel that play out in how I fit into the fraternity, or lack thereof, because I'm older, I'm a graduate student, and I'm gay. So I have three of the like big differences in the group, and I don't feel like, unless I go to a chapter meeting or it's a formal thing, that I hear about stuff. Like I know of ways that other people communicate that are not included to everyone, so I think that to me just shows that I don't think people are actively excluding, but they just assume that if you're different there's not like a reason to bring you in. I think that's what creates the culture of fraternities being more White when they were White to begin with. And even with Black fraternities, why they stay predominantly Black because there isn't like, neither one takes proactive action to show that they're interested or open to that topic. If there was a fraternity here that would come out and say something to the effect of like, 'we fully support this' or if a fraternity went and stood at (the Southeastern University sit-in) in solidarity, I guarantee people would perceive that totally differently. And it would make a difference to students that don't go through recruitment at all because of the diversity aspect or

drop out or don't accept bids because they're afraid of that. I think that's different with people of color because there are organizations for people of color, and I know you said you're focusing on race, but especially for sexual orientation because that's something you can hide or if you're 18 years old you might not fully understand yet. So if you're trying to figure yourself out and you just perceive fraternities to be these places where men only talk about women or are exclusive or gay bash or make jokes or say things like that which I hear frequently. And like that makes you kind of hesitant to that. And so I think it's just being aware of how that impacts people. I don't think that fraternities necessarily need to go out of their way to bring in people that are different, but what I think the middle ground is just showing that you are aware of the differences that are around you, even if they're not in your own organization. (Zach)

Zach went on to wonder if him and another fraternity brother were excluded from group activities because they are gay or because they are separated from the other XYZ fraternity men. His struggle with trying to determine the cause of his inability to fit in with the other fraternity members of XYZ highlights the importance of acceptance within fraternity culture:

It's hard to know in our group because both of us who are openly gay are graduating and 22 and 24 years old, so you know, how do you know what's different because we're not freshmen living in the halls with everyone. Half of the group is friends because they live next door to each other versus the fact that we're just different. I don't know if that's just age demographics or lifestyle demographics versus actual identity things. So who knows?

Norms and values

Fraternity norms and values can be established in a variety of settings, and often have a powerful impact on the behavior of members. This section was used to better understand the appropriate behaviors that are communicated within both ABC and XYZ fraternities. This section will be organized into norms and values exhibited specifically

during the recruitment process and those exhibited following that period that summarize the general new member experience.

Norms and values during recruitment

XYZ participants discussed the advantage of a different rush or recruitment process employed by their fraternity during the first year as a colony. Rather than having fraternity men select prospective new members, full time staff members employed by the international headquarter office conducted the review for membership. Participants talked about this process and its effect on the diversity of XYZ. One participant expressed concern about the continued diversity of the group when XYZ chooses their own new members as a brotherhood. He directly addressed the semantic moves sometimes employed by privileged identities to avoid seeming racist, or in this case, homophobic.

Their conversation about the fraternity recruitment process:

People from (XYZ) national were talking about starting a chapter at (Southeastern), so they selected us. So unlike the usual process, where it's just a bunch of guys looking for people to be friends with, which is what rush is, it was two guys from nationals looking for a diverse group of people to pull from all areas on campus to really help an organization get a strong start. So I think that's a big part of it. It wasn't a group of guys looking for people who were similar to them to hang out and have a good time. It was people, it was the two guys from nationals looking to give the organization a strong start. And then the other part of that, it's just guys who are more willing to take a different look because all of us either didn't find a fraternity we fit with or weren't associated with the Greek scene at all. (Victor)

I think that they (XYZ fraternity men) didn't choose to have a 24 year old, graduate, gay guy join the group. If someone like that walked up to a tent at smokers, I don't know that they would want to give him a bid, and I don't know that it would intentionally be because of those things, but I think knowing that I've sat in that room where those conversations happen I think it would be talked about but not from that direct perspective. I think people would find a way to make that problematic in another way. Like 'oh well he's older, that might be

weird.’ Or like ‘oh, but are people going to think we’re the gay fraternity because of that?’ I know that other groups on campus here have that. (Zach)

Wes addressed the values he sought out during recruitment of potential new members. “I would say first off decent to strong grades, first off, for us at least. We actually do look for involvement, so that’s one of the biggest things – grades and involvement.” However, Wes talked about how XYZ went through a learning process in seeking out those values during their first experience with recruitment.

The biggest kind of takeaway from it was we needed more than just someone who was, at the end we banned this phrase that we didn’t want someone who was just a ‘cool guy’. There’s tons of guys out there on campus who are ‘cool guys’ and we can all get along great, but that doesn’t mean that they necessarily need to be a part of us. (Wes)

Todd expanded on the fit sought out by XYZ fraternity. Todd stated that XYZ fraternity chooses to operate differently than the norms established by other fraternities:

We want to be labeled as different from the rest of Greek life, and we need to make sure that there’s not one general stereotype about all of us. It’s like oh they did this at Oklahoma, but that’s not what we are here. We are here to promote the community through our service and through philanthropy, we’re here to actually make a difference in the area while also getting to know each other as a brotherhood. And that’s the most important aspect of it. (Todd)

Norms and values during the new member experience

Participants from both ABC and XYZ fraternities felt that their organizations benefited from a diverse membership. Participants discussed the benefits of having a diverse brotherhood in ABC fraternity, in part, because it decreases the likelihood of racial bias:

I can't say that racial inequality or undermining other races at least in my fraternity is even a thing because we're so diverse because all that we have in common is that we're cool dudes and we go to (Southeastern). I can't really say that anyone would undermine somebody because of their race because we are so diverse. (Ben)

However, participants expressed uncertainty in openly discussing brothers' views on controversial issues because of the hesitancy to engage in difficult conversations. "I can't even say that our political views would line up because that's not something we really talk about often. We stray away from that," Ben said. Ben explained that conversations about diversity never come up in ABC fraternity either. He stated, "I've never really sat down and talked with everybody about race before." Alan simply said "No not really," when asked if race was an important topic within ABC fraternity culture. However, Todd said XYZ fraternity openly talks about race. Todd stated, "Formally, I would say we do it at least once a semester, especially during recruitment to make sure that everyone is on the same page that we want to be accepting, that we are not going to stereotype against anyone because we want the most diverse."

Participants of XYZ also explained how interacting with individuals from diverse backgrounds impacted and strengthened their views while examining the benefit of having multiple perspectives in a space:

I would just say just being in such a large, different, and diverse group has gotten me to view things from a whole lot different perspective. So I don't think it's really changed my opinions of anything like that, but you definitely get a whole new view on matters, which just expands on your own beliefs and views and everything like that. (Todd)

There's also a lot of people that came from completely different areas and different backgrounds and very different beliefs. I know that yesterday in the fraternity group message, people were talking about the recent protests that have gone on at (Southeastern). And there was like, people who were getting mad at

each other, who had never, you know who were good friends and who had never gotten mad at each other before. Because they brought in different presuppositions about what was going on. So I would, to wrap it all together, I would say the fraternity doesn't have any specific culture in terms of attitude towards race. Individuals in the fraternity have brought that, but there's not like there's just one, there's a lot of different ones. (Victor)

It allows us to grow as a fraternity because it allows us to attract different people to it. Instead of everyone becoming very like minded and then you kind of start down a path that you may not want to go down where you become pretty much all the same person, which is not really what we want to do. And then just casually, I think everyone is pretty comfortable talking with one another about those subjects. (Todd)

While participants generally agreed that inclusivity was desired, Zach expressed frustration about the lack of intentionality behind the measures of inclusivity within XYZ fraternity:

Why can't we be a group of people that are all different sorts of thought processes? I don't think you can probably find people who think about life differently than me and (Todd) do. But we get along and have fine conversation and most of the time enjoy each other's company. So I think it happens, but I think we don't realize it's already happening. I think there's not like a good conversation about why that's a valued thing. (Zach)

The new member education process was generally devoid of any formal diversity or inclusion education for both ABC and XYZ fraternities, but participants from both organizations talked about the other ways that their education process and values system impacted their views on diversity. Zach talked about his perception of the priorities of the pledge education process for XYZ fraternity:

I think the focus, at least from my perspective of the pledge period, is proving loyalty to the fraternity. People want to see that they are going to be loyal, that they're committed to being with the group, that they're learning stuff, but even that I would say that people are borderline more concerned with people proving their loyalty and that they're going to fit in then they are actually learning the

customs and traditions of the group. I think there's very brief conversations about being proper, and what that means to be a gentleman, at least within (XYZ fraternity). We don't really touch on, like, how that could boil down into inclusivity or diversity. The closest we get is telling people like, 'you're probably not going to like everyone, so just remember that throughout this process.' There's 60, 70 guys, and more in the future, so how do you navigate that difference when you don't agree with someone, but I don't really think it's focused around what we would define as diversity. (Zach)

Zach indicated that the XYZ fraternity education taught respect, albeit not directly from the lens of inclusivity:

We do talk about values a lot. I think that one thing we try and touch on a little bit is the whole like friendship and excellence thing, and respect, and those being part of our value system. So like trying to bring that up. I try to work that in a little bit, but I don't think that we specifically address it from a diversity lens but I think we do talk about it from the fact of yeah, like being a gentleman and treating people with respect, and what that means in a brotherhood kind of a thing. (Zach)

Chad felt that the ABC fraternity mottos and teachings directly and indirectly contributed to inclusivity. Chad stated, "A lot of it is respecting your brother, and when you have brothers who are minorities you have to respect them regardless of what not. So it does teach you not to be racist, yeah, indirectly." Chad thought the ABC fraternity values system, in particular, directly led to anti-racist teachings:

We specifically have the seven core values... I mean if you really do follow those things, you can't be racist and be all of those things. So I mean I think that goes with part of it, you learn to be a man and better person. Part of that is being accepting of everyone regardless of their skin color and what not. (Chad)

The Role of Racially Segregated Environments in Perpetuating White Supremacy

Both ABC and XYZ fraternities operated as racially segregated environments. The existence of the organizations as predominantly White institutions led to the

portrayal of people of color in a largely negative light through stereotypes that went unchecked. Under this theme, the areas of (a) *tradition and regional influence*, (b) *(lack of) engagement with diversity*, and (c) *the perception that people of color are combative* are explored.

Tradition and regional influence

Tradition and history were important talking points for participants within both ABC and XYZ fraternities. The way things have always been done guided a lot of conversation about the way things would be in the future.

When discussing recruitment, participants of ABC fraternity discussed why their organization remains racially homogenous. Alan said, “But I mean it’s just kind of the way it works out, most of the White kids rush.” History was prevalent in the conversations with ABC fraternity members:

I mean there’s Black fraternities that a lot of the Black kids are going to join. So it’s just, I don’t know, IFC rush is a predominantly White thing, and it’s always going to seem racist when you have a group where 95% of the kids are White, but that’s not, even if you take all the minorities that come through rush, you’re still going to be a 95% White fraternity. And that’s not necessarily, that doesn’t mean you’re racist. It’s just the way it is. (Chad)

I think that’s just the history. It’s not even necessarily a thing that anyone does on purpose, but it’s just the way the south evolved through the 60s and 70s. It’s just how Greek life came to be. There’s a lot of Black only fraternities and sororities, and not necessarily White only, but predominantly White because that’s the way they progressed at the school’s history. We worked with one of the Black fraternities raising money for our fraternity, so I don’t think it’s necessarily that we don’t want to see them or interact with them it’s just the way that the Greek life here has evolved we just don’t necessarily interact that often. (Ben)

I think that probably has a lot to do with the history of it. I’d say, probably I don’t know twenty or thirty years ago, fraternities probably were pretty racist. Just from what I gather. But I think just from the history of like fraternities being a White thing, I guess scares minorities off from trying to join them when now I know

mine and most other fraternities are very accepting of minorities. I think maybe they're just kind of scared off from the stigma of them being a White institution. (Chad)

Alan suggested the reason some students of color are unwilling to commit to predominantly and traditionally White fraternities is "Just because it's not something that people do that often." Dave suggested that it might be more because of recent racially charged incidents that occurred nationally. "Probably they have seen things like the Oklahoma thing on social media and probably intimidated by it, and things like that. I know I wouldn't be excited to join a fraternity if I saw something like that and I was another color."

Some of the ABC participants pointed to the institutional culture to blame for the low percentage of students of color within Southeastern's fraternity and sorority membership:

I think part of it is getting the numbers up for students. If the numbers aren't there for the student population then they're definitely not going to be there in the Greek system because I mean the Greek system is how many percent of the students? It's an unbelievably low number of the students. If we don't have the numbers in the student population then I definitely don't expect to see it in the Greek system because the Greek system makes up like, I know it's under 20 percent of the student population. (Ben)

We obviously would have more diversity in the fraternity if more kids came out to rush that were not White. Which I think is the main problem, is getting kids out to rush who aren't White and I don't know how you would necessarily do that. But I mean, I think as time progresses it will kind of happen on its own. People will, more people will come out to rush who aren't White. Fraternities will become more diverse. That will bring even more kids out. It will become a much more diverse system as time goes on. And I think part of that is on the university. They have affirmative action and all that stuff, trying to get a good, diverse mix of people. So I think that's the main thing, trying to reach out to all groups, even minorities maybe especially, trying to get them to come out to rush to be part of Greek life. And I think as a whole, if it became more diverse, people would be

less quick to assume that they're racist. And accuse them of doing racist things, and in some cases actually doing racist things, that would happen less. So I mean I think, I don't know, I guess the university should just try and reach out to people and minorities and let them know that Greek life isn't a White thing, it's for everyone. If you fit in, you fit in regardless. So yeah. (Chad)

Alan suggested that ABC's reputation as a "southern fraternity" could impact the willingness of students of color to consider going through the recruitment process. "We do sometimes get the reputation as a southern fraternity. We do have a lot of guys from the south, but we're pretty diverse. So they could hear that and not come rush us or something like that, but that's not how it is." Ben also thought southern history had something to do with the current racial climate:

I think just because of the past, not necessarily the present, but just the past. Those two groups were very segregated, especially in the south. So more of it now is more tradition, just people are set in their ways. I don't think it's necessarily that people are opposed to the idea, but Greek life in the south especially is very traditional. Father – son, mother – daughter, stuff like that. Legacies and all that. I think the tradition just carries on. That's a lot of it. I think it's just about breaking down those traditional values. (Ben)

Chad could not quite put his finger on the reason, but he also pointed to southern culture as an influencing factor in race relations:

I don't know. I guess down here it's like people are a lot more conservative as a whole. I'm from up north and it's a lot more liberal. I don't know. It's not that I've come across people who are racist down here, there's just not as much diversity. I couldn't tell you why that is, to be honest. It's definitely different, but I'm not sure what the reason is. (Chad)

Similar to ABC fraternity's conversation about the south, XYZ fraternity participants discussed the notion of fraternity culture reflecting the society in general.

I don't think it's a fraternity culture issue because if you go up to the northern states, because I'm from (a state in the northeast), the cultures of fraternities are so much different from down here. From the way everyone acts and everything really, the culture of them up there to here and out to the west coast. I think it's more of a society issue because the fraternities represent the societal view of the region they're from more than anything. So I wouldn't necessarily narrow it to the fraternities. I think they just reflect the society as a whole. (Todd)

I think it's hard because I think it's a, it has less to do with how the system works and more to do with how the culture works, you know. At large, it's the culture in general, you know. So I think it's fraternities aren't segregated because they're fraternities, they're segregated because our country is still a bit segregated, you know, with White people generally hanging out with White people and Black people generally hanging out with Black people, and so on and so forth. And there's like economic reasons, there's cultural and psychological reasons, there's a bunch of factors in that. So I think those are the reasons, and not the fraternity system, per se. (Victor)

Victor even discussed the current political climate as a factor influencing the way diversity and inclusion is discussed on a college campus:

The idea of diversity, and like that type of thing has become so politicized that it's difficult now. For example, someone like me, I consider myself very middle of the road politically. Like with the (Southeastern University incident) for example, I largely agree with a lot of the things they are calling for, but at the same time, I wouldn't bring that up in a conversation with a lot of my friends who are very conservative politically because I know that just to say the word diversity has become so politicized in like American culture right now. You have to be very careful if you want to have a productive conversation about stuff like that, so you don't immediately turn people off and push people away. So for the fraternity for example, if you're a fraternity you say you want to open ourselves up to more people of color, more people with other sexual orientations or what not, we're not saying we're trying to recruit those people necessarily specifically opposed to other people, but we want them to feel comfortable coming in and being part of us so that way we have them to choose from. And so one of the ways you can do that is you can make an announcement as a fraternity and say, 'oh, we're open to diversity' but then because of the current American political culture you now have a lot of people who see that and say 'oh, so they're a bunch of liberals' you know. Which I kind of think is stereotyping, I don't really agree with that view, but that's gonna happen. You have to be realistic and say, that's going to happen, especially in (the city and state of Southeastern University). So every single thing you do around this whole thing, just because of the way the American culture is, has its costs and benefits. (Victor)

Conversations about regional diversity and southern culture led to some time spent talking with participants about the Confederate flag. Southeastern University had a recent incident with the Confederate flag on campus when the flag was hung on a flag pole outside of an academic building in 2015 in what was thought to be a racially motivated gesture. ABC fraternity participants shared their thoughts on the Confederate flag and its impact on race:

I mean to me it's like not really a symbol of the civil war or racism, but I think of it more as the southern flag. And I like it, I don't think it should be taken down from places. If it really is causing that much offense to people, then by all means take it down. But yeah, I mean, some guys will sport the southern flag in their room but it's not much to do with a racism thing and more to do with the south and the culture of the south and kind of living that. (Alan)

I think it's part of everyone's culture. It's part of the history of this country. I'm definitely one of those guys, you kind of run into people who think differently of it, but I don't think it's a racially immoral symbol. I don't think it stands for racism whatsoever. Slavery was going to die out anyway whether that war was won or not, it just wasn't economically efficient once you reach a certain point in time. That just represents a certain part of our country who wanted states rights and less overseeing government. Which I agree with a lot of political views today. I wouldn't say that it needs to be flown for a political party or anything but that's part of our history. You can't not teach slavery and the civil war in history books, so for that flag to offend somebody, I mean I can't tell you how to feel but I don't think it's a very racially significant symbol. (Ben)

Like, I don't know, I thought it would be more of a thing down here. It seems like people who have it aren't necessarily racist, I think they just are against the whole censorship there's been lately. And like personally, I think you should be able to fly it, it's up to you. A lot of people argue that the civil war is about states' rights. That's up to however you want to interpret it. But I do agree with like banning it from the state buildings. I think that was the right move, but you have to respect freedom of speech, and I think a lot of people who fly it are just kind of saying that. Just saying F you to all the people who are super politically correct and get offended by everything. (Chad)

While ABC participants generally spoke positively about the flag, several participants

also admitted that the flag could be interpreted a different way:

Yeah, it definitely could be. I think it's all how you take the flag and use the flag. If you're running around with your rebel flag, waving it and saying a bunch of racist stuff then yeah, obviously that's terrible. I think more the way I see it I think it just represents the south. (Alan)

Uh, yeah. I think a lot of people view it as racist. But I don't know, I don't know anyone who does that. But yeah, it couldn't help, it wouldn't make people think we were more inclusive. But I don't think it would indicate that we're racist if someone were to do that. I think a lot of people just view the south as it's own thing and want to make a distinction between themselves and the north, I guess. (Chad)

Chad expanded beyond southern culture to talk more about exclusivity within fraternities in general:

Yeah, I mean you can kind of tell. Even by the way a kid dresses. If they're wearing like six inch shorts and that kind of stuff. But yeah, I mean, in general it's just that people are more conservative, into hunting and fishing, and all that stuff. I don't know, it seems like, I mean I don't want to stereotype, but it seems like they're more racist, I don't know. It's like a stereotype, but it seems like those groups, the fraternities here that are super exclusive and admit based on where they're from, they're probably going to be exclusive based on who you are as well. I don't think it's necessarily, I don't think the problem is that they're southern, I just think that they're just really exclusive and if they're exclusive in one area, then they probably are in another. (Chad)

Chad further explained the exclusivity factor within what he called "upper tier" fraternities:

Yeah, so as a northerner, I guess, there's only certain fraternities you can rush. I think those ones that are all southern or all from one area, they're also in general the better ones - the higher tier. So I think you probably do see more diversity in the lower tiers, but that's just because the upper ones are more exclusive as a whole. (Chad)

As a result of the selectivity of fraternity recruitment, participants discussed how racialized fraternity culture can be:

Yeah, I don't know, like they may only take kids from one area of high schools where everyone knows each other. That might be a White area. So they don't get a lot of kids coming out to rush. (Chad)

I think, you know, just to start off, fraternities, culturally, have been a white, southern thing. So it's something that the White southern parents would tell their kids about when they were in it. You don't get that on the other side as much. There are also Black fraternities. And I think there are other fraternities, I have a friend at another school and he's in a Jewish fraternity, I'm not sure if we have that here or not to be honest. There's other groups, specifically for other racial groups so I know that takes away some of it to a certain degree. And you know people tend to hang out with people like them. So fraternities have kind of become a place for White southern people to hang out with each other. (Victor)

Some XYZ fraternity participants turned inward to reflect on the fraternity culture of racism that has developed rather than relying solely on institutional or regional culture:

I do think it's more of a culture problem of everything than it is a fraternity problem, but I have seen other instances of things where I think a specific fraternity culture develops. So I wonder if there's like a minor piece, but a small piece of it that's there too with that. Because I know things like binge drinking, is also that's a college problem not a fraternity problem, but fraternity culture has taken it to another level even. Like you've heard of things like TFM (TotalFratMove.com), you know things like that, there's a certain fraternity mentality that's created exactly that – a fraternity culture. And a lot of the things in it, I don't like that much honestly. So I consider that fraternity culture specifically. A lot of the problem there starts with high schoolers, high school guys seeing things that aren't actually really going on at colleges all that much but they perceive as being what it means to be a fraternity person. This is what I have to do to be cool in college. You get a mentality growing that way, those kids then go to college and problems spread. (Victor)

I think that there is definitely this thought of I think whether or not we do it intentionally there is definitely praise for being the frat guy, right? I mean I think the only thing we don't want to do is to be too ridiculously rowdy, we try and reign that in a little bit, but there are very frequently moments where some of us will challenge that when people say, 'well, this is what the other fraternities do.'

And like that, as a new group, that was a big thing that a lot of us came in on, is that we don't want to always be functioning from that mindset. (Zach)

When specifically addressing inappropriate party themes, Zach discussed how that mentality has become engrained in fraternity culture, "I think that was just like 'ha ha, let's dress up in these costumes and party together.' Because that's what everybody in Greek culture does, right? Pick a theme, have a mixer, dress that way, go do it." However, Zach reflected on what administrators and advisors are teaching White students about inclusivity. He wondered, "But I think all we teach people about those is how to be politically correct about it, right? You can't dress up like Mexicans because it's gonna offend the Mexicans. We don't teach them why that's offensive, we just teach them not to do it."

(Lack of) Engagement with diversity

The lack of racial diversity in ABC and XYZ fraternity membership led participants to recall a dearth of opportunities to discuss race with other members. Ben of ABC fraternity stated that, "For us, it never really comes up like that often, as a brotherhood, and I've never really sat down and talked with everybody about race before." Dave of ABC fraternity also indicated that conversations about race do not typically occur. He explained, "Um, I don't know. It's something that's not really brought up a lot." Victor suggested that recent current events at Southeastern were the primary reason that brothers of XYZ fraternity were having conversations about how race impacted their fraternity. When asked if conversations about race come up often, Victor responded:

Not really. You know part of it's probably because, like I said, we don't have a ton of racial diversity. There are just a few members who are minorities and stuff. In fact, I would say that the discussion yesterday was the first time that people have talked for a prolonged time about anything having to do with race. Yeah, I think that was the first time. (Victor)

The ABC fraternity participants became animated when we discussed the current protests at Southeastern University. They explained how they withdrew even more from interacting with people of other races because of their perception of the current events. Dave said, "I think it's partly because of things like this (the current protests), people are scared to even..." Ben jumped in and finished his sentence, "to move those cultural boundaries?" Dave finished by saying, "Yeah. I think that everybody is scared that they're going to get in trouble in some way, get kicked off campus, like they just don't want to have anything to do with it."

Participants discussed the notion that discussing race as a White identified student can be uncomfortable. When asked if he was uncomfortable discussing race, Dave of ABC fraternity responded, "Yeah, I guess. I don't really like to get in the whole Ferguson topics or stuff like that. Yeah." Participants from ABC fraternity discussed their comfort level with discussing race or interacting with people of a different race:

One of my good friends, he's Black, and I tried to get him to come to our fraternity. He didn't have the GPA requirements to rush this semester, so he couldn't. I know he would have liked to rush. So I'm trying to get him to come in the fall. (Dave)

I don't find it necessarily uncomfortable, but I don't think I'm a very, I guess, informed person about it. The town where I come from is like super diverse, I guess. It's like 40% Asian American, like 10% Black, it's like a real melting pot, I guess you'd say. So everyone is equal. My friends at home, kids of every race in my friend group. I have never seen any racism or anything like that, at home. So I guess I'm not someone to talk about bigger issues when people talk about police

brutality and race, and stuff like that. It's just not something I've been exposed to very much. (Chad)

Todd described conversations about race in XYZ fraternity as occurring very naturally in informal settings. Todd stated, "Casually, I think everyone is pretty comfortable talking with one another about those subjects." Victor of XYZ fraternity countered that conversations about race do not come up, but he felt that it was not because people are uncomfortable, but because race is often not a salient part of White identity:

I don't think people are stopped by it being uncomfortable, you know. I don't think people are saying 'oh we should talk about race but it would be uncomfortable.' I think it just honestly doesn't occur to people. I think yesterday it got a bit uncomfortable because there were people disagreeing with each other. And so there was a bit of hostility and tension around that. But in general, I would say the reason that race doesn't come up is less, it doesn't have anything to do with comfort, it's just not on people's minds as much. (Victor)

Wes discussed conversations about race with White brothers from the lens of being the only student of color in XYZ fraternity. When asked if conversations about race ever came up, he laughed, and said:

Okay, so it does, but never in a negative light. It does but it's always some joke behind it. It rarely ever goes too far. I don't know if that's just with me just cause I've dealt with this sort of thing my whole life, but for example, I mean I'm a person that like brings it up myself, just to mess around and be funny. For example, at our last chapter meeting, one of our brothers brought up how, you know as a fraternity we should be very aware of what is going on at the (Southeastern university building) sit-in, and just understand you know basically what is going on and how organizations like ours, for example, are kind of like, what did he say, it's just, I guess we're kind of like the White group, kind of like the stereotype that brings that whole sort of, I guess to put it into like without having better words, bringing the African American community at (Southeastern University) down. He's like speaking this out loud to the fraternity, I was sitting in my chair like just going like this (hand raised), just going 'uh what.' But you

know a lot of guys got a laugh out of that. But no, it comes up and it's barely ever in any negative light. Like you said with the questions, I've had some brothers come up to me and ask me, for example, about the (Southeastern University building) sit-in because I am Black, which is fine. Obviously, I would be more in touch with what's going on then they would. Most likely at least. And I'm happy that they have the comfortability to do that, at least. You know, I'm their brother, and I'm completely fine with that. (Wes)

Zach explained how having a voice in the room willing to challenge and speak up would be beneficial to fraternity culture. Zach stated:

There's not someone to tell them to stop. Especially when I think about the (inappropriate theme) party here, I don't think anybody was like, 'ha ha, I don't like Black people, let's do this party.' It was just like we don't understand how gangs relate to the bigger issue of racism as a whole. Racism to most of my brothers is like saying the N word or like blatantly saying I hate Black people. The ideas of microaggressions or anything like that is not even anywhere on the radar for most White fraternity men, so I think that, and even for some fraternity men of color, I would argue who are younger or haven't even had that conversation or been challenged on that yet. So I think it's just not being challenged on that by people around you on a daily basis, and not feeling it yourself. Of course stuff like that could pop up. (Zach)

Zach suggested that increasing the number of underrepresented populations in traditionally, predominantly White fraternities would serve as a helpful solution toward encouraging privileged identities to engage with difference. Zach claimed:

I really do think getting members of minority groups in fraternal organizations is helpful, but I also understand that you have to break the cycle somewhere else to get them to want to join that group. I really do think it's important to sustain that conversation and make people understand why it's important. And really just educate them on what exists. I really don't think that everybody is ever going to believe the same thing around does oppression exist, etc., etc. but I think they're not even being challenged to think on systems that exist in our society or how they are benefitting or not because they're all people that are in majority identities, most of the time. I really do think getting members or people who can share their stories with them and have sustained time around them is really important.

Zach also felt that interacting with diverse individuals would be beneficial and self-rewarding when fraternity members eventually graduate and look for employment:

I think at the very core of it, good luck getting a job nowadays where they don't ask you one diversity question. You know, I think whether or not it feels important to you in that moment, I think just understanding it, for me, just understanding it is at the core. (Zach)

ABC fraternity participants described how they interpreted increasing the number of students of color in traditionally and predominantly as problematic. Alan admitted that he does not invite students of color to join ABC fraternity because he does not perceive any interest. He said, "I haven't necessarily gone and asked them because they don't make it seem like they want to rush." The salience of race came up in other ways for the participants. Alan thought there was a certain comfort level for students of color being around other students of color that does not necessarily apply to White students. When I asked him why fraternities are racially segregated, Alan explained:

I really have no clue, but a guess of mine could be like when you get to college you don't really know anyone and like I guess if you're Black you meet other Black kids, it's always something in common. That's not really the same with White kids meeting other White kids. (Alan)

Wes discussed the salience of race from the vantage point that he was actually seeking out diversity in the fraternity he eventually chose:

Yeah, with (XYZ fraternity) I guess going through the rush process I mean, me being myself, an African American, that's one of the things that I looked at was how generally different the fraternity was. Because I mean no one wants to go, I mean me personally, I guess there's obviously people that do, but me personally I didn't want to go into a group with just the same type of people. Because even my friends back home, you know in high school, I was a part of a lot of, I kind of had my hand in a lot of different groups in high school and so I wasn't used to being around just one single type of group of people. (Wes)

Wes further described the fit he was seeking in a fraternity when he explained the lack of a stereotype exhibited by XYZ fraternity:

I look at there's some brothers that I have and I would immediately think that they'd be part of a fraternity and there's some that I just, probably absolutely wouldn't. And I mean I've had friends tell me that they wouldn't really guess that I'd be Greek as well. So I feel as if we don't necessarily have a stereotype yet, not to say that, you know that's from inside looking out, somebody looking at us might think the other way, but that's just how I kind of see it. (Wes)

The lack of any experience with people of different races, can be problematic for White identified individuals who draw narrow conclusions about people of color based on stereotypical views. Dave discussed how his few interactions with people of color impacted his view, but how students of color at Southeastern University began to change that:

When I was in high school, I grew up in (city and state redacted) which is like my high school was pretty evenly split as far as Blacks and Whites. And I saw a lot of really not very smart Black people. And I kind of had that perception of them. When I came to college, I guess it opened my eyes a little bit more, and I started seeing, thinking about diversity I guess, than I did in high school. It kind of broadened my sense of acceptance, I guess.

Zach claimed that his XYZ fraternity brothers possessed very simplistic views about race because they lacked the knowledge necessary to have more in-depth conversations at this point in their lives. Zach summarized XYZ fraternity members' conversations about race:

It's usually like, 'oh that's the Black fraternity, right?' when they're talking about NPHC groups or 'that's a Black party' or something like that and they kind of boil it down to being just about race a lot of times, but they don't do it with any negative intention or to make fun of another group. It's more just lack of knowledge. (Zach)

XYZ fraternity participants discussed the impact that difference has on their interactions with one another. Wes talked about how his XYZ fraternity brothers asked him questions about what other Black students on campus were thinking. Wes declared, “I can’t address an issue that someone else has had but I necessarily haven’t.” Zach addressed his perception that his XYZ fraternity brothers are well intentioned, but they are not sure how to engage difference. Zach stated:

I have heard people in the fraternity, not so much in a joking way say like ‘I don’t know how to approach a group of people that are very different from me’ and they obviously view race as something that separates them pretty distinctly. And granted that was a pretty pointed conversation talking about the sit-in and everything, but still, there were people that had some views like how do we show that we’re trying to be inclusive. (Zach)

Zach examined a story from his own interactions with XYZ fraternity brothers when he came out as gay to illustrate the type of setting that can be productive in encouraging his fraternity brothers to engage with difference. Zach explained:

I think about one particular incident where a bunch of my brothers wanted to play this game called who can get the most matches on Tinder, and they asked me if I wanted to play, and I was like alright (Zach) here’s the moment where you decide to tell them or not. And so I told them, and I was like ‘I’ll play, but I’m going to match guys. And they were like, ‘oh.’ That was only half the group we were with and so like one of those four guys told the other four guys and so I had to be like, ‘hey, that’s called “outing” and you probably shouldn’t do that.’ And we had to have a conversation about that. A lot of the conversation that night was just like, ‘what’s going on? Like what do you do’ or just talking about my life experiences and things like that, so I think if it’s in a very natural setting where they don’t feel like they’re being attacked or intimidated then we can talk about it. But it’s not like a huge thing. I haven’t had many people want to have an in-depth conversation. (Zach)

Zach expressed disappointment in the lack of interest displayed by XYZ fraternity members in learning more about him and his intersection of identities. He explained that a celebration of diversity would change the culture of XYZ fraternity. Zach stated:

I think you used the word celebrated, I would never apply that to any idea of diversity in our group. I don't think celebration is what we do around it. I think, if anything, there have been times where we overly point out some of those things and I don't even think they're necessarily identity type diversities, just different. That's what I think would change the culture is if we did celebrate diversity and talk about it and engage in a conversation. You know I've engaged in a couple of passive conversations when I've come out to people in the group at first, but I'm sure at this point everyone knows, and no one has taken any interest in talking with me about who I am as a human. So sometimes that feels a little crappy but I don't think, I don't know why that is, but it is what it is. (Zach)

Participants in both ABC and XYZ fraternities expressed that they were interested in engaging in difference in the future, but several were hesitant. I asked Alan if he would be open to ABC fraternity planning an event with a historically Black fraternity or sorority. He feared that it would not go well. He said:

I wouldn't be opposed. I think it would be a cool thing to do. At the same time, I think there would be some kind of racial tension going on there. I mean, you never really know. But yeah, I wouldn't be opposed to that. If they throw like a fun party or something like that, I'd totally be down. (Alan)

When I followed up with Alan for clarification on why he thought there would be racial tension, he explained:

I don't know if it would be as much racial tension as it would be just different. I don't know. Because it's not like Black people and White people are totally the same in every way. You know, a party or social that we can have can be totally different than what another Black fraternity would do. So there's that. (Alan)

Southeastern University made attempts in the past to provide a space for first year students to engage in critical conversations about difference through the addition of

mandatory class dialogues around race or other areas of identity. Chad discussed these dialogues when I asked him about additional education or training around diversity. Here were his thoughts:

It's a bunch of kids in a classroom and a dialogue leader, and they talk to you about issues of race, gender, and all that stuff. And personally, I didn't like it at all. I mean, it just seems like they try to force these issues on you that aren't really issues. Like they, it seems like, you're guilty until proven innocent of being racist or not inclusive. People are so concerned with being politically correct and what not that they try and force all this stuff down your throats about being all inclusive and what not, assuming you're not. To me it's just annoying. I don't need to be told that women are equal or other races are equal. I'm not an idiot. I'm not a racist asshole. I don't know, it just seems like they're trying too hard to me. And anyone who really is racist, having this hour session with the leader person who isn't qualified to be doing what they're doing, isn't going to help anything. It's just a nuisance to me. (Chad)

Members of XYZ fraternity discussed their views on mandatory diversity training or education within the fraternity:

I definitely think it would have a place. Anything that would help like that, then it definitely doesn't harm. All it can really do is benefit them. I think it really should be something required like the alcohol awareness and management thing, just to make sure that everything is going straight and smooth. (Todd)

If you're going to educate people, saying oh, this is, saying here's the evidence that there's not a difference among races, stuff like that, is less impactful. I think you need more change on a cultural level where you don't have people forming these cultural teams. Which is hard to do, because that's kind of what people have been doing for forever. (Victor)

Perception that people of color are combative

The notion that people of color were combative, particularly around issues of race, was a consistent theme with ABC fraternity participants. Dave spoke about his experiences with race when a race related incident occurs nationally:

There's just a big division in terms of everybody is friendly to each other, but then something controversial happens like somebody gets shot and it's just like this whole big thing. I don't know. I try to stay out of it as much as I can. Honestly, not a big fan of it. (Dave)

ABC fraternity participants used current events at Southeastern as an opportunity to reflect on race. When talking about the gang themed party at Southeastern, Ben felt that students of color were aggressive in addressing the cultural appropriation from the party. He explained, "The day after the party, (the Southeastern fraternity that planned the party) got called to a dialogue with like 200 Black students and I was talking to guys who had to go and they literally walked in there and started getting berated." Ben went on to explain his thoughts, "I just thought it was ironic that there was an uproar about it. I just felt like it's very opposite of their cause. I felt like they're more equating the Black community with gangs then denouncing gangs as part of the Black community. I don't know."

Ben explained that he suspected that Southeastern administrators had organized the conversation between students who were upset and the fraternity students who planned the party. Ben spoke about the situation as though he felt that students became angry out of nowhere. He stated:

I found this very silly because they got brought up the next day in a dialogue in front of 200 African American students and were pretty much, from what I was told, from the moment they were brought in were berated. And I just found it funny because here's this group of African Americans in front of this fraternity for this (gang related party) and it was like whether or not these African American students decided to have this or they volunteered to go through the university offering it to them, it was basically equating these African Americans with these gangs and with violence and everything else associated with these gangs, and I just found it pretty ironic that we're trying to break down racial stereotypes and racial boundaries and this fraternity was getting called out for having a gang

themed party and all of a sudden people said this was offensive to minorities. And I didn't understand that. Why are we making this offensive and equating them to these negative things, and I just found that to be pretty silly? Especially because there were people of other races in attendance at that party who were also just enjoying the party. So I found that to be pretty silly myself. (Ben)

ABC fraternity participants had several things to say about the protest on campus at Southeastern as a result of the incident where a student hung bananas on an African American history event banner. The sit-in and protest following the incident occurred on campus during the time that our focus group interview was held, so it provided an additional opportunity to reflect on race with the participants. Ben provided a conspiracy theory about the incident. Ben suggested, "I heard it was an African American student who did that to raise racial awareness to make this a thing." Alan backed him up saying he heard the same thing. He then added that, "This (Southeastern building sit-in) campout was planned even before that. This is just what I've heard."

Other ABC participants had strong feelings about the demands made by students upset about the racial climate on campus. Chad said, "And that whole protest is basically asking for segregation again. Like they want like their own multicultural building, they want the school to specifically hire Black professors, everything they're asking for is... Ben finished his sentence saying, "Very racially oriented rather than about equality." Chad admitted "Yeah, it's not about equality, it's about them wanting things because they're mad. I don't get it."

Alan questioned the unfair treatment that marginalized students at Southeastern receive when he explained that "Yeah, and I obviously can't speak to this because I'm

not a Black student at (Southeastern), but I don't see any student coming here and getting unfair treatment, from the school at least."

Some ABC fraternity participants were also quick to deflect blame when talking about their recruitment of students of color. Chad suggested that history could be at play when he explained the lack of students of color in predominantly, traditionally White fraternities "I think they're intimidated in some ways." Alan immediately countered that he thought students of color are to blame for that. Alan said, "Intimidation is something having to do more with them than us. Like they maybe think that we don't want more Black kids, but I would totally be open to any Black kid if he was cool and seemed like he fit into the fraternity. Regardless."

Ben suggested more time with NPHC organizations would help change perceptions on race within ABC fraternity. He said:

Racial tensions were pretty high last year just with everything that was going on between Ferguson and stuff like that. I really haven't seen any of that this year. I think we definitely need to make it a point to reach out, especially within the Greek system. There are definitely some African American based fraternities within our Greek system that kind of stay away from the rest of the Greeks. I don't know. I know I volunteered for an event making money for our fraternity and they were doing the same. And we were getting along, joking around, having a great time. I just thought that was great so maybe we just need some more intermingling, those two sides of the Greek system. Because they are in the Greek system. There are like fraternities here that are predominantly African American, so I don't see why we can't mix with them and make it a point to reach out to them. Because just volunteering with them we had a ball, it was a great time.
(Ben)

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented results on race and the concept of fit in traditionally White fraternities as told by the eight participants. The results were organized by the major

themes found in the data. The four major themes revealed in this study were: (a) *Student Self-Governance*, (b) *the Minimization of Race and Racism*, (c) *Normalizing Whiteness*, and (d) *the Role of Racially Segregated Environments in Perpetuating White Supremacy*. There were ten subcategories identified in the results. The subcategories presented in the data results were: (a) *levels of racism*, (b) *public relations*, (c) *rule setting*, (d) *color blindness*, (e) *reframing and relative diversity*, (f) *acceptance*, (g) *norms and values*, (h) *tradition and regional influence*, (i) *(lack of) engagement with diversity*, and (j) *the perception that people of color are combative*. Chapter six will discuss the findings of the study, including a discussion through the lens of the theoretical framework. In addition, the implications for future practice and policy and recommendations for future research will be considered.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand how racial attitudes were socialized within members of traditionally White fraternities through a critical examination of participants' narratives on race and the concept of fit within the fraternity. This study was constructed as a qualitative phenomenological multiple case study of students' experiences with race specifically bounded within two separate traditionally and predominantly White fraternity's new member education processes. This study used institutional theory as a theoretical framework through a critical constructivist lens to add to the body of knowledge on how White men use normative, regulative, and cultural-cognitive structures to perpetuate Whiteness.

Narratives from all eight participants in this study were presented in chapter four. From those narratives, ten subcategories were identified and divided into four major themes for analysis. The four major themes from this study were as follows: (a) *Student Self-Governance*, (b) *the Minimization of Race and Racism*, (c) *Normalizing Whiteness*, and (d) *the Role of Racially Segregated Environments in Perpetuating White Supremacy*. Chapter five will present a discussion of the findings from this study, along with implications for future practice, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the narratives of recently initiated fraternity members with a phenomenological multiple case study approach to better understand how fraternity members are socialized on race and sense of belonging specifically bounded within two

fraternities' member education processes. Participants were fraternity members initiated into the fraternity within the previous twelve months from the time in which this study was conducted. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

- 1) How do fraternity men explain the salience of race in fraternity group socialization?
- 2) How do fraternity men describe the notion of fit within their organization?
- 3) In what ways does Whiteness permeate group culture for college men in traditionally White fraternities?

This section specifically addresses the three research questions that guided this study.

Research question one

How do fraternity men explain the salience of race in fraternity group socialization?

In the theme of *Student Self-Governance*, participants discussed the ways in which they regulated behavior within their fraternity. Participants spoke about race as a “non-issue” and a topic that is seldom, if ever, discussed within their fraternity, but they were very aware of the implications of being perceived as racist by their peers or university administrators. The university's willingness to regulate racial bias or incidents regarding race was influential in the participants' response to these matters. Participants spoke about the need to avoid racial overtones in their party themes, for example, because of previous sanctions enacted on another fraternity by the university. However, ABC participants' continued mentioning of “open racism” and racism that is not “mean spirited” suggests that there was an underlying culture of racism that is intended to remain covert.

Participants discussed how little they thought about race in the theme of *the Minimization of Race and Racism*. Participants described race as not being a salient issue in their fraternity culture, while some even suggested that it had never been a salient issue in their entire life experience during or prior to college. Racial diversity within the fraternity was described as happenstance, but not something that either fraternity intentionally sought out in their membership.

In the theme of *Normalizing Whiteness*, race was deemphasized as long as members assimilated into the already established White norms and culture of the fraternity. Rather than focusing on race, participants centered on fit as the delineating factor for membership. Some participants noticed the contradictions in their views on fit and assimilation, like Wes, who noted that “there are tons of people who can’t connect with every single person.” Others, like Todd, viewed XYZ fraternity as building an inclusive culture around identity, specifically race, because nobody had complained of being isolated, even though he admitted that he had never asked anyone about their experiences within the fraternity.

Participants in ABC fraternity explained that conversations about race or other aspects of diversity were not regular occurrences for their members. They indicated that members avoided dialogues on race because of their controversial nature. XYZ participants expressed more willingness to have conversations about diversity, but they were not intentional, pro-active discussions with any follow up action. Participants outlined recent conversations among members about race and racial issues because of the increased racial tension and current protests occurring at Southeastern.

While I continually used the term, student of color, to identify any student who did not identify as White to encompass a variety of marginalized students, participants consistently referred to a Black or White binary in their language. Participants only discussed Black students when talking about non-White fraternity brothers despite the fact that both fraternities in the study had students identifying as a race or ethnicity other than Black.

The fraternity education process is another aspect of fraternity life devoid of any real commitment to diversity. The fraternity values, ideals, and teachings during the new member education processes for both fraternities focus on respect and teaching behaviors synonymous with being a gentleman, but like other aspects of fraternity culture, the teachings refrain from addressing race or diversity directly. Participants expressed no desire to change the education requirements to reflect a growing need for educating diverse citizens.

Under the theme of *the Role of Racially Segregated Environments in Perpetuating White Supremacy*, race is discussed as a salient piece of traditionally, predominantly White fraternities, in part, because of history and tradition. Participants explain the lack of students of color in predominantly White fraternities as resulting from everything from “it’s just kind of the way it works out,” to the justification that “fraternities probably were pretty racist” twenty or thirty years ago, to a rationalization that it is uncommon and “not something that people do that often.” Participants of ABC fraternity blamed a range of other factors including students of color for being intimidated because of recent racially

charged incidents within White fraternities, the low pool of potential students of color to recruit from the institution, and the pervasiveness of southern culture.

It is clear that race and racism, like discussing religion and politics at the dinner table, are still topics that many White Americans find uncomfortable to approach. Participants stated that the only conversations they ever had with fraternity brothers about race were because of the recent racial incidents and protests at Southeastern. However, the perceived racial tensions led several participants to withdraw even more from discussions on race. The discomfort and perceived combativeness led participants to refrain from the conversation because they “just don’t want to have anything to do with it.”

Participants recognized that race is a more salient topic for students of color than it is for them or other White students. Wes, who identifies as Black, commented that he looked for diversity in his choice of an IFC fraternity. However, other participants did not indicate that diversity was something they wanted when seeking out fraternity membership. Other participants mentioned their perception that Black students care more about connecting with other Black students than White students care about associating with only White students. Participants described race as a non-issue within their college and fraternity experience, but spoke about students of color on campus as making everything “racially oriented.”

Zach explained that his XYZ fraternity brothers reduced conversations and topics down to being only about race. The lack of interaction with students of color and the avoidance of conversations about race led participants to possess very simplistic and

stereotypical views of race. For example, Zach described that students would talk about an historically Black fraternity as “oh, that’s the Black fraternity, right?” or would discuss a social event planned or attended by a group of Black students as “that’s a Black party.”

Despite insisting that race was not a factor in their Southeastern experiences, ABC participants discussed race as a hostile, dividing issue on campus. Participants presented students of color as combative, as perpetuating segregation and hostility on campus, and as fabricating racial bias incidents. Participants failed to see any racism on campus and questioned the intentions of students of color when demands for equality were made.

Because of perceptions of combativeness, participants were fearful and hesitant to engage with students of color. Participants perceived a high level of racial tension on Southeastern’s campus, and thus were unwilling to make efforts to interact in any way with organizations that were filled predominantly with students of color.

Research question two

How do fraternity men describe the notion of fit within their organization?

Participants discussed race as having no impact on their recruitment of potential new members to the fraternity under the theme of *the Minimization of Race and Racism*. Participants re-centered the discussion of recruitment entirely on fit, explaining that they carried “no biases” concerning race. However, their primary concern was that students fit in with the rest of the group, the majority of whom are White. Fit was emphasized as the most desired trait for potential new members, even though participants struggled to

define exact characteristics of that fit. Participants of ABC fraternity explained fit as someone who was “cool,” well “liked,” someone people “like to hang out with,” and a “good guy.” XYZ participants also struggled to define fit although they were slightly more descriptive. Participants of XYZ described fit as someone who “fits our ideals,” contributes to “a brotherhood we’re all proud of,” someone who is able to focus on academics with “decent to strong grades,” and a student who is also able to accumulate “involvement” on campus. Neither definition of fit celebrates difference in any way.

Participants explained that racial diversity was not a desired trait within their fraternity, so neither fraternity had any plans to change their current recruitment strategy to recruit more students of color. The lack of racial diversity within each fraternity was rationalized because of the lack of racial diversity at the institution and within the other IFC fraternities.

Both ABC and XYZ fraternity participants mentioned the diversity in their group by reframing the context of diversity and presenting it as relative to the culture within which they operate. Participants mentioned the regional diversity within their fraternity, while also speaking about the advantages of possessing brothers with different ways of thinking about issues. Participants described diversity as a positive when thinking about White brothers from regional areas outside of the south or White brothers who have a different way of viewing the world, but racial diversity for brothers identifying as a race other than White was not assigned the same value during the recruitment process. Participants reiterated again and again that racial diversity was not a trait they sought during their recruitment of new members.

Under the theme of *Normalizing Whiteness*, participants emphasized the importance of sameness in a variety of ways. While not explicitly addressing race, participants explained that they were looking for someone who could “mesh” with current members, a characteristic both fraternities expressed would create one cohesive brotherhood. However, not all participants felt included in the cohesive unit. Zach pointed out that he contributed to XYZ fraternity through leadership roles, attendance at events, and a primary role in service projects, but he was concerned that he would not be accepted if he was not such a positive contributor. Zach also explained that he felt excluded from XYZ fraternity because he is older, gay, and a graduate student at Southeastern. He was confident he would not have been recruited into the fraternity if his fraternity brothers made the decision rather than full-time staff members from XYZ headquarters. Participants spoke about difference as being a positive during recruitment, but the culture within clearly valued assimilating into one united organization.

Astin (1993) pointed out that increased racial tensions on campus tended to balkanize the student body and drive students to seek out other students of their same race. Participants in this study claimed to be open to racial diversity one moment, but acknowledged their reluctance to engage with students of color because of increased racial tensions on campus in another. Participants were hesitant to engage in controversial topics on race, thus the current racial climate at Southeastern impacted how some of those participants viewed students of color on campus.

Fit in traditionally, predominantly White fraternities was described by participants as having connection to history and tradition in the theme of *the Role of Racially*

Segregated Environments in Perpetuating White Supremacy. Participants discussed how White is the norm in IFC fraternities. Some pointed to the concept of legacies, or students who have family members who were a member of the fraternity or sorority in the past, as a way that history perpetuates itself. Legacies are given preferential treatment during the recruitment process for fraternities. Others described appearance as a way to determine fit. Chad said that he could tell which fraternities were exclusive “by the way a kid dresses.” Hegemonic White culture perpetuates itself through the continued search for members who fit the already established mold through the fraternity’s history.

Fit was racialized in other ways. Participants described exclusive fraternities as recruiting from only select high schools, generally private schools that admit a high proportion of White students. Victor explained that fraternity men look for people like them during recruitment, so it was only natural that White men continued to seek out other White men for membership.

Research question three

In what ways does Whiteness permeate group culture for college men in traditionally White fraternities?

For the purposes of this study, Whiteness explores the privileged social identity (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Reason & Evans, 2007) that created a pervasive ideology of racial oppression and systematic method of protecting White supremacy. Whiteness refers to the social construction of White racial identity and White privilege as a way to study racial dominance. This study aims to deconstruct that privilege to better understand race

from the perspective of White identified individuals holding a significant amount of social and cultural capital on a college campus.

Under the theme of *Student Self-Governance*, the results suggest that incidents involving racial bias were typically governed informally by fraternity members. Participants in ABC fraternity described a culture of racial joking that was regulated by members who would intervene if jokes were in “really poor taste.” Participants spoke about the need to limit this type of behavior, not because it was the right thing to do necessarily, but because it would reflect negatively upon the fraternity if exposed. Participants spoke about the desire to appear non-racist as far more influential in their self-governance than the desire to build an inclusive or accepting environment. The notion that racial joking and stereotyping of people of color occurs in good taste and in good fun perpetuates an environment of exclusivity, leaving little room for students of any race to question or push back on those established norms.

White fraternity members provided leadership for governance without the influence of advisors or even formal rules to govern racial bias, and those leaders saw little evidence of racism within their predominantly White spaces. The inability to recognize racial microaggressions or covert or subtle forms of racism make the typical White fraternity leader a poor choice to lead regulative functions of the fraternity when racial issues arise. Both ABC and XYZ fraternities lacked an outlet for students to report issues of racial bias or racial incidents. Without a formal mechanism to report bias, fraternity leaders assumed that all members were having a positive experience.

Participants found no evidence of racism in the cultural appropriation found within fraternity party themes at Southeastern University and other institutions in recent history. There was an assumption from participants that racist actions by White fraternity men were mostly unintentional and executed with no ill will. In terms of governance, the culture perpetuated by fraternity members is one of avoidance when it comes to racial issues, with no clear desire for education about why something might be offensive or what fraternities can do to create inclusive environments.

The re-centering of fraternity recruitment to focus on a matter of fit is explored in depth under the theme of *the Minimization of Race and Racism*. By subscribing fraternity recruitment patterns to a color-blind approach in which all races are welcome as long as an individual is a good fit with the existing fraternity members, removes focus on the lack of racial diversity in the fraternity and refocuses on the qualities and characteristics in the individual. In other words, this color-blind approach to recruitment frames an individuals' inability to gain access to the fraternity as some inequity in their personality, rather than an exclusive attitude with the fraternity or its members.

In the theme of *Normalizing Whiteness*, participants explained how reliant they were on first impressions and appearance to make recruitment decisions because of limited time allotted during the recruitment period known as fraternity rush. Participants expressed that they often relied on gut feelings about a prospective new member, but many admitted having stereotypical or negative views of students of color. The participants described limited interactions with students of color in their daily lives, as well as their level of discomfort when they did enter into conversations about race. The

current fraternity recruitment format at Southeastern and other universities with a Fall recruitment period leave little time for potential recruits to get to know existing fraternity members.

When recruitment decisions were made, at least one participant was confident that the diverse identities of potential new members would be an issue for privileged identities in the group, although it would not be explicitly stated as such during the process. Zach knew that his own identities as an older, gay, graduate student would cause current members to pause if they were discussing his fit in the fraternity. He said that members would find other ways to make those identities problematic, by pointing to how other fraternities would perceive the group if they allowed him in. The negative influence of other, largely exclusive fraternities on campus reinforces exclusionary tendencies, even when a fraternity strives to be different.

Under the theme of *the Role of Racially Segregated Environments in Perpetuating White Supremacy*, the participants' narratives reflected views that society has a major impact on Southeastern's racially segregated fraternity environments, and thus influenced participants' willingness to transcend cultural boundaries. The segregation the participants viewed outside of the college environment made racial segregation seem natural within, as they followed patterns they viewed elsewhere. Participants were hesitant to bring up inclusivity or diversity in many settings because of the politicized nature of those words, and the perceived backlash they would receive for even broaching the topic.

Participants pointed to the institution's commitment to recruiting racial diversity as an area that directly affects the demographic makeup of their available pool of students. An institution that does not make recruiting students of color a priority within their Admissions process cannot expect organizations from within their culture to act any differently.

University culture has a significant effect on the individuals and organizations operating within that culture, but a unique fraternity culture also has a strong effect on fraternity men. Fraternity culture has taken on a life of its own, celebrated on websites like totalfratmove.com, and personified in popular films and books. For example, selecting a party theme and dressing in another's culture is one small aspect of fraternity culture. There are many other examples, not explored in this study. That unique culture and experiences lead to a stereotypical view of what it means, and of course, what it looks like to be a fraternity man. The typical IFC fraternity guy in popular culture is almost always White, heterosexual, and from an upper class socio-economic status.

White students who possess stereotypical views of students of color have few opportunities to change those perceptions because of a lack of engagement and limited interactions with people of races other than White. Dave expressed how his feelings about Black people changed after he was exposed to more students of color when he came to Southeastern. However, many White students in traditionally, predominantly White fraternities limit the number of opportunities they have to interact with students of color because of the insulated and hegemonic White spaces within the IFC fraternity system.

Discussion Through the Lens of the Theoretical Framework

This study used institutional theory to explore how racial attitudes were socialized within members of traditionally White fraternities through a critical examination of participants' narratives on race and the concept of fit. Institutional theory is enacted to understand how ABC and XYZ fraternities operated as smaller organizational units within the larger institutional context of the university setting. The theoretical framework (figure 2.1) is presented in depth in chapter two. Institutions are systems comprised of three pillars, known as regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive, as components that achieve meaning, stability, and order (Scott, 2003). Figure 5.1 displays how each theme from this study fits within the theoretical framework.

Each of the three pillars interact and affect one another in institutional culture. The results suggest that the institutional culture of the college and university has a profound influence on the organizations operating within the campus culture. However, each organization has its own institutional culture that is quite powerful and can be vastly different from one organization to the next. The way in which these influences interact with one another are discussed in this section.

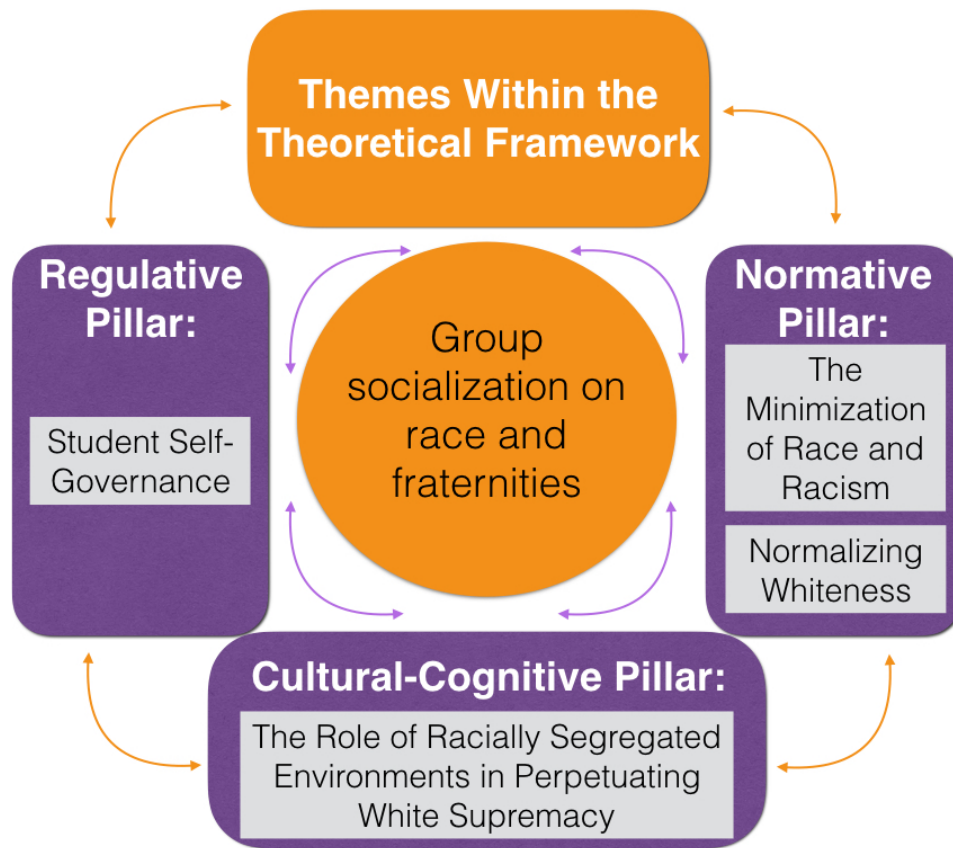


Figure 5.1. Displaying Themes Within the Theoretical Framework

Regulative

The regulative pillar addresses the formal and informal rule-setting, monitoring, and sanctioning in regard to how participants regulate their interactions with race. All institutions constrain and regularize behavior through both formal and informal processes (Scott, 2001). Behavior in the regulative sense is governed through coercion, formalized sanctioning, or shaming while the process of establishing rules and supervising compliance influences future behavior in the organization (Scott, 2001).

The *Student Self-Governance* theme is located in the regulative pillar. Participants spoke of how they used formal and informal processes to regulate behavior internally, but

also of how institutional culture informed their behavior. Participants in XYZ fraternity talked about shaming (and ultimately sanctioning) the new member who was removed from the fraternity for racist behaviors because they knew that his actions were a reflection of their fraternity.

The recent string of racist incidents by fraternities at Southeastern University and nationwide influenced behavior in both ABC and XYZ fraternities. Participants discussed the ways in which they monitored members' social media accounts and the public image of their fraternities because they were well aware of the current racial climate and had seen firsthand the implications for misbehavior.

Normative

Simply stated, the normative pillar describes how people within institutions believe things should be. The normative pillar emphasizes values and norms as ways to provide a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life (Scott, 2003). Values are defined as “conceptions of the preferred or the desirable together with the construction of standards to which existing structures or behaviors can be compared and assessed” (Scott, 2001, p. 64). Norms, on the other hand, “specify how things should be done; they define legitimate means to pursue valued ends” (Scott, 2001, p. 64). Behavior in the normative pillar is governed through internalized social obligations and the desire to be appropriate through the eyes of other accepted members of the group (Scott, 2003).

Both the themes of *the Minimization of Race and Racism* and *Normalizing Whiteness* are in the normative pillar. The norms and values of ABC and XYZ fraternities stressed color-blindness and assimilation tactics to blend into fraternity culture. Race is

considered a non-issue in fraternity life, and one that has no bearing on the individuals in the fraternity. Race was rarely, if ever discussed, in part, because of its controversial nature, but also because of the low level of importance to the group of largely White students.

When norms and values are not applicable to each individual in an institution, specific roles emerge. Victor explained the emergence of roles when he declared that racial diversity was not important to XYZ fraternity, as much as having each member play a “good part of the group.” The results suggest that playing a “good part” of the fraternity is proving loyalty to the rest of the group and assimilating into already established norms. Some individuals, like Zach, performed leadership roles to demonstrate their commitment to the fraternity because he was not fully accepted into the group in the first place.

Cultural-Cognitive

The cultural-cognitive pillar is described simply as the way things are done within an institution. This section helps explain shared conceptions and beliefs that are taken for granted or subconscious (Scott, 2003). In the cultural-cognitive pillar, social order is maintained through collective sense-making created by the group (Scott, 2003).

The Role of Racially Segregated Environments in Perpetuating White Supremacy is located in the cultural-cognitive pillar. Participants talked about a number of influencing factors including the history and tradition of traditionally White fraternities, the region in which they reside, and fraternity culture. The results reveal that members of different fraternities construct different meanings about race and fit, suggesting that

culture can affect the influence of Whiteness on individuals within an institution, even influencing different institutions under the same campus culture.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings from this study have implications for professionals who work in student affairs, fraternity and sorority life, and multicultural affairs or diversity and inclusion offices, as well as advisors and student leaders of fraternities and sororities.

The first practical implication from this study is to improve education and training for fraternity members. Participants in this study described education and training as unnecessary and operating from the assumption that White students are racists. However, the findings from this study suggest that additional training and education is needed for students to understand more on racial microaggressions and cultural appropriation.

University administrators should consider engaging students in dialogue when race is being discussed on campus. Southeastern students were discussing race, many of them for the first time, following a protest and sit-in on campus that brought race to the forefront of discussions even for White identified students. University administrators could have used this opportunity to better explain why some students are upset and why cultural appropriation and microaggressions are harmful. However, this information should come from faculty and staff, rather than putting students of color in a position to educate their peers.

The second practical implication is for fraternities and sororities to consider establishing formalized structures to address bias within the organization, if those are not already present. Participants in this study described governance structures as more

informal, and even where there were formal processes, they lacked any specific language about bias. Multicultural affairs or diversity and inclusion office staff should be involved to provide the expertise and experience in establishing such a structure, since IFC fraternity men and advisors may not have the experience necessary to construct an appropriate reporting mechanism or even be aware that one is needed.

The third practical implication is to evaluate the rush or recruitment process to assess areas to improve inclusivity. Campuses with recruitment occurring in the Fall semester should consider investigating a deferred recruitment process to be held in the Spring semester to allow fraternity members to move beyond initial first impressions of potential new recruits, to better recruit based on the values of each organization. Fraternities should consider involving advisors more in the recruitment process, as advisors in this study were described as being extremely helpful but very hands off in recruitment decisions.

A set of practical implications are suggested for fraternity and sorority life offices. Fraternity and sorority professionals should seek out informal ways for IFC and NPHC organizations to interact, such as the service project described by ABC fraternity when they were paired with a historically Black fraternity. Additional opportunities to interact would better serve both entities. Fraternity and sorority life offices should look to formalize the theme party selection process for fraternities. Most fraternities are not required to reveal their social event theme on forms turned into the fraternity and sorority life office, so a formalized approval process could better serve both fraternities,

sororities, and the university administration in policing for cultural appropriation, especially in cases where there is simply a lack of awareness.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored how Whiteness influences group socialization and interpretations of fit for fraternity members in traditionally, predominantly White fraternities. This study used a phenomenological multiple case study approach specifically bounded within two fraternities' new member education processes. Previous studies in this area focus on the racial attitudes of White fraternity members, but this study used a different lens to better understand the group socialization process. Therefore, this study has multiple implications for future research.

This study could be replicated using different student organizations. The two fraternities chosen for this study are vastly different from one another, and other fraternity cultures could be examined. Sororities represent a potential for future research as they operate within the fraternity and sorority culture, but may experience race in different ways. Additionally, other predominantly White student organizations may be worth exploring to see the differences in the ways other groups experience race outside of the fraternity and sorority culture.

This study could be replicated using a different institutional type to explore the differences in campus culture. Southeastern University is a large, public institution in the South region of the United States. The data suggests that southern culture and the politics of the region was an influential factor in how students viewed race. Campuses in other

regions of the United States should be explored to see if similar regional influences are apparent.

Participants mentioned the lack of racial diversity at Southeastern as an influencing factor in their fraternity's recruitment plan. Southeastern recently announced that their enrollment of African American students for the freshman class of 2016 is up 25 percent from 2015, to nine percent of the overall freshman class. Future studies should explore the changes, if any, which occur in the racial demographics of fraternity and sorority membership after an increased enrollment of students of color.

While this study explored race and predominantly White fraternities, other intersections of identity could be explored. Participants in this study discussed age and sexual orientation specifically. The socio-economic status of members or potential new members is another under-researched area of inclusivity in fraternities and sororities that could represent an opportunity for future research.

This study was conducted as a qualitative approach, but a quantitative or mixed-methods approach could be used to better understand the competencies students have around racial microaggressions, cultural appropriation, and racial bias. Students indicated very little understanding about race and racism, or the harm it can cause marginalized identities, so a better understanding of the competencies students bring with them to the college environment could help university administrators be better aware in providing training and education to this population.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings for this study on the effects of Whiteness on racial group socialization patterns and interpretation of sense of belonging for participants within two traditionally, predominantly White fraternities. The findings were also discussed through the theoretical framework of institutional theory. Implications for practice and policy and recommendations for future research were also presented.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Research Invitation

Hi ____,

Hi, my name is Brian Joyce and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Clemson University. I am conducting a research project for the purposes of my doctoral dissertation to be conducted under the supervision of my graduate advisor, Dr. Tony Cawthon.

I would like to invite you to participate in this project. Broadly stated, the purpose of this project is to explore the group socialization process in regards to race for college men within the context of the traditionally White fraternity system. You have been identified as a potential participant because you initiated into an Interfraternity Council fraternity, in which I am focusing my efforts, within the last twelve months.

Please note that your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, the extent of your participation will include one focus group interview with other members of your fraternity, and one additional individual interview. The interviews will take place in a conference room in Tillman Hall on Clemson University's campus. Each interview will last approximately 60 – 90 minutes. With your consent, all interviews will be recorded. The recordings will be stored on an external, password protected, hard drive in a locked office.

The risks to participate in this study are minimal. Your name, university attended, and fraternity will be fully protected through the use of a pseudonym. There is no compensation for participation in the study.

If you are willing to participate, please contact me via email at sbjoyce@clemson.edu. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your time,

Brian Joyce

PhD student, Educational Leadership

Clemson University

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Information about Being in a Research Study Clemson University

Examining the influence of Whiteness on the group socialization process of college men
in the traditionally White fraternity system

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Brian Joyce in completing the requirements for his dissertation, under the direction of Dr. Tony Cawthon, invites you to take part in a research study. Brian is a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership program at Clemson University. The purpose of this research is to explore the group socialization process in regards to race for college men within the context of the traditionally White fraternity system.

Your part in the study will be to participate in one individual interview with the researcher and one focus group interview with the researcher and other members of your fraternity.

It will take you about two to two and a half hours to be in this study.

Risks and Discomforts

Some of the information shared during the group discussion may be personal, and we ask that you respect the privacy of others in the group and keep the information shared private. Please do not share any information that may be sensitive or make you uncomfortable. You may refuse to answer or leave the discussion at any time if you become uncomfortable.

Possible Benefits

You will receive a \$10.00 gift card at the conclusion of both an individual interview and focus group interview as a benefit for your participation in this study. The researcher will provide food and drinks during the focus group interview. Additionally, this research may help us better understand how race is socialized in college men in traditionally White fraternities.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell anybody outside of the research team that you were in this study or what information we collected about you in particular.

We might be required to share the information we collect from you with the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance and the federal Office for Human Research Protections. If this happens, the information would only be used to find out if we ran this study properly and protected your rights in the study.

Your name, university attended, and fraternity will be fully protected through the use of a pseudonym. All transcribed interviews will be stored on the researcher's personal cloud storage account and will be destroyed upon the completion of the research project. All audio files will be stored on the researcher's personal cloud storage account and will be destroyed upon the completion of the research project. To protect the anonymity of the participants, the transcribed interview files and audio files will be saved with an pseudonym and that pseudonym will be changed again prior to publication in order to make the best effort to protect the identity of the participants.

Choosing to Be in the Study

You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

If you choose to stop taking part in this study, the information you have already provided will be used in a confidential manner.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Brian Joyce at Clemson University at sbjoyce@clemson.edu or 864-250-8890 or Dr. Tony Cawthon at 864-656-5100.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-0636 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this form will be given to you.

Appendix C

Individual interview protocol

Hi,

The purpose of this study is to explore how fraternity men socialize in regards to race within the context of the traditionally White fraternity system. You received an introductory email outlining your participation and right to privacy as it pertains to this interview. You will receive a \$10.00 gift card at the conclusion of both this individual interview and a future focus group interview as a benefit for your participation in this study. I want to clarify that your participation is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any questions and you may discontinue with the study at any time.

With your permission, I would like to tape record this interview, in order to have a record of our conversation. Is that acceptable? If you would like me to turn the recorder off at any point, please let me know.

At this point, I would like to begin with a few questions.

General diversity/race questions

- A) Why do you think race is such a hot topic currently associated with fraternities?
- B) Do you think there are benefits to diversity in higher education, and if so, what are those?

Membership

- C) How racially diverse is your fraternity? Do you wish it was more diverse? Why isn't your fraternity more diverse?
- D) Do students of color participate in rush/recruitment? Why do you think that is?
- E) Do you have friends of different races?
 - a. Do you invite them to be a member of your fraternity?
 - b. What about your fraternity brothers – do they invite people of a race other than white to be a member of your fraternity?
- F) Can you talk me through how you would define a good fit for your fraternity?
 - a. Do you think that has anything to do with race?
 - b. What about a bad fit? What kind of person would not get into your fraternity?
- G) Is racial diversity something you strive for in membership?
- H) Can you talk about what makes up the best fraternity on campus?
 - a. Does exclusivity have anything to do with fraternity rankings?
 - b. Do you aspire to be exclusive?
 - c. Do you think that being exclusive limits the amount of diversity in your organization?

Racial attitudes and beliefs

- I) Is talking about race uncomfortable for you?
 - a. Do you think it is uncomfortable for other members of your fraternity?
 - b. How often do you talk about race with members of your fraternity?

- J) Do you think you generally agree or disagree with your fraternity brothers' views on race?
- a. Do you ever feel uncomfortable about their views or actions on race?
- K) Are you ever uncomfortable with racist incidents or actions from other fraternities at this university or other universities?
- a. Do you think you have a responsibility to do something to condemn those actions?
- L) Do you think race is an important topic for fraternity or new member education?
- a. Do you think the fraternity or the Fraternity and Sorority Life office should plan diversity education programs or dialogues to begin discussions on race?
- M) How have your views on race changed, if any, since joining a fraternity?
- a. Have you or anybody in your fraternity ever challenged something that might be seen as derogatory towards a person of another race?
- N) Can you give me your opinion on southern culture?
- a. What about the Rebel flag?
 - b. Do you think the display of the rebel flag hurts the perception that you are an inclusive fraternity?
- O) Do you think that people are likely to hang out with others who are similar to them? Why do you think that is?
- a. Are you okay with that or do you think we should challenge that notion?
 - b. Do you feel more comfortable around white people?

- P) Do you think the students of color in your fraternity have a good experience?
- a. Have you ever talked to them about race?
 - b. Have you ever been present when a joke about race was made? Were you comfortable or uncomfortable in that setting?
 - c. Do you think the students of color were comfortable or uncomfortable when in the presence of racial jokes?
 - d. Would there ever be a situation where you would intervene?
- Q) Do you think that your fraternity emblems, composites, photos, t-shirts, everything that represents your fraternity are inclusive?
- a. Do you think a member of a race other than White could look at what represents your fraternity and feel comfortable?

Appendix D

Focus group interview protocol

Hi,

The purpose of this study is to explore the group socialization process in regards to race for college men within the context of the traditionally White fraternity system. You received an introductory email outlining your participation and right to privacy as it pertains to this interview. You will receive a \$10.00 gift card at the conclusion of both the individual interview and this focus group interview as a benefit for your participation in this study. I want to clarify that your participation is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any questions and you may discontinue with the study at any time. This focus group interview should last approximately one hour. During the initial individual interview, you were selected as a candidate to continue to the focus group interview phase.

With your permission, I would like to tape record this interview, in order to have a record of our conversation. Is that acceptable? If you would like me to turn the recorder off at any point, please let me know.

At this point, I would like to begin with a few questions.

- A) Fraternities have the unique ability to select members for membership. What qualities and characteristics do you look for as a group?
- B) Fraternities are often criticized for racist attitudes. Do you think your fraternity is racist? Why or why not?

- a. Do you think your fraternity is inclusive? How would you describe inclusivity?
- C) What do you think other fraternities say or think or what would they say or think if you had numerous brothers who were a race other than White?
- a. What do you or your fraternity brothers say or what would you say about other traditionally White fraternities with higher numbers of non-White brothers?
- D) Did you discuss race or diversity during the new member education process? Do you think those are topics that should be discussed?
- E) Race has been a big topic nationally and locally with various incidents involving fraternity men. Students of color at this institution made a list of 7 demands to the administration following an inappropriately themed party. Among those 7, was a demand that the president immediately denounce the party along with statements made on social media sites, and prosecute individuals found guilty of defamatory speech. What is your opinion on these demands? If you were president of your fraternity and you were asked to do so, would you publicly denounce the party and support prosecution of individuals found guilty of defamatory speech?
- F) Do you think the racial incidents that have occurred with fraternities are individual incidents or indicative of a larger problematic institutional or fraternity wide culture of hatred and racism?

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