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# Ethical Decision-Making Examined in Greek Letter Organization Members: A Case Study

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ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING EXAMINED IN GREEK LETTER  
ORGANIZATION MEMBERS: A CASE STUDY

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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

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by  
Matthew Robert Burns  
August 2016

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Accepted by:  
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## ABSTRACT

This examination of the ethical decision-making employed by a group of fraternity men utilized a case study approach to illustrate the processes by which the men reached decisions and the impact of influences upon their decisions. The information gained was examined through the conceptual framework of Bertram Gallant and Kalichman's (2011) systems approach by which the behaviors of university actors are considered through four nested layers of influence.

Fraternity men were studied at a small, liberal arts university in the southeastern United States. Through a process of interviews with the men, their chapter advisors, and applicable university staff, the researcher sought to better understand the ethical frameworks that the men used. The interview responses provided by participants were further considered in the context of documentary evidence by way of instructions from the institution and fraternities, and observational data gleaned from the campus and relevant social media.

The investigation noted that while the fraternities and university espoused lofty and important ethical goals, that those expectations were not always, or even often, lived in daily practice. There was evidence of a lack of congruence amongst the decisions of the men and the perspectives of both their fraternity leadership and the university. This lack of congruence was relevant when implications for further research and practice were developed.

Due to the single-case design of this study, implications are recognized to be inherently limited. They are, however, a starting point for future consideration. As such,

the author encourages further exploration of the guidance provided to students regarding their ethical decision-making and to practitioners in how they effectively provide guidance that is both applied and in congruence with broader university statements, policies, and practice. Through continued work, it is hoped that researchers and practitioners may enhance and improve students' ethical decision-making.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family for their unyielding support throughout the doctoral process. I recognize the sacrifice that each of them made during the time necessary to complete this degree, and I know that it was only through their sacrifice that this was possible.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all who made this work possible. No academic endeavor is a work in isolation and this dissertation is no exception. Whether named or not, many individuals and groups were a part of this work.

I am forever indebted to my chair, Dr. Patricia First. Her guidance, support, and patience have helped me endure. I am also thankful for the work of each member of my dissertation committee, Dr. Tony Cawthon, Dr. Anthony Normore, and Dr. James Satterfield for their insight and expertise. Each faculty member I have encountered at Clemson University has demonstrated care and dedication to their field of study, and more importantly, their students.

The fraternity men, chapter advisors, and university leaders at the study site gave invaluable time and insight. Without compensation other than the support of an academic endeavor, they were wonderfully generous. I am also indebted to the national offices of the six fraternities represented on the host university's campus. In making their members available for this study, their support opened the door for this work. Finally, I am incredibly thankful to the acting Greek Life coordinator at the host site. Through a thousand questions and needs, she was unfailingly helpful and supportive.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

#### Introduction

Students have long been exposed to ethical considerations both in and beyond the academic classroom. This study sought to examine the history of these considerations, how they are currently applied, and, ultimately, make recommendations for future practice and policy. In doing so, I worked from the history of academic integrity research to move forward through current approaches (at the time of writing) to ethical decision-making.

Educational researchers over the past fifty years have thoroughly examined the issue of cheating on college and university campus, as well as in other academic settings, using a variety of contexts and dimensions (Biswas, 2013; Bowers, 1966; Davis, Drinan, & Bertram Gallant, 2009; McCabe & Treviño, 1993; Whitley, 1998). These authors and others have sought to determine when students cheated, the means by which they did so, and the rationale behind students' decisions to cheat. Cheating is neither a new phenomenon today, nor was it a new concept when examined in Bowers' (1966) landmark study, which surveyed over 5000 undergraduate students on cheating behaviors and perceptions of academic integrity issues. In fact, it must be noted cheating is as old as the American higher educational system (Bertram Gallant, 2008; McCabe, 2001), with roots stretching back to the founding of the academy. Research shows that just as cheating is not a new action or concern, it is not an uncommon occurrence either. The pervasiveness of incidents of reported cheating has been found to be significant. Research

by McCabe and Treviño (1996) demonstrated that the majority of high school and college students have participated in at least one form of cheating on at least one occurrence during their academic career. The foundational understanding that students in higher educational arenas are engaging in this behavior helps begin the contextualization of the study of students' ethical decision-making as outlined in this report.

Though the concept of cheating on academic assignments and the desire to do so may have been consistent, if not increasing, with time, the mechanisms employed by students in engaging in academic dishonesty as well as the locations in which cheating may occur have changed and become more varied. Through the ever-increasing inclusion of technology in the classroom and the expansion of the classroom beyond a strictly physical space in an academic hall, including new virtual and non-traditional settings, students participate in organized instruction in many new environments. While these educational opportunities are changing the face of the collegiate experience, they are also providing new means by which students can cheat and new opportunities by which students may not see their behavior to be incorrect (Higbee, Schultz, & Sanford, 2011). Waycott, Gray, Clerehan, Hamilton, Richardson, Sheard, and Thompson (2010) found that changes in the availability of information via the internet and students' use of online resources requires redefining and clarifying academic integrity policies and those policies' application to new learning environments. Craig, Federici, and Buehler (2010) identified increased instruction on the definition of intellectual property and the need for appropriate and thorough citation to be necessary as students' perceptions of web-based materials indicated that traditional citation and documentation were not necessary.

Kleinman (2005) identified means by which teachers of online courses can promote academic integrity. Further, Simha, Armstrong, and Albert (2011) found that while students who volunteered in campus service opportunities have stronger *stated* opinions on cheating than their peers who do not volunteer in service opportunities, their rate of *incidents* of cheating was not substantially different. The work of these researchers indicates that educators must broaden their examination of the issues surrounding academic integrity. As the review look further into students' ethical behavior, this discrepancy between stated beliefs and realized action requires further exploration and study.

A further concern regarding conflict in perspectives is brought forward when students' understanding of cheating, and the ways in which it is defined, are juxtaposed with those of academic faculty. In a concern for the academic landscape, there is a growing understanding that students' perceptions of what constitutes cheating differed from and are far more restrictive in application than those of faculty members (McCabe & Treviño, 1996). These authors noted that many students view collaboration as an acceptable component of the learning process, even when such behaviors are expressly prohibited by the supervising faculty member. As unapproved collaboration of this sort is often likely to occur in non-classroom settings, McCabe & Treviño's study provides further support for the investigation of how students employ ethical decision-making frameworks outside of traditional academic settings.

The prevalence of cheating behaviors among college and university students and the need for institutions and faculty to identify means by which to combat those

behaviors has led to the formation of entire organizations to address the problem. One such group, the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) housed on the Clemson University campus, “encourages, supports, and shares research that predicts, describes, and responds to trends and issues relating to academic integrity standards and practices” (ICAI Mission Statement, 2015). As such, the Center for Academic Integrity supports the development and implementation of honor codes, academic integrity polices, and related programming. Centers such as the ICAI, provide a strong foundation for the review of students’ approaches to integrity concerns.

Correlations between membership in a fraternity or sorority and academic integrity issues have been studied at length (McCabe & Bowers, 2009; Pino & Smith, 2003; Stannard & Bowers, 1970; Storch & Storch, 2002; Williams & Janosik, 2007). Despite the number of studies, there is no consensus on the impact of membership in a Greek-letter organization on academic integrity decisions. While McCabe and Bowers (2009), Pino and Smith (2003), Stannard and Bowers (1970), and others have reported increased evidence of cheating by fraternity members, Stannard and Bowers (1970) noted a *decrease* in incidents of cheating when there is an increase in overall fraternity membership. Further, despite the breadth of study on *whether* students in fraternities and sororities cheat, there is little research on *why* they cheat when they do so. Further, these studies focused primarily on traditional viewpoints of cheating and academic integrity. Fraternities, therefore provide a group ripe for further investigation into ethical decision-making.

For the purposes of this work, the question arises as to how students apply academic integrity lessons to other aspects of their campus life. Biswas (2013) noted the importance of drawing students' lessons to greater applicability in life and work enabling sustainable and continued changes in behavior. Biswas' study raises several important questions that will be further investigated through considerations here. Are we, as student affairs professionals, adequately educating students on making integrous decisions across the landscape of their lives? Are college and university students responding with ethical behaviors beyond the classroom and traditional academic environments? In reviewing these questions, there appears to be a gap in the literature in examining how students are making ethical decisions on campus and how university policies and procedures are impacting the perceptions and actions of the campus community.

Developing a stronger understanding of the means by which fraternity members approach issues of ethical behavior and the connection of these behaviors to the greater campus community, may provide opportunities for better understanding of the actions of students at large. It is essential that student affairs leaders and faculty members recognize the current challenges posed to integrity and positive decision-making and examine the means by which identified concerns may be addressed. Such an understanding is critical to the development of effective policy and procedure to enhance positive outcomes and lessons from the undergraduate experience.

To develop a better understanding of these issues, my research utilized a case study approach. By implementing an instrumental case study (Creswell, 2013), I was able to examine a core issue: ethical approaches by college and university students outside of

the classroom and the effects of university and student affairs leadership on those decisions. An instrumental study is one which addresses “an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate the issue” (Creswell, 2013, p. 99). A case study is further applicable as I seek to understand the workings of a “social phenomenon” (Yin, 2014, p. 4). For the purposes of this study, I have identified the core issue (ethical decision making outside of the university classroom) and a bounded case (fraternity members at a small, private, southeastern university). As such, the case identifies Yin’s (2014) two-prong framework permitting investigation of a core, current issue in which the interaction between the issue and its surroundings are under study. For these reasons, a case study was the selected method of investigation as it permits a real-world understanding of a contextual problem.

### Statement of the Problem

As noted previously, the mechanisms by which students analyze and make academic integrity decisions in university classroom settings have been well studied over the past 50 years. Through research the means by which students cheat, the motives which encourage them to do so, and instructional strategies, which may be employed by faculty members to minimize the likelihood of cheating behaviors, have been well-documented. Current research is continuing to expand into the impact of the online classroom and other changes in the academic environment in regards to student cheating. (This expansion of research is important to this study given its examination of out-of-classroom decisions and expressions of those choices.) Further, research supports the use

of honor codes and institutionalizing practices that reduce the likelihood that students will commit academic integrity violations.

In addition to recognizing the prevalence of cheating behaviors, it is further clear that the college experience is a defining time for moral development that both applies to and extends/expands later in life (McCabe, Butterfield, & Treviño, 2012). Values gained and enhanced during this period are often acquired from peers as well as institutional norms. Whether those norms support integrity-driven behavior or detract from it, students are gaining perspectives that will help shape their lives. McCabe, Butterfield, & Treviño give a call for action:

The college experience marks a crucial turning point, when adolescents abandon their own beliefs in favor of their fellow students' opinions and values. Students require guidance during these formative years and academic institutions can play a central role in this development process (p. 6).

As student affairs professionals, the potential impact of the college years determines the importance of the guidance that is imparted upon students. McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviño's (2012) work indicates that researchers must examine all facets of the education that is being delivered to students. Researchers are only addressing a portion of the problem if they limit ourselves to only focusing on understanding the impact of academic integrity decisions and outcomes.

Further support for this study comes from the closely allied behaviors of cheating and student organizational membership, including Greek Life (fraternities and sororities) as well as athletic teams (McCabe, Butterfield, & Treviño, 2012). These same authors

also identified a correlation between risk-taking behavior and academic integrity issues. As both of organizations of these types (Greek Life and athletics) and risk-taking or exploratory behaviors are often present on college campuses, they represent a substantial potential impact on students' daily lives and long-term futures. Again, as institutional leaders, we are charged with imparting strong, lifelong structures upon students, which leads to the opportunity and need for further review related to the impact of out-of-classroom pressures and choices.

At the same time, limited research has been done on the means by which students make non-academic ethical decisions outside of the classroom. As such, practitioners have limited exposure to these types of decisions during the university experience or utilizing a student life framework. The work that does exist focuses primarily on students' choices in regards to the use of illegal drugs; the use of alcohol, including while underage; and risk-taking sexual activity or sexual misconduct. Included in this gap in the literature is how students weigh the impact of personal decisions on adherence to university rules and policies and other ethical norms. This study sought to fill this gap by examining the intersection between ethical decisions in out-of-classroom experiences and guidance, with a particular focus group of study of a unit of fraternity members and Greek Life structures.

### Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to consider the ethical decision-making experiences of male fraternity members at a small, southeastern liberal arts university. In



doing so, the study sought to not only examine the decisions reached by the fraternity members but to also examine influences on members' decisions by fraternity leaders, university staff, and institutional policies and procedures. The secondary purpose of the work, was to seek to make recommendations for improving the ethical decision-making experiences of fraternity members, and perhaps even students at large, by impacting leadership and policy within student affairs divisions. Through a more in-depth examination of influencing factors, the study sought to guide student affairs practice and to establish frameworks for future study. The importance of the study is that it illuminates how ethical decision-making occurs or fails to occur within this community.

My hope through this study is that these experiences may be used to provide proactive future policy and procedural approaches. It is particularly hoped that further knowledge will permit the institutionalization of values as outlined by Bertram Gallant and Drinan (2006). It is recognized by the researchers that influencing policies through the use of research is a process with several potential pitfalls as outlined by Rist (2003). These include the caveat that decisions are made through a number of points of impact, of which research is but one factor, and an often minor one at that. Further, policies are the outcome of resources, motives, and opportunities (Rist, 2003). Each of these elements is under the influence of many actors. As such, and as outlined later in the study's limitations, any policy recommendations must be tempered by an understanding of the group and the campus for whom they would be implemented and the group and campus from which they were gleaned.

### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, there are several terms which must be defined as they are utilized in this document to facilitate a common understanding.

#### *Advisors*

Advisors were those men utilized as chapter advisors for the fraternities included in this study. Advisors were adults who were typically members of the fraternity as undergraduates, though not necessarily in the chapter they now advise. In the case of the host university studied, advisors were not required to be employed by the institution. Such a plan has been discussed by the university for possible future implementation.

#### *Documents*

Documents for this purpose of this study and the triangulation of the case study were deemed to include documentary evidence which contributed to the understanding of the organizations and their members. Artifacts included those generated by the university, organizations, and individuals.

#### *Fraternity*

Fraternities in this study were male-only organizations recognized through the official Greek Life system at the host university. The fraternities were overseen by national offices, local chapter advisors, and a coordinator of Greek Life at the host university.

#### *Greek Life Organizations*

Greek life organizations and Greek letter organizations are used interchangeably here to describe organized social organizations affiliated with the college or university

through an Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Council, or other organized component of the school's Greek Life office. These organizations may include women, men, or both.

### *Members*

For this study, the membership of Greek life organizations was considered to be currently enrolled undergraduate students. Graduate and alumni members were not included. However, as noted later in this document, chapter advisers who were interviewed did include, as often occurs, alumni members of the studied fraternities. (Chapter advisors and collegiate Greek Life staff are often comprised of individuals who were part of the Greek Life system during their undergraduate studies.)

### *University Staff*

For this study, university staff were those individuals directly employed in positions supporting students' growth and development. This included several participants in the student life division and one in the academic affairs division. This group did not include chapter advisors, even though some of these advisors may be separately employed by the university.

### Limitations

The limitations of this study were dictated by several factors from its inception. First, the scope of the study was to examine the relationship between ethical decision making and students involved in Greek Life at one southeastern, small, private university. While the case study method utilized provided in-depth information about this group and their perspectives on decision-making, it did not provide data from a broad-based arena.

The data provided was reviewed in the context of the setting in which it was examined. The restrictions on the manner in which data was examined lead immediately to the second limitation of this work; it is not transferrable to another institution or setting. The work presented here provides a framework for understanding the occurrences at one specific institution at a particular point in time. As such, it is illustrative of a particular environment at a given point (Yin, 2014). While it is informative about the students and policies examined, it is not generalizable, nor is it intended to be. Third, policy implications are limited by the first two restrictions. Though this study identified policy recommendations for the university and fraternities studied, these are applicable only to the studied group and institution. Any policy implications are contextual in nature. I believe that these limitations do not diminish the work that occurred, but rather clarify its position within the body of knowledge.

A point of potential bias that must be revealed is that I, the researcher, did not participate in the Greek Life system as an undergraduate student. Therefore, I remain an outsider to the groups being studied and required a “gatekeeper” to facilitate access and an communication (Yin, 2015). For studies of this type, the role of the gatekeeper is essential in establishing not only formal access to the community of study, but also informal rapport that encourages an open dialogue. (Liamputtong, 2007). This function is best served by a “visible and respected individual who holds a position of authority, high respect, or leadership” (Tewksbury and Gagné, 1997, p. 134). The value in such an individual is clear both for the formal permissions granted due to their authority, but much more importantly, for the interpersonal connections that can be made by them. For

this study, the gatekeeper role was filled by the director of student activities at the host college. As a component of her work, the director currently serves as the university's Greek Life coordinator. (In other years, there would be an assistant director of student activities directly serving as the Greek Life coordinator. During the study, this position was vacant, but in the process of being filled.) For the purposes of this study, it is important to note the gatekeeper's power role with the students and groups being studied (Brooks & Normore, 2015). The gatekeeper in this study maintains administrative oversight of the Greek Life process, but does not assert direct, formal disciplinary authority. (Disciplinary authority for the Greek Life system, exercised through a dedicated conduct board, is vested in the director's supervisor, a senior student affairs administrator at the host institution.) However, informally, the gatekeeper enjoys a wide-ranging sphere of influence over Greek Life and its members. Despite this sphere of influence, I felt, as the researcher, that my personal distance from the Greek Life system and the gatekeeper's non-judicial role served to provide an appropriate and understood connection without unduly biasing the study.

### Researching a Vulnerable Population

Historically, fraternity men have not met a commonly accepted definition of being a vulnerable or sensitive population. They are, after all, frequently and often primarily, a population of white, (at least moderately) affluent, heterosexual, cisgender males. Further, fraternity men after graduation have often included some of the most powerful and influential of American leaders. Konnikova (2014) notes that a significant number of

United States presidents, congressional leaders, and Supreme Court justices are former fraternity men. With connections of this sort, fraternity men have enjoyed immense access to power and privilege.

However, in light of recent news and public scrutiny, including calls for the abolishment of the Greek Life system, for the purposes of this study, I have considered fraternity men a population under significant pressure. Liamputtong (2007) notes that a group under pressure or stress requires additional consideration during a research investigation. Research into a vulnerable population may result in unintended consequences and even the opportunities for (further) persecution (Liamputtong, 2007). As such, the population must be treated with a sensitivity beyond that which is typically provided in research. Further, by asking a population to expose “behaviors or attitudes which would normally be kept private and personal, which might result in offence or lead to social censure or disapproval, and/or which might cause the respondent discomfort to express” (Wellings, Branigan, & Mitchell, 2000, pg. 256) further the risk to the group exists. During this study, I asked that fraternity men share behaviors that may be viewed as unethical or, at a minimum, undesirable in a larger societal context. Additionally, I asked that participants further expose themselves and their organizations to the potential of criticism or disciplinary action. (While the researcher utilized appropriate confidentiality protocols to protect participant privacy, it must be noted that the Greek Life advisor’s dual role as a university employee and as the gatekeeper for introducing the researcher to potential participants was a potential threat to the anonymity of responses. I believed that this individual, who also provided responses as a research

participant, successfully navigated these conflicting roles, but full disclosure to readers of the study is important. As with any interested reader, the advisor has access to the results of this study. However, individual participants' stories were not shared by name.) Also, given the current media climate regarding fraternities, which is discussed further in the literature of this document, additional support and care was warranted so that I did not endanger the member-participants or their organizations to further public ridicule. It was important that participants not feel that this study placed them in danger of additional risk to that I might receive the most honest and forthcoming information possible.

Liamputtong's (2007) work provided the framework of protection in this endeavor.

### Assumptions

For the purposes of facilitating this study, several assumptions were made. First, it was assumed that participants would be forthcoming and truthful given the privacy considerations which were taken. To ensure the documenting and reporting of accurate analysis after data collection, it was important that this assumption be met. (All data was examined using the process of triangulation (Yin, 2015).) Unless otherwise noted, participants' statements were presumed to be their perceptions and presumed to be truthful at least as the participant knows and believes.

The second assumption which was important for this study was that the fraternities' memberships would be impacted by a common set of policies and procedures. That is, the study believed that the university guidelines and policies for Greek Life and fraternities provide a shared framework for the administrative oversight

of the organizations. Further, the policies of each fraternity provide a similar oversight for the members of that particular fraternity. This assumption required that all members of the organization be considered to be engaged in having the opportunity to know and understand the policies that applied to that organization. (It is recognized that some members may have not availed themselves of this opportunity.) As such, and as will be discussed in the methods used for the study, the communication of such policies was investigated as a potential area of concern. It is believed that these two assumptions were necessary for the progression of the research which occurred and contributed to my understanding of the results.

#### Frameworks of Study

As this work examines student behavior in regards to ethical actions while under the direction and guidance of a college or university, it was determined to use two core frameworks as outlined below to facilitate analysis and understanding. The first of these, the ethical framework, provided guidance to the researcher on the intended outcomes and goals for participants and organizations. It allowed the researcher to make judgements on whether a particular choice was ethical and to make determinations as to what constituted an ethical outcome. The second framework utilized was the conceptual. This conceptual framework allowed the researcher to better understand the impacts of the university and its leaders on the student, fraternity member, participants. The conceptual framework, represents a means by which I may gauge student affairs professionals' success as organizational leaders. Through an amalgamation of the two existing approaches, I



believed that I could develop a better understanding of students' responses the work involved in guiding future decision-making.

### Ethical Framework

Throughout this study the issues of ethics and integrity were addressed, including ethical decision-making, academic integrity, and morality, with an emphasis on the synthezation of students' approaches and responses to guidance from practitioners. Terms such as integrity and ethical behavior serve to guide students on their journey through college and are often imparted as components of universities' statements of mission, belief, and values. Student life offices further espouse these goals as elements of students' out-of-classroom learning. A survey of local (South Carolina) colleges and universities yielded several examples. Clemson University Student Affairs, encourages students to "take responsibility" (Clemson University Student Affairs Mission Statement, 2015), while Furman University seeks to "enhance the personal development" of their students (Furman University Division of Student Life Mission, 2015). The University of South Carolina (University of South Carolina Student Affairs and Academic Support Mission, 2015) works to "shape responsible citizens and develop future leaders" and the College of Charleston (College of Charleston Division of Student Affairs Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion, 2015) is committed to the "facilitation of the cultural, social, emotional, physical, ethical and intellectual development of all students." South Carolina State University (South Carolina State University Student Affairs Mission, 2015), a state-funded historically black institution, moves beyond student's individual behaviors to

issue a call for action, with the goal that a graduate of the university, “appropriately challenges the unfair, unjust, or uncivil behavior of other individuals or groups.” Similar values are espoused at the national level of professional organizations through student affairs leadership organizations. The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) states in their *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs*, a guiding document for student affairs practitioners, that a strong student life division, “helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards” (NASPA, 2015, p. 1). As stated previously, despite these lofty university and organizational goals and while much work has occurred with a focus on academic integrity and cheating, a gap continues to exist in examining similar values in out-of-classroom settings and experiences of students.

In examining out-of-classroom settings, this study utilized a unique ethical framework: applying the feminist ethical approach of Hilde Lindemann (2006) to a male, fraternal organization. For the purposes of this work, the ethical framework provided the structure of study by which the behaviors and actions of students, here, fraternity men, were judged. As such, I utilized the dual feminist approaches of an ethic of care coupled with an ethic of responsibility to examine the actions and choices displayed. As outlined below, I believed that this approach of the use of a feminist ethic may be generalized beyond female actors to all individuals involved in a system of care and responsibility. Such systems are represented in this study by the care of fraternity members for one another, by the oversight and supervision provided by chapter-level leadership, and by the responsibility that is inherent in university officials’ execution of their duties to

students, to the fraternities, and to their institution. Each of these systems is interconnected by its nature with other actors and organizations.

In outlining an approach to feminist ethics Lindemann (2006) provided her reader with a refutation of traditional ethical frameworks, including social contract theory, utilitarianism, and Kantian ethics. Lindemann further refuted the male-dominated, singularly focused approach to moral development outlined by Lawrence Kohlberg. In doing so, she referenced the subsequent work of Carol Gilligan, which outlined an alternative, feminist approach to moral development with enhancements to universalize the applicability of the framework. (Kohlberg's work followed a group of young males, while Gilligan performed similar research with a female population.) Lindemann borrowed extensively from Gilligan's work on the formative nature of relationships and experiences in shaping moral development. The relational nature of ethical thinking was an important element in the study as it assisted in understanding the impact of participants' collegiate experiences and the way in which they interacted with one another.

Lindemann's work provided a strong framework for the examination of the ethical decision-making of fraternity men due to the incorporation of several key elements as outlined below:

#### Interconnected Relationships

"None of us stands on our own; we all live firmly embedded within the thick web of social relationships" (Lindemann, 2006, p. 75). Fraternities are by their very nature social organizations with an existing framework of interaction. Individuals are not

autonomous actors who can operate in isolation (Lindemann, 2006). Fraternities exist within the culture and policies of their host university, within goals of a national organization, and with public scrutiny from a variety of media sources. As such, any decision-making is determined and impacted by these other spheres and the webbing which connects each individual and the organizations with which they are affiliated.

### Leadership Roles

Lindeman's work oriented ethical behavior within a framework of care and responsibility (2006). Care, exemplified by Lindemann as "mothering" (2006, p. 90) provides a roadmap for the behavior of adult student life leaders and practitioners. These professional university staff are often called upon to conduct behaviors such "protection, nurturance, and training" (p. 90-91) of their students. Further, Lindemann's ethical code invites participants to move beyond simply providing care, that is—the delivery of resources, to providing caring relationships.

### Mothering

As universities educate students, I have already noted a desire to guide and develop responsible behaviors and actions. These goals fit squarely within the three responsibilities of mothering as defined in Lindemann's (2006) ethic of care: protection, nurturance, and training. Universities seek to maintain the safety and well-being of their students, to nurture those same students to have the resources for growth, and to train students to make what Lindemann describes as "morally reliable" (p. 91) decisions.

### Common Responsibility

A feminist ethical approach further represents the need for common responsibility. Lindemann noted this unified approach as, “something we do *together*” (2006, p. 102). No one individual is solely responsible for either his or her own ethical development or of that of his fellow journeyman. As such, individuals construct views of moral interactions with a shared understanding and perspective.

### Flexibility

Finally, Lindemann’s work provides the flexibility for fluid decision-making. By focusing on responsibility through relationships, she notes that the constructs may change with time, situations, and needs. For this study, it was important to examine how decision-making was impacted by situational concerns and issues.

### A Millennial Generation

The writings of E. R. Gross (2011) on the frameworks of understanding utilized by the millennial generation provided further support for the use of feminist ethics to understand current student behavior. In calling for more flexible, fluid approaches to teaching, learning, and classroom management, E. R. Gross discussed the contextual nature of millennials’ approaches to education. She encouraged readers to consider an ethic of care and responsibility in determining whether a student’s actions have violated classroom or institutional policy. (For the purpose of clarity, it must be noted that E. R. Gross discusses these approaches, but does not directly link them to a feminist framework or methodology.) This approach further expounded on the value placed in cultural norms

as opposed to hard and fast rules. For this study, this approach helped understand the means by which students make meaning of institutional policies.

### Conceptual Framework

As student affairs leaders seek to structure their work with students, campus activities, and organizations to incorporate best practices and guidance, they also seek to understand the means by which students engage the world. Educators, including those in student affairs, must effectively comprehend the motives and perspectives of their students to meaningfully guide and impact their actions. Engagement of student perspectives in a substantive manner is particularly necessary in addressing integrity concerns with students. As noted previously in this work, extensive research has occurred to better understand the frequency of incidents of cheating, the populations most likely to engage in cheating behavior, and mechanisms available to reduce the rate of incidence of these behaviors. This prior research has been primarily centered on academic integrity. This study seeks to expand upon the existing framework as outlined in the following section and consider its applicability to non-academic settings within the college or university environment.

The conceptual framework employed in this study is the systems approach was outlined by Bertram Gallant and Kalichman (2011). These authors, in an effort to create what they identify as the “ethical academy” (p. 27) espoused the creation of an environment that is intentional, deliberate, and sustainable. The ethical academy is one

which respects the rights of others and their property and encourages mutual respect and responsibility.

Bertram Gallant and Kalichman (2011) described the creation of an ethical systems approach as one of nested contexts within which individuals operate. These contexts were defined as the individual, organizational, education system and society levels. To better understand their impact each is briefly described below as developed by the original authors.

#### The Individual Level

The individual level is defined as the core functional level of the organization. In fact, it is developed as the core building block for the remaining levels. The individual arrives with preconceived notions and ideas formed based upon constructive knowledge from previous experiences. Individual actors may, and often do, have varying levels of decision-making prowess as such skills are developed through practice and usage.

#### The Organizational Level

The organizational level is the unit which supports and drives the educational experience. Bertram Gallant and Kalichman (2011) relate this level to the university or college. For the practical reader, this level represents the interconnected approaches at a particular campus. In seeking to identify the ethical academy, the authors define it as one which has a clear, intentional focus on ethical behavior. That is, the ethical academy is one which has identified policies and procedures as core and fundamental values of the organization.

### The Education System Level

The educational systems level represents education as a combined entity. Ranging from K-12 through graduate work, this level demonstrates the importance of processes and beliefs throughout a students' educational career. Normative values, such as competition for high grades and test scores, are defining factors at this level. These influences can lead to short-term and poorly acknowledged impacts on decision-making.

### The Society Level

The highest level in Bertram Gallant and Kalichman's (2011) approach relates to the impact of society on the decision making of the academy. Outside influences, such as technology, and normalizing reports such as news of unethical business practices can promote poor behavior at other levels of the system. The societal level determines those behaviors that we mutually decree to be unethical.

Through this study, I sought to apply the nested framework of Bertram Gallant and Kalichman (2011) to the fraternity men and fraternities being studied. Understanding the action of the men who were subjects was only possible when the external influences were considered. While it is important to note the four concentric levels of Bertram Gallant and Kalichman's model, this research focused on the first three components: the individual organizational, and system levels. These represent the on-the-ground areas of influence under consideration. Further research may find applicability in the societal level of influence.

The work of Bertram Gallant and Kalichman intersects with the examination of the impact of campus policy. In a landmark review first presented in 1973, Pressman and



Wildavsky (1984) noted that discrepancies in communication between stated goals and actual outcomes may greatly alter the impact of organizational actions. Therefore, establishing and maintaining institutional focus on a particular issue is challenging. As such, this study considers the disparities that arise between the policies of the university and the outcomes of student actions.

Williams and Janosik (2007) found this discrepancy in their examination of the cheating behaviors of sorority women. Using the quantitative instrument designed by McCabe, they noted differences in cheating behaviors between sorority women and the general population. They also noted a difference in students' and administrators' perceptions of whether specific behaviors constituted cheating. In recommendations for further study, the Williams and Janosik noted that there needed to be increased clarification of academic goals and structures. They further noted that policies as outlined by institutions were not inherently understood in consistent manners by students. As such, Williams and Janosik recognized a need for examination of the intersection of institutional policy, application of the policy, and communication of the policy.

This study utilized the frameworks of ethics and organizational culture to understand the means by which students determine what constitutes unethical behavior and relate their views to the overall policies of the institution. It examines the intersection between the two to clarify how students approach these issues. From this understanding, it makes recommendations for practice for student affairs administrators.

## Design of Study

This study was guided by the desire to better understand the following overarching research question: What frameworks are fraternity men using to make ethical decisions? This question may be further investigated by the following questions:

1. What are current members of fraternities' perceptions of ethical decision-making?
2. What challenges and obstacles to ethical decision-making are presented by members of fraternities?
3. Are the perceptions of fraternities aligned within the campus community and congruent with the student affairs leadership responsible for this area?
4. What recommendations for policy are made by both members of fraternities and student affairs leaders?
5. Have the values of ethical decision-making been "institutionalized" within the fraternity men and student affairs leadership responsible for this area?

To examine the questions at hand, I chose to use an instrumental embedded case study (Creswell, 2013; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). This formula provided the ability to examine a core issue (ethical decision making in fraternity men) in a bounded group and place (a small southeastern university in the winter and spring of 2016), with distinct subunits (fraternity members, fraternity leaders, and university leaders). I determined that this approach provided the most effective means by which to conduct and report this inquiry. Through this work, I was able to develop a more in-depth understanding of the issues being faced by all involved. Further information on

the case study approach and its applicability to this examination will be shared in the methods section of this report.

To facilitate this study, I employed three main points of inquiry. The first was conducting face-to-face interviews with fraternity men at the chosen host site. I also conducted face-to-face interviews with the fraternities' adult leadership, again in a face-to-face format. Leadership interviews encompassed chapter advisors, who are typically alumni of the fraternity and often alumni and/or employees of the university itself, and relevant university staff, who at the front-line level are often former members of the Greek Life system as well. The second method of inquiry was through document review. For the purposes of this study, documents included policy and procedure manuals, formal communications such as directives and university announcements, and informal communications, such as e-mails and other personal correspondence. The third prong of investigation was through observation. By observing university and student messaging (signs, social media posts, etc.), I was able to gauge whether students were aligning with institutional policy.

Information gleaned during the research process was examined using the qualitative approaches of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Through this method, interviews and documents were rigorously examined to seek patterns of data. Data was then triangulated (Yin, 2014) to verify its consistency across sources. (Coding of data will be further discussed in the methods section of this report.) I believe that this method permitted a clear understanding of the perceptions of the fraternity men being studied and the influences upon their behaviors.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE

#### Purpose and Type of Review

The purpose of this research study is to examine the means by which college and university students engage ethical decisions outside of the traditional academic classroom and how campus leaders shape students' approaches to those same decisions. I sought to examine the juxtaposition and possible conflict between intended outcomes and realized actions for all stakeholders. Through this exploration of institutional approaches to non-academic integrity concerns and challenges, I sought to identify possible strategies for supporting positive decision-making and reducing negative outcomes in these functional areas.

This literature review seeks to identify and synthesize the current body of work in several disparate, yet for my purposes here, interconnected strands. These strands include the traditional study of academic integrity with both foundational work and current research, the intersection of ethical development and campus life, and the impact of policy, it informs the understanding of outcomes in student behavior. This review also seeks to highlight emerging current issues that are prevalent in today's news media and journalistic outlets related to both ethical concerns and the chosen study group: fraternities.

Boote and Beile (2005) noted that a dissertation literature review requires strong criteria for the judgment of whether sources should be included in the final product. This

review began by examining the existing and historical research related to the study of academic integrity. In doing so, search terms such as academic integrity, ethics and college, and integrity and college were employed. As the review of the literature expanded to students' campus life experiences and the intersection of these experiences with ethical concerns, search terms were equally expanded to encompass living-learning communities and ethics, living-learning communities and integrity, campus life and integrity, and campus life and ethics. Finally, current news and events were also considered as they reflect the evolving nature of concern with ethical decision making, with fraternal organizations specifically and Greek Life generally. Though the primary source of information has been through academic journals, some professional journals germane to student affairs and some books on the topics presented here have also been included as pertinent sources. For emerging issues, media and news sources reflect the current challenges that are arising.

To select sources for inclusion in this review, I determined to include text to which “yes” can be answered to one or more of the following guiding questions.

- Does the text provide a foundation to the study of integrity or ethical decision-making in higher education?
- Does the text establish connections between integrity concerns and college or university students' out-of-classroom experiences?
- Does the text provide new, additional, or clarifying information to the sources which have been previously analyzed and included in the review?

- Does the text provide a framework for understanding the intersection of policy and practice related to student integrity issues?
- Does the text reflect current or emerging trends related to ethical behavior on college campuses?

Using this process, I found that a strong body of work exists examining both the history and extent of cheating in higher education environments. As an example, McCabe (2001) noted that cheating is neither new, nor stopping. Students' interest in pursuing cheating behaviors will be present and must be addressed. However, I noted a limited examination of ethical behavior outside of the classroom, nor did I find extensive literature examining the policy implications and implementations of campus integrity structures as applied to students' out-of-classroom activities. Therefore, I sought to utilize this review to synthesize available sources in preparation for further examination of out-of-class concerns.

#### Historical Foundations (1964-2005)

Throughout the past fifty years, significant research has examined the issue of cheating in college (Bowers, 1966; Davis, Drinan, & Bertram Gallant, 2009; Hollinger & Lanza-Kaduce, 2009; McCabe & Treviño 1993; Whitley, 1998). These studies and other similar works have sought to determine the means by which students cheat and ascertain the prevalence of such incidents on college campuses. The pervasiveness of incidents of reported cheating has been found to be significant. Research by McCabe and Treviño (1996) demonstrated that the majority of high school and college students have

participated in at least one form of cheating on at least one occurrence during their academic career. Further, studies indicated that students' perceptions of what constitutes cheating may be malleable and inconsistent with those of adults in their learning community (Higbee, Schultz, & Sanford, 2011; Higbee & Thomas, 2002; Owunwanne, Rustagi, & Dada, 2010). As McCabe and Treviño relied upon students' self-identification of cheating, the rate of incidents may—in fact—be much higher than is even reported. In a further concern, in fraternities and sororities the instances of cheating behaviors may occur at the same rate, but the willingness to report observed behaviors in others may be diminished (Eberhardt, Rice, and Smith, 2003). These foundational works support both the presence of cheating behavior on college campuses and the need for further study as it remains a relevant and widespread concern.

Significant research on collegiate academic integrity began with the landmark Bowers (1966) study, which examined a representative national group of students to investigate their beliefs and practices surrounding cheating and academic integrity. Though this study began the systematic examination of the prevalence of cheating, there are strong indicators that cheating behavior dates to the origins of formal education in the now United States. Patterns of cheating were noted to not be a new phenomenon, with roots stretching to the beginning of the American higher educational system (Bertram Gallant, 2008, McCabe, 2001). While both authors indicated that students have long engaged in cheating behavior, the mechanisms for doing so have rapidly evolved.

The ever-increasing inclusion of technology in the classroom, as well as the additional use of virtual classrooms, has led to new means by which students can cheat

and new opportunities by which they may not see their behavior to be problematic (Higbee, Schultz, and Sanford, 2011). Higbee, Schultz, and Sanford's 2011 work repeated a 2002 study by Higbee and Thomas examining how students determined if a particular behavior constituted cheating. Waycott et. al (2010) found that changes in the internet and students' use of online resources required redefining and clarifying academic integrity policies. Moeck (2002) found that there are continuing technological challenges to ensuring that students adhere to academic integrity policies. Craig, Federici, and Buehler (2010) identified increased instruction on the definition of intellectual property and the need for appropriate citation to be necessary as students' perception of web-based materials was that traditional citation and documentation were not required. Kleinman (2005) identified means by which teachers of online courses can promote academic integrity. Faculty members can also mediate students' approaches to cheating rationalization and therefore their incidents of cheating using "neutralization" approaches (Brent & Atkisson, 2011), but, there is not consensus that online courses inherently lead to greater incidents of cheating. Watson and Sottile (2010) found greater incidents in courses presented in traditional, classroom based settings.

Whether through new technology or traditional means, not only does cheating have firmly established roots, it also appears to have at least held its ground in the rate of incidence if not, in fact, grown in both the outright number of incidents as well as the percentage of students who cheat (McCabe, 2001). Cheating is not a phenomenon which is diminishing. Not only is cheating not going away, students' perceptions on cheating differed from those of faculty (Higbee, Schultz, & Sanford, 2011; Higbee & Thomas,



2002; McCabe and Treviño, 1996). McCabe & Treviño (1996) noted that students view collaboration as acceptable, even when prohibited by the supervising faculty member. Inappropriate assistance, resources, or collaboration can and often is justified by students either prior to or after the fact of a cheating incident (Brent & Atkisson, 2011; Burrus, McGoldrick, & Schuhmann, 2007). Yet, even with such an extensive program of study regarding traditional academic integrity, there is a far more limited field for the study of such issues outside of the classroom.

#### Recent Considerations and Approaches (2005-Present)

An examination of current literature in regards to academic integrity would be remiss if it did not note that there is an ongoing and robust discussion of this issue in current literature and media. Recent considerations include studies of academic integrity that have been shared or published in the past ten years. (There are—of course—also numerous new developments in the media related to fraternal organizations, which will be addressed at a later point in this review.) During this time period, there have been a plethora of stories on this topic. Leading into the period of discussion, in identifying a mindset of cheating behaviors, ABC News aired a six-month expose in 2004 on a crisis in America's schools, cheating (Weinraub, 2010). Vogel (2011) reported that the Atlanta Public School system has unethical behavior at "every level." *The Miami Herald* asked if the lessons that educators are teaching students are not those of core academic subjects, but rather how to be deceitful (Veciana-Suarez, 2011). In examining the issues surrounding students' academic integrity, Berlins (2009) noted that the increasing

prevalence of the internet provides an ongoing and ever-changing challenge. He further acknowledged that this challenge is modeled by adult behavior, including a noted journalist who copied work for a published news article. Each of these authors and articles reminds their reader that academic integrity is a not a challenge isolated to the higher education academy, but rather one that is prevalent in society. Further, they emphasize that such behaviors are not simply the product of youthful indiscretion. They are—in fact—modeled by adult leaders who have been entrusted with the education of youth (Vogel, 2011) or of the leadership nation (Berlins, 2009). In both instances those same leaders have failed their charges.

Scandalous headlines have even focused on Harvard University, long considered a bastion of the American higher educational system. In the spring semester of 2012, approximately half of the 279 students in a government course with a take-home exam were suspected of cheating (Peréz-Peña, 2013a). Of those suspected, approximately 70 were ultimately dismissed from the university for a period of two to four semesters. In defending their responses on the exam, which explicitly prohibited collaboration, students indicated that they had worked together on study notes and had questioned teaching fellows on the appropriate responses to the exam. The Harvard incident led to calls for further review of not only how often students cheat at elite universities, but also their understanding of the context of their behavior (Peréz-Peña, 2013b). The ethical questions at the university progressed with revelations in the spring of 2013 that the university had undertaken searches of faculty e-mails to determine the source of leaks to the media regarding the scandal. In media reports students noted the need for implementation not

only of an honor code, which was then under discussion by the university, but also of a culture of ethical behavior across campus. An honor code was adopted by Harvard University in the spring semester of 2014 with a planned implementation in the fall semester of 2015 (Harvard Magazine, 2014).

Unethical behavior by elite college students is not limited to Harvard University. Up to 64 Dartmouth College students were suspected to have cheated in a Fall 2014 course, ironically titled “Sports, Ethics, & Religion” (Rocheleau, 2015). Despite an existing honor code, students were suspected of using electronic clickers to answer in-class questions for others or of providing their clicker to a classmate so that the answer could be provided for them. The professor of the class noted his perception that honor generally, and among college students specifically, has been a declining attribute.

There’s an app for that... In an effort to stem concerns with unethical behavior by students and to meet them in a native format, the Markula Center for Applied Ethics, located at Santa Clara University, offered a mobile app to guide students through tough choices (Markula Center for Applied Ethics, 2015). The app takes students through common ethical frameworks such as utilitarianism, justice, virtues, and rights to assist in making a decision. The app not only allows students a means by which they may assess a situation, it provides further information on the underlying ethical tenets. The Center’s work seeks to help students transition from classroom-based ethical theories to incorporating ethical practices in their daily lives.

Bernardi, Banzhoff, Martino, and Savasta (2012) reported that there is a communal (and communicable) aspect to cheating. Much like an illness which spreads

from one student to another with an exponential increase as it moves, cheating which is observed by fellow students can lead to further cheating by others. The authors further postulated that the perception that others are engaged in cheating behaviors and the choice to engage in those behaviors can carry forward into the future workplace. If unethical behavior spreads in a transmittable manner, it illustrates a potential cause of poor ethical decision making considered later in the study.

Recent approaches of study on academic integrity and student ethics also include an increasing emphasis on discipline and program specific concerns. Selections from these discipline based works are considered below for the value in illustrating the progression of work in academic integrity and ethical decision making.

In a review of doctoral students, Minarcik and Bridges (2015) found similar integrity concerns to those expressed in undergraduate programs. This study is more fully discussed later in this review.

Working with first year writing seminar students, Kolb, Longest, and Singer (2015) questioned the motivations that led students at a small liberal arts college to not cheat. The authors' model invited participants to reflect on a recent opportunity to cheat and reflect on the reasons that they chose not to do so. The model utilized a pre and post-test format with students interviewed at the start of the semester and at its conclusion. While the study noted positive results in students not cheating, it found that many did not do so due to structural barriers such as fear of being caught. The authors expressed an interest in further consideration in training students to intrinsically make ethical decisions, especially when moving forward in life outside of academic areas and study.

Kolb, Longest, and Singer's conclusions illustrate the need for further study in students' adapting ethical practices as their own and applying those practices to all aspects of their lives.

Working with business law students, Prescott, Buttrick, and Skinner (2014) found a similar need to help students see actions and their consequences beyond the classroom. By using a real-life integrity episode in one of the authors' classes, an exercise was developed by which students could reflect and comment on the intersection of law and ethical behavior. In doing so, students were presented the opportunity to expand beyond concepts of the law and to make the case personal. The report shares the authors' work to allow students to make this transition and calls for others to provide similar opportunities. Much like the Kolb, Longest, and Singer study outlined earlier in this review, Prescott, Buttrick, and Skinner noted that students must have the chance to explore their ethical decision-making in real world situations where the structural connections and direct consequences for violations may not be as tightly construed. As with the previous study, this report provide applicability for my work in its need for further understanding of how we help students apply their ethical learning to non-academic considerations.

Another examination with relevance for this work was Biswas' (2014) study, which advocates for the use of collaborative instructional strategies to improve students' retention and application of civic responsibilities, including academic integrity and ethics. As with other examinations, this study again used undergraduate writing as the framework by which students are introduced to ethical considerations and reflections on membership in a greater community. The author noted the importance of not only

providing information regarding honor codes and integrity policies, but also providing examples with which students may relate. With the rise of co-curricular programs, all members of the academic community, including faculty, student life practitioners, and administrators are called upon to reflect and incorporate the values of the institution. Biswas notes that the messages that many extra-curricular and co-curricular programs seek to deliver are lost if they are not affirmed and lived throughout the campus community. This collaborative nature of responsibility for students' moral development is key to future work to understand and impact how students make ethical decisions.

Molnar and Kletke (2012) investigated, "Does the Type of Cheating Influence Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Cheating?" (p. 201). In framing cheating behavior, the authors used an expansive definition of inappropriate actions, including illicitly procuring materials via the Internet. This broader approach allowed insight into students' perceptions beyond the classroom and traditional assignments. The authors further investigated whether consequences, education, and the type of institution among other variables influenced students' decisions on whether to cheat. Finding that students who had received defined ethical instruction, such as a standalone ethics class, were less likely to cheat, Molnar and Kletke noted that this instruction seemed to carry forward beyond its initial field of context. Finally, the authors noted that students who spend greater amounts of time using the internet demonstrated a greater likelihood of cheating. As such, they raised the question for future research of how this implication correlates with students' decisions to cheat and how students may compartmentalize such decisions.

Despite the growing calls for alarm within integrity circles, research indicates that all is not lost. Desplaces, Melchar, Beauvais, and Bosco (2007) demonstrated that the implementation or existence of an honor code positively impacts students' beliefs about the existence of honor as a value at their institutions. Further, when organizational systems and personal conduct are aligned to support integrity, there is a greater likelihood of positive outcomes in individual behavior (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, and Treviño, 2010). Such a cultural approach throughout the institution can establish and promote lasting change in integrity outcomes and realized actions (McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviño, 2012).

#### Integrity and the Law

An examination of integrity would not be complete without also considering the legal aspects of academic integrity issues and students' decision-making. While academic integrity cases are not foreign to the judicial system, they are most often addressed in terms of process rather than fact (Ryesky, 2007). That is, courts have been reluctant to wade into determining whether students in fact plagiarized or committed integrity violations, but rather have chosen to focus upon whether appropriate due process procedures have been followed. Mawdsley and Cumming (2008) noted that courts have historically given greater freedom to colleges and universities in determining academic issues and been more restrictive in considering disciplinary concerns. This dichotomy has become problematic in issues of academic integrity. Courts must determine whether such cases are purely academic matters or whether due to the potential consequences,

including expulsion from the institution, they rise to the level whereby review is appropriate. Thompson and Hein (2014) note, however, that even for adjudicated offenses, intervention from college leaders can make a difference in the rate of recidivism. The authors note that the engagement of Greek Life leaders may improve students' decision-making in relation to the use of alcohol and other substances.

### Leadership

Thompson and Hein's (2014) work stresses the importance of leadership interventions in guiding improved outcomes in students' thinking of integrity issues. Leadership is further considered as an outcome of peer interaction. In their study of leadership attributes of fraternity men, Martin, Hevel, and Pascarella (2012) found only limited areas of higher leadership skills exhibited by fraternity members. These findings were noted to not be sufficiently strong in light of the additional training and support of leadership skills given to fraternity members. Long (2012) questioned whether fraternities are meeting their stated goals of increasing students' "professed core values." While finding that students self-reported these goals to be met, there remains room for additional guidance and leadership. For the purposes of my work, it is important to note that this ongoing debate is consistent with challenges faced by many institutions in determining where to draw lines between traditional academic matters and those overseen by student life offices.



### Integrity in the Organization: Leadership for Change

The study of academic integrity has been shaped by new directions of examination within the past ten years. These changes have included the use of organizational theories and best practices to analyze institutional responses to cheating. New studies have also examined the impact of campus leaders in establishing and maintaining campus climates related to academic integrity.

Significant changes in the study of academic integrity began with the dissertation of Tricia Bertram Gallant, now the Academic Integrity Coordinator at the University of California at San Diego. Bertram Gallant's (2006) work applied existing organizational theory to the examination of the causes of academic integrity violations. Noting that previous work on academic integrity focused on student responsibility, Bertram Gallant sought to reframe the discussion as a product of complex organizational factors. While the various theories utilized were not revolutionary, Bertram Gallant's dissertation represents the first application of organizational theory to student cheating. Writing further, Bertram Gallant and Drinan (2006) examined the applicability of organizational theory to the study of academic integrity and espoused its use in combatting integrity violations.

Effecting change in higher education environments can be notoriously slow and difficult to occur. This phenomenon is as true in impacting academic integrity outcomes as in other areas of campus. Bertram Gallant (2007) described the process of changing institutional frameworks relating to academic integrity as complex and fraught with confusion and unanticipated stumbling blocks. As such, embarking on an institutional

effort to address integrity issues requires collaboration and a commitment from institutional leaders to ensure that change is supported.

To support institutional change related to academic integrity, Bertram Gallant and Drinan (2008) examined the use of techniques of institutionalization to impact college and university culture. As with Bertram Gallant's earlier work (2007), Bertram Gallant and Drinan found that change was difficult, slow, and often transitory. They sought to identify means by which gains made related to integrity can be solidified for future campus actors. Unfortunately, the work of Aaron and Roche (2013) found that institutionalization has occurred, yet in a negative manner contradictory to the goal of reducing integrity violations. The authors found cheating to be prevalent from K-12 education through graduate school programs. In establishing this long-term view of cheating, they noted that students receive guidance from many areas, including negative direction and modeling and that it is essential that all stakeholders speak with a common message. Further, Aaron and Roche emphasized the need for a cultural shift to change integrity outcomes. Schuhmann, Burrus, Barber, Graham, and Elikai (2013) noted that to effect change, messages regarding academic integrity must be delivered early in students' careers and repeated often. These studies will be beneficial to my work as I consider how messaging impacts students' broader ethical considerations and decision-making.

In a similar focus of study, new approaches in academic integrity also include examination of the impact of campus leadership on organizational perspectives and actions involving integrity. Whether in higher education or a K-12 environment, the need for ethical leadership was well-grounded in the literature (Edmonson, Fisher, & Polnick,

2003; Hughes & Jones, 2010; McCabe & Pavela 2004). In a call to “cure the cheating pandemic” by Williams, Tanner, and Beard (2012, p. 58), these business school leaders emphasized the importance of education for students and faculty on the aspects of academic integrity. They call on campus leadership to examine policies and practices to provide an institutional response. Hulsart and McCarthy (2011) noted that ethical leadership in the classroom can and should begin with the supervising faculty member modeling such behavior and creating a culture of academic integrity. As such, academic integrity study is examining the role played by campus leadership in impacting students’ ethical decisions, but, there are challenges in identifying appropriate measures to mitigate students’ tendency to cheat. Community college students, their teachers, and college leadership face similar challenges (Humphreys, 2012). The author encourages increased education on integrity coupled with power sharing strategies to enhance students’ ownership of their educational experience. While doing so, greater responsibility falls on faculty to advise and guide students due to the reduced exposure to a residential or student life component in a community college setting. Common approaches, including formal institutional honor codes and cheating hotlines were found to not be effective for all, or even most students (Hollinger & Lanza-Kaduce, 2009). As academic integrity is a long-standing issue for institutions, there must also be consideration of the impact of desired change. It should be noted that no study has advocated for the continuation of the current status quo. Rather each of the summary studies, such as McCabe and Treviño (1993 and 1996), identified the problem that students have been, are, and for the foreseeable future will be cheating.

A consideration of leadership issues and responses must also include discussion of faculty violations of academic integrity policies as these actions may model behavior for students. After finding that he was the victim of a wholesale plagiarism incident by an academic leader at another institution, Sonfield (2014) presented a case study on his own life event and made recommendations for future review. Sonfield calls for expanded education of new scholars, including those in the faculty as new professors and researchers. He notes that integrity violations by these emerging researchers includes both inadvertent as well as explicit examples of inappropriate usage of materials and others' work.

McGrail and McGrail (2015) bring forward the leadership concern that university officials and institutional policy present disparities on what exactly constitutes cheating, plagiarism, and unauthorized help and support. In reviewing the publically available integrity statements of 20 research institutions, the authors noted significant differences in both the definition of an integrity violation and the potential outcomes. While recognizing and supporting academic freedom among professors and institutions and the need for tailoring of policies to fit particular campuses, the authors found the disparities to be a potential cause for concern. They recommended that a national academic leadership body, such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) structure a unified code which could be a framework for all of higher education. Upon the adoption of such a code, the authors further support its implementation at all levels of academic life, noting that in many cases, more rigorous applications of integrity codes do not come until student behavior is entrenched. (It was noted that while upper level and

graduate students are and should be held to a more exacting standard, behaviors learned at earlier stages of their academic career may have become entrenched.) The challenges of the current late adoption model are further exacerbated when major discipline faculty either believe that integrity has been taught at a general education level or do not perceive a significant prevalence of a cheating problem in the work of students in their major. McGrail and McGrail's work is informative for my study as it indicates the need for further understanding of what students perceive about integrity and ethics as well as a more universal application of the values represented therein.

Minarcik and Bridges (2015) found similar concerns regarding the lack of unified definitions and understanding of exactly what constitutes an integrity violation. In their study of psychology doctoral students, the authors asked that students share their perspectives as well as their understanding of why colleagues cheat and what universities can do to rectify the issue. An important aspect of this review was that it worked with students at the pinnacle of their academic studies. Students engaged in a doctoral program should have received both extensive training on academic integrity concerns and have broad experience in implementing appropriate practices into their personal work. Participants in the study noted a need for further institutionalization of a culture of honesty. The authors expressed a belief that such a process would provide needed reminders of the importance of ethical behaviors at key decision-making moments. The work of Minarcik and Bridges is influential to my study in that it reinforces the impact of peer influences on ethical decision-making and illustrates the need for further

incorporation of training throughout students' academic careers and out-of-class experiences.

It is important to note that leadership does not consist solely of top-down direction. Rather, it can be provided at all levels of the organization. Kezar, Bertram Gallant, and Lester (2011) wrote that leadership can be generated at the grassroots level of the institution and yet still have a transformational impact on the campus culture. This study recognized that there are varying types and sources of ethical leadership. It also noted that some changes are more effectively implemented at levels of the organization other than the executive suite. Further, however, the authors addressed the disparity between formal institutional policy and the outcomes that arise in daily situational approaches. As such, they begin a process of policy analysis to determine the causes these differences and to identify areas of study within them.

Leadership, particularly in institutions seeking to make transformational changes, was impacted by the current culture of the organization and the change strategies employed (Kezar & Eckel, 2002a). As such, if policy is not addressed in a manner that supports a universal vision, there will be gaps between intent, direction, and outcome. Further, higher education institutions must allow opportunities for the operationalization of cultural transformations developed through sensemaking as they occur (Kezar & Eckel, 2002b). Perspectives on cheating behaviors by students and efforts to create a campus-wide approach to reduce unethical choices varied by faculty role. Part-time and adjunct faculty do not enjoy the same connection to the institutional academic community, but with increasing regularity, teach large numbers of students (Hudd,

Apgar, Bronson, & Lee, 2009). As such, as institutions seek to transform approaches and more importantly outcomes to integrity concerns, it is important to give all staff and particularly those charged with the implementation of policy and procedure the opportunity to participate in the cultural development process.

Student affairs practitioners have previously demonstrated the ability to transform from functionaries within the institution to change agents when called upon to do so by organizational or societal need (Gaston-Gayles, Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle, Twombly, & Ward, 2005). However, the ability to create institutional change from a non-executive role, was not limited to student affairs staff as it has also been noted in female faculty seeking to cause change from a position of limited formal power (Hart, 2008). In both cases, it is possible for change to be effected through direct effort without the formal power of the institution, but, the outcome of such change is mediated by the perceptions and needs of the front-line agents. In an editorial overview for the *College Student Affairs Journal*, Roland Mitchell (2013) called on student affairs practitioners specifically, and more generally, all members of a college community to expand personal perceptions of their role. Mitchell noted that while a component of the collegiate education for students is to provide a career path, the university experience also prepares students to enter other aspects of adult life. As such, student affairs professionals and by extension, their universities, are called upon to help students reflect ethical decision-making in multiple facets of their lives.

Second, younger and/or less experienced staff members need what Liddell, Cooper, Healy, and Stewart (2010) described as “ethical elders”. These role models guide

newer staff in developing strong professional ethics and in learning to share and model those ethical decisions with students. It is important to note that this work does not describe a formal mentoring program, but rather the network of support and guidance that professionals establish in the workplace. The authors noted that these elders have a strong impact on their direct mentees and indirectly on those touched by their mentees. Further, these mentoring relationships help define institutional policy as they reshape and restructure the written directive with daily practice. Former university president, Karen Gross (2015), writes of the need for higher education leaders, and particularly college and university presidents, to return to what she terms the “treasured values” of “truth, transparency, and trust” (p. 1). K. Gross notes that these values are inherent to positive administrative leadership as well as positive role modeling for students. These examples of role modeling are important to my work as they reflect a mechanism by which student affairs practitioners can impact student decision-making.

As mentoring relationships were developed, an ethic of care arose which provided for the needs of young professionals and assisted them in their own professional development. Noddings (2010) notes that care is not provided by institutions, but rather by people. As such, the ethical decisions undertaken by these individuals and the integrity guidance that they provide to students will be formulated by individual care. Therefore, collaborative endeavors are essential. Starratt (2012) further expounds on the ethic of care, noting that it is a fundamental need of all persons. Within the school environment, it becomes a binding glue, connecting students with one another and with the institution. As



such, it transcends the often functional nature of institutions to be create a place whereby mentoring of both students and colleagues can occur.

Professional ethics are further examined through the work of Shapiro and S. J. Gross (2008) in noting their importance at both the institutional and organizational levels. The authors emphasize the importance of professional codes in serving as “guideposts and aspirations for a field” (p. 31) while at the same time recognizing the need for professionals to develop and apply personal ethical codes. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) write of the interconnected nature of ethical decision making to ensure that students’ needs and concerns are appropriately met. Further, the authors outline the ethic of justice, which they note underlies many professional codes, legal principles, and considerations of equity and fairness. Such an ethic may consider not only the applicability of a law, but whether one should be removed or added to address wrongs that exist (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2011). In this way, individual, professional, and organizational ethics are juxtaposed through the various considerations that must be applied and, at times, reconciled, to ensure best outcomes for students.

The work of professionals is also supported by an ethic of critique. Starratt (2012) expounds on the multifaceted nature of educational institutions and how such an ethic may be employed. He notes that institutions may be strong in one area, but weak in another. As such, it is imperative for the practitioner to examine the values being displayed and the power being utilized in each situation. Shapiro, Stefkovich, and Gutierrez (2014) write that the ethic of critique may be utilized to challenge the status quo to ensure that all students have, “opportunities to grow, learn, and achieve” (p. 213).

This examination permits an understanding not only of how things exist, but to illuminate how they may be addressed in the future.

Efforts to affect students' perceptions of cheating and subsequent responses that are short-term and singly focused, such as those limited to a particular course are ineffective (Bloodgood, Turnley, & Mudrack, 2010). Effective approaches required integrated actions amongst students, faculty, and staff (Malgwi & Rakovski, 2009). Bath et. al (2014) studied such an integrated approach at Concordia College. In their findings, they noted that the collaborative nature of the support in this small, religiously-affiliated college better enabled students to embrace positive cultural values.

As a reflection of the university's role in developing students' ethical behavior, research also suggests that students must develop a greater ethical sensitivity. Rissanen and Löfström (2014) found that the foundation of the challenge to students responding ethically was that they must first recognize a situation as containing a moral dilemma. While the authors found an overall positive response by students to such dilemmas, they encouraged greater focus on exposure to issues of this type. For the purposes of applicability to the work outlined in this project, Rissanen and Löfström noted a need for further research into the means by which students examine ethical considerations and support their views.

Through the adaption of organizational approaches to an ethical decision-making study, the use of institutionalization techniques to formulate and sustain change, and recognition of the part played by all members of the campus community in developing ethical frameworks, the study of integrity on campus is changing. Despite this change,

there remains a need for significant developments in the examination of students' integrity decisions in campus life.

### Connections Between Campus Life and Student Decision-Making

The connection of integrity and ethics study and campus or student life has been at times tenuous and almost exclusively narrowly focused. For the purposes of this discussion, campus life and student life are used interchangeably to indicate the experience of higher education students in areas such as university housing and student activities. Work examining this intersection has primarily focused upon the impact of fraternities and sororities on the moral development of students.

The correlation between membership in a fraternity or sorority and academic integrity issues has been studied at length and using multiple frameworks as either a stand-alone work as a component of a larger study (McCabe & Bowers, 2009; Pino & Smith, 2003; Schuhmann, Burrus, Barber, Graham, & Elikai, 2013; Stannard & Bowers, 1970; Storch & Storch, 2002; Williams & Janosik, 2007). Despite the number of studies, there is no consensus on the impact of membership in a Greek-letter organization on academic integrity decisions. While Schuhmann et. al (2013), McCabe and Bowers (2009), Pino and Smith (2003), Stannard and Bowers (1970), and others reported increased evidence of cheating by fraternity members, Stannard and Bowers (1970) noted a *decrease* in incidents of cheating when there is an increase in overall fraternity membership. DeBard and Sacks (2012) found that despite negative societal impressions of fraternities and sororities, first-year students in Greek Life organizations have higher

rates of academic success. However, they also noted the need for institutionalizing policies that enhance support in a sustained manner. Hevel and Bureau (2014) also noted the need for a better understanding of the impact of Greek Life membership in decision-making areas.

Greek Life membership and an associated impact on student health was examined by Collins and Liu (2014). The authors found that there were higher incidents of negative behaviors (drug and alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, etc.) in fraternity members. These behaviors, and their associated outcomes, may be linked to decision-making concerns.

In a significant longitudinal study, Hevel, Martin, Weeden, and Pascarella (2015) examined fraternity and sorority members at the beginning of the collegiate (and Greek Life) experience as compared to the culmination of the students' undergraduate work. One of the core factors under consideration was the impact on students' moral development after membership in a fraternity or sorority. The authors found a racial disparity in the outcomes, with white students demonstrating a higher level of moral development at the conclusion of the work. It was postulated that this difference may be the result of variance in the resources which are offered by various differing fraternities and sororities, with traditionally white organizations have a greater depth of resources. The study did not query whether participants were members of predominantly white or predominately black organizations, however. It only questioned the self-identified race of the participants. The authors noted the question of moral development as being an area of needed further investigation to better determine the impacts present on students'

decisions. It should be noted, however that previously, the work of Walter Kimbrough (1995) found that there were significant leadership opportunities afforded minority students in predominantly black fraternities and sororities. As minority students participated in these roles, they gained skills that would not have been otherwise available.

The work of Walker, Martin, and Hussey (2015) provides an important framework for the use of fraternities as a focal point for study. The authors noted that there is significant influence and correlation between the behaviors and beliefs of members in fraternities. While they caution that such a correlation may be the impact of self-selection as potential members choose organizations with which they already identify, the commonalities serve to magnify the impact of the phenomenon. As such, the authors noted that challenges, such as underage drinking, that may be attributed to membership, provide opportunities for campus-wide instruction and guidance.

Despite the numerous examples in literature of examinations involving fraternities and sororities and academic integrity, there is limited research available on other components of ethical decision making. A critique of the literature is that such a gap exists. There will need to be additional examinations of student life as it intersects with these broader aspects of integrity.

### Emerging Issues Foster a Need for Research

Current and emerging issues, as outlined in media sources, indicate that there remains great space for the review of students' decision-making generally, and

particularly the choices of students engaged in fraternal organizations. In the *New York Times*, Hughey (2015) asks, “What should we do about fraternities?” (p. A19). At the same time, fraternity membership continues to grow (Mangan, 2015). The impetus for this question is reflected in even a brief review of current events and headlines.

### Fraternities

Whether reflecting actual practice, or a fascination with the lurid, today’s headlines read as listing of news of the weird and/or tragic straight from the 1970’s classic *Animal House*. Two guests at a Marshall University Alpha Tau Omega party required medical attention (Flanagan, 2014). In an inebriated state, the first attempted to launch a bottle rocket from a body orifice. The second, while attempting to capture the events of the evening on video fell from a deck. Both required extensive medical attention. In a more tragic episode, Clemson University student, Tucker Hipps, did not return from a morning run with the university’s Sigma Phi Epsilon chapter (Barnett, 2015). In a lawsuit filed against the fraternity and its leadership, it is alleged the Hipps, a freshman pledge, was forced to jump from a bridge over Lake Hartwell, falling to his death on the rocks below. On the side of non-physical yet still harmful activities, the University of Oklahoma expelled two Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity members after a video surfaced of them leading racist chants, including references to lynching (Fernandez and Pérez-Peña, 2015).

At the same time, fraternities and their alumni are an important and engaged stakeholder population. Fraternal organizations represent significant, unified political power for universities, influencing alumni affairs and development efforts long after

graduation (Flanagan, 2014). The University of North Carolina at Wilmington experienced a public and difficult falling out with its chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon (Elderman, 2015). After suspending the chapter for two years, the associate dean of student life reported that he was the victim of intimidation from members and a close associate of the then-governor of North Carolina. After reinstating the group, the university has been engaged in an extended disagreement with the chapter seeking to be advised by a group of local alumni. The university is seeking to have the national Sigma Alpha Epsilon organization take a direct leadership role in the local chapter. Flanagan (2014) further notes a core paradox of the current relationship between fraternities and their host colleges. In a world where *in loco parentis* no longer applies; increasingly involved parents are seeking for colleges to provide detailed growth to students' decision-making maturity. Whether inappropriate, if not illegal, behaviors receive a blind eye from adult leadership is a focal point in the current murder trial of five Baruch College Pi Delta Psi members (Rojas, 2015). The members allegedly participated in a hazing ritual that involved physically assaulting pledges. The accused have testified that fraternity leaders were aware of their behavior as part of what they termed long-standing indoctrination practices. At the same time, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* questioned who should take the lead on addressing inappropriate behavior by fraternity members (Brown, 2015). Timothy Bryson, Fraternity Council President at the University of South Carolina described the culture of student Greek Life leadership as, "Ignore, ignore, ignore and hope something doesn't occur" (Brown, 2015, p. 1).

## Athletics

In a similar form to consideration of ethical issues in student and Greek life, we find struggles with appropriate decision making in the athletic arena. Clayton, Grantham, McGurrin, Paparella, and Pellegrino (2015), outline the ethical catastrophe at a prestigious university with a long tradition of both academic and athletic excellence. Athletic program students were enrolled in fake classes with no requirements or even course meetings. For these courses, the students received positive grades, which allowed them to maintain their eligibility for athletic competition. Despite the university's strong honor code, this practice was institutionalized and occurred for many years. Perhaps most concerning for the purposes of this paper's review, the study's authors note that the institution's honor code encompassed campus life including not only academic dishonesty but also underage drinking and vandalism.

Athletic related malfeasance is further explored in Turner's (2015) review of the impact of presidential decision-making on athletic standards. Turner notes that flexible ethical choices pervade at all levels of the institution. Turner particularly notes the failure of The Ohio State University's then president Gordon Gee to terminate head football coach Jim Tressell as a National College Athletic Association (NCAA) investigation unfolded. Turner notes that even those at the pinnacle of their careers (here, college presidents) are influenced by the ethics of those around them and have the ability to influence others' ethical decisions.

Athletics have also featured prominently in the reflection of current events relating to academic integrity. Writing for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, which



serves as a weekly news for the work of colleges and universities, Davis (2015) notes the growing tension between definitions of success. He relates:

In the early 1990s, a newly married head football coach at a major NCAA Division I institution took his wife to the American Football Coaches Association annual meeting. At the awards banquet, according to the coach, a prestigious university was recognized for having achieved the highest graduation rate among members' teams the previous year, as calculated by the now-defunct College Football Association. An administrator accepted the award on behalf of the university, as the coach had been forced to resign after not winning enough football games. The recently wed coach's wife, new to the world of big-time college sports, turned to her husband and remarked, "That doesn't appear to be an award you want to ever win!" (p. A27)

This anecdote illustrates the challenges faced when universities employ varying and at times conflicting definitions of success. In doing so, employees may model inappropriate behavior for students and/or even encourage integrity failures. Davis notes both the pressure to meet NCAA minimum standards while keeping star players eligible for competition. As with other studies referenced in this review, Davis calls for a greater culture of academic integrity and modeling of such behavior for students.

### Summary and Conclusions

In summary, I find that there is extensive literature that addresses the issue of academic integrity in the classroom. These works squarely address the problem at hand,

its history, and the need for future work to resolve the issue of students cheating. In the historic literature, in effect, there is a collective wringing of hands that the problem is known, but there are few solutions on the horizon. In the new approaches, as outlined by Bertram Gallant (2006) and others, there are new ways of examining the issue of academic integrity, including the application of new theories or existing theories in new ways. Collins and Liu (2014) note the need for intervention to change student culture within Greek Life organizations. Hevel and Bureau (2014) further support stronger adult leadership to inform and guide students' ethical decision-making. He notes the importance of intentional programming goals to assist in improving student outcomes and development. Martin, Hevel, and Pascarella (2012) also lend support to the need for further investigation of programming guidance. The work of Martin, Hevel, Asel, and Pascarella (2011) further recommends alignment of the stated goals of fraternities and realized outcomes. Aaron and Roche (2013) espouse the need for a campus "village" to effectively address students' approaches to integrity issues. They call for a focus on the culture rather than on a particular area or initiative. The authors further recommend the importance of connecting students' perceptions of cheating with real life implications. Using examples from mechanics unable to perform required maintenance to medical professionals without the core knowledge to execute their job duties, the authors expound on the post-graduation impacts of cheating in both practical and theoretical ways. They utilize this approach to stress the equal importance of faculty understanding of the need to clearly address not only academic integrity, but also its applicability outside of the classroom. In interviews about their current work, student life leaders echo this call

(Kelderman, 2015). There remains, however, limited research on the intersection of broader integrity concerns and campus life. The research that exists is primarily focused on fraternity and sorority life.

For this dissertation, I seek to examine the gap in current literature as related to student life and its interactions with ethical behavior and integrity. This important intersection in students' lives informs how they navigate challenges that are only tangentially, if at all, connected to academic endeavors. In doing so, I seek to utilize a case study approach to better understand how intended outcomes and actual practice related to ethical decision-making diverge.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Overview

This study utilized the qualitative method of inquiry of a case study to examine the actions of fraternity men in approaching ethical decision-making outside of the university classroom. It further examined the impact of policies, procedures, and leadership on these same students' ethical decision-making, again, outside of the university classroom. The study examined these choices within the context of a defined group: fraternity men at a specific small, southeastern university. A case study approach was determined to be appropriate and relevant due to the in-depth analysis which such a study provides for the chosen issue under consideration. Such studies are "bounded by time and activity" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). These parameters and limitations are further referenced by Creswell (2013) and Stake (2005) in defining and applying the unique, focused nature of such a study. Creswell notes that at the same time, they represent the opportunity for the collection of detailed information that may shape the outcome of the issue at hand. The case outlined in my work reflects Creswell's (2013) admonition that there must be clear and natural boundaries to the study and a desire to develop an in-depth understanding. For this study, I determined to use fraternity men to clearly define the grouping being examined. Fraternity men represent both a definable, recognizable student group as well as one about which a body of information and literature exists. Further, fraternity men are a group influenced by one another, their leadership both

within the fraternity and in the broader college or university, and through university policy. This level of organization and influence permits a more closely analyzed approach to the impacts of university decisions, procedures, and policies. As noted elsewhere in this document, the goal for understanding is to examine actions, motivations, and influences upon the fraternity members. Qualitative research permits us to understand the “social arrangement” and “explicit and implicit rules” of the issue under consideration (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 9). These authors further note that it is the researcher’s responsibility to provide a clear overview of the contextual nature of the problem and its influences. As the researcher for this project, I further determined to use an embedded approach (Yin, 2014) due to the three distinct subunits contained within the case: fraternity members, fraternity advisors, and university employees. Each subunit provides a unique and individualized aspect of the ethical decision-making process. Fraternity men represent the college students with whom we, as student affairs professionals, work. Fraternity advisors represent adult supervision and guidance for the students of the university. However, these leaders may, or may not, be institutional employees and/or otherwise affiliated with the host university or college. Finally, university employees or staff reflect the direct supervision of students through official institutional channels. University staff are, for the purposes of this study, defined as direct employees of the host campus or university. The latter two groups also serve as the primary generation point for documents and materials that provide frameworks for students’ actions. As such, in this study, they served as the access point to core repositories of documents. Through the analysis process, the subgroups’ responses were

compared against one another to determine each group's perspectives and impact on ethical decision-making. The subunits' responses were also compared to the documentary evidence which was obtained. This will be further discussed in the triangulation section of this chapter. Through this examination, the case study approach provided a clear and rigorous review of the responses, motives, and influences upon the fraternity men who formed the case.

### Research Methodology

Drawing upon the naturalistic inquiry first presented by Lincoln and Guba in 1985 and subsequently utilized by many researchers and research guides whereby realities are multiple and inquiries are value-bound (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), research, in this examination provided through a case study, makes "the world visible" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). In subsequent work, and in the introduction to the fourth edition of their comprehensive guidebook for the practice of qualitative inquiry, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe the researcher as a "*bricoleur*" (p. 4) or quilt-maker. The process of such a person is one of taking the bits and pieces gathered during the research process and weaving them into a complete, clear whole. Flyvbjerg (2011) illustrates the ability of the case study to connect the context of an issue under study, potential causes of the issue, and realized outcomes. The mechanisms of a case study permit the researcher to examine the issues of how and why both events occur and decisions are made (Yin, 2014). As such, the case study lends itself well to the study of a defined group or incident

within a greater context, and here specifically, to the study of a group of fraternity men at a specified university.

The naturalistic paradigm of Lincoln and Guba (1985) provided the underlying framework for studying responses to influences including leadership, guidance, and policy. The authors noted that:

- Realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic.
- Knower and known are interactive, inseparable.
- Only time-and context-bound working hypotheses (idiographic statements) are possible.
- All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.
- Inquiry is value-bound. (p. 37)

Lincoln and Guba's seminal paradigm provides the underlying structure for this study to understand the impact of the leadership provided to fraternity members including educational and integrity/ethical decision-making policy. This structure guides a core tenet of this work which is that the study and its outcomes cannot be divorced from its surrounding context. Further, this framework permits a review of the priorities of the fraternities' leadership and the institution's employees. First (2006) states, "Policies are manifestations of the choices society has made about its future" (p. 131). Rist (2003) notes that policies are reflective of multiple influences, including resources, actors, and motivations. Decision-making is therefore an iterative process, reflective of multiple inputs (Rist, 2003). As such, Rist notes that it is not crucial to identify a single point in

time or policy as the root cause of an outcome, but rather, it is essential to examine the aggregate of influences that have acted upon an individual or group. In this study, the choices that the society (institution) made about its future (student integrity) are being studied within their home context. These choices cannot be accurately understood if divorced from this setting, therefore, the use of a case study approach is instrumental to effectively evaluating their use and success.

Stake (2005) furthers this discussion in noting that case studies pull simultaneously from:

- The nature of the case, particularly its activity and functioning;
- Its historical background;
- Its physical setting;
- Other contexts, such as economic, political, legal, and aesthetic;
- Other cases through which this case is recognized; and
- Those informants through whom the case can be known. (p. 447)

These supporting areas drive the ability of the case study to appropriately and successfully examine the organizational structure inherent in its definition. Further, the case must contain an issue or concern that requires a deep, rich, and contextual evaluation (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Each plays a role in developing the outcome of the case. None can be ignored or omitted without a failure to fully investigate the case.

These paradigms are designed to provide a method of study within a bounded system (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). That is, the researcher must examine a naturally defined group or organization. The boundaries of the study must appropriately match the



existing boundaries of the organization, unit, or group. The boundaries of the unit of study provide the necessary definition to limit the case to a group within which there is significant interaction. Such boundaries further enhance the reliability of the case as they assist in preventing a mission creep that includes ancillary or tangential concerns (Yin, 2014). For the purposes of this study, I utilized a group of fraternity men at a southeastern university. This group was previously defined by membership in an organized male fraternity. Additional participants included those fraternity and university leaders directly connected to the studied students. Members from several fraternities on the campus were chosen. These targeted groups permitted the rigorous design needed, yet a target sample to ensure that appropriate diversity of perspectives was present.

Of the case study data collection methods outlined by Yin (2014), three primary selections were chosen for the purposes of this study: interviews, document review, and observation. These methods, which will be further discussed in the design section of this report, contributed to the value of a case study approach. Interviews served to illustrate individual perspectives within the broader case. Documents provided fundamental reflections of official policy and procedure. Observation entailed examining messages shared by students and university officials via official and casual channels, including postings, social media, and web-based sources.

### Design

Ary, Jacobs, and Sorenson (2010), and Yin (2014) noted the use of case studies to develop a fuller understanding of a person or organizational unit. This creates a reflective

process by which the group or organization of study is examined in its natural setting (Stake, 2005). Flyvbjerg (2011) expounds on Stake noting that the case examines a system or unit of study that requires an in-depth examination. Here, this unit was defined to be fraternity men of a southeastern university. Through this method of study, the unit may be understood within the full context of its environment. This unit is a “bounded system” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37) permitting its study as a singular case (Stake, 2005). Such a case examines one overarching organization or unit in one issue or concern aspect. (As previously noted, I did examine three subunits within the larger case.)

Further, Merriam and Tisdell note that the case is the defining quality rather than the topic of research. This permits the researcher to focus on the influences at the chosen site with the identified group. Flyvbjerg (2011) further explains that the case is an examination that must take place within its native context from which it cannot be separated. For the purposes of the study reported in this document, fraternity men were studied at one university during a defined period. As such, the data presented is applicable only to this group within the identified timeframe.

### Research Questions

Development of the research design was facilitated through the guiding research question as listed previously in this document:

What frameworks are fraternity men using to make ethical decisions?

And the subordinate questions:

1. What are current members of fraternities’ perceptions of ethical decision-making?

2. What challenges and obstacles to ethical decision-making are presented by members of fraternities?
3. Are the perceptions of fraternities aligned within the campus community and congruent with the student affairs leadership responsible for this area?
4. What recommendations for policy are made by both members of fraternities and student affairs leaders?
5. Have the values of ethical decision-making been “institutionalized” within the fraternity men and student affairs leadership responsible for this area?

Each question was illustrated by one or more of the methods of inquiry (interviews, documents and materials, and observations) during the case study and each was also identified as pertaining to one or more subunits of the work.

#### Research Setting

The setting for this research was a small, southeastern university. The university was chosen because of its strong Greek Life system, approachable community, and manageable (for the purpose of study) student body size. Further, the chosen university offered proximity to the researcher and a direct personal connection of the researcher to the institution. As outlined in other sections of this document, entrée to a closed and sensitive group must be gained through a gatekeeper, who assists in establishing rapport and ensuring participation from the chosen subjects (Liamputtong, 2007). As an alumnus of the university, I was able to establish a gatekeeping relationship with the appropriate staff. This relationship building element was essential to the process. The chosen university has a strong Greek Life population with approximately 50% of the student

body current engaged. The choice of a research site was further influenced by the current events outlined in the literature review chapter of this document. Additionally, the chosen site has not been visited by some of the high profile public cases in recent years, though it did publically remove a historic fraternity chapter in 2015. (The removal of the chapter was virtually unprecedented as its alumni membership included a former governor of the state and former United States cabinet member, as well as influential university alumni and local business leaders.) Universities which have been impacted by these cases are understandably much more reluctant to submit to further inquiry during a period when they may be facing public scrutiny, external policy review, and/or legal action. As such, the host site was far more receptive to the opportunities presented by this research and the granting of access to the researcher. Finally, due to the smaller size of the university and its staff, the chosen site presented a greater organizational flexibility, which was important to the process. Flyvbjerg (2011) notes that the case chosen for a study must provide the ability for rich inquiry, yet with careful consideration to the factors which may limit that same inquiry. The chosen host site provided strong access to the research questions without being either too large or too influenced by other elements.

### Documents

To facilitate this project, the researcher collected documents related to the ethical education of students who are both enrolled at the host university as well as in the chosen fraternities. Official documents include the university's policies and procedures as well as official directives. Further, the researcher sought to acquire university and fraternity documents that would provide a holistic examination of practices and policies relating to

ethical decision-making. Additionally, interview subjects were invited and requested to share any personal documents that would bring light to their approaches to ethical decision-making and any instruction that they had either received or, depending on their role, given. Personal documents included e-mails sent and received and personal working notes of fraternity advisors and university staff. It is recognized by the researcher that by relying on the gatekeeper and interview subjects to provide documentation, an inherent bias may be created. Participants may exercise selective provision of documentation (Yin, 2015). The researcher sought to minimize this self-selectivity by asking each participant for documents and comparing documents as a component of the triangulation process. The researcher also investigated the university's official document repository, which contains policy and procedures manuals for the institution.

### Interviews

Interviews were conducted in a qualitative, semi-structured format. This choice of format permits the researcher to deviate from a rigid interview protocol script by utilizing open-ended questions (Yin, 2015). Such questions may initiate, or even require follow-up questions to further illuminate an interview subject's perspectives and rationales. As such, the researcher has the flexibility to explore topics as they arise. Interviews began with a scripted interview protocol to ensure that each sub-unit of interviewees received the same initial inquiries. However, it should be noted, that while the protocols for each subunit contained some core questions, there were additional inquiries relevant to the specific subunit contained in each set. Through this process, the researcher sought to be "fluid" as described by Yin (2015) and flexible as noted in Creswell (2014). Further, the

interviews indicated a process of negotiated text by which questions and points of further inquiry developed from responses to earlier questions (Fontana & Frey, 2005). (Each interview asked the core questions as outlined in the provided protocol, but permitted exploration of items that were brought forward by the interview subject.) That is, it was important that the researcher engage the interviewee through the information he or she presented. Interviews were scheduled for an initial hour of discussion with an opportunity at a later point for reflection on the transcript provided and clarification of any issues. Initial interviews were conducted in person on the campus of the host university. Follow-up interviews were conducted both in-person and via telephone as requested by the interview subject.

### Observations

It is important to note that for the purposes of this study, observations were considered and intentionally limited within the research methodology. While in many settings observations provide valuable insight into group dynamics, their very nature was problematic to this study. Fraternities and their meetings are by design secret societies. As such, the presence of a non-member could inherently change the conversation and is in many cases an obstacle for research that cannot be overcome. Further, the researcher would be unable to live (literally or figuratively) amongst the research subjects to observe the casual conversations and interactions that would be most informative for this study. As such, the researcher is unable to be present for the 24-7 day-to-day working conversations that may (or depending on the day) may not arise. While observing these interactions may have been illuminating, it was feared by the researcher that access to

them would be too happenstance to contribute meaningful value to the discussion. Observations were gained regarding the general host site, however. These included a review of artifacts as displayed throughout the campus, including advertisements, images, and other displays. These items were available in residence halls, the student center, and other campus locations. It was felt that these reflected student perceptions and messages in a casual, non-controlled way. Observations were further collected through messaging provided through social media; such as Facebook, Twitter, and Yik Yak; and web sources. These points of reference were utilized to gauge the consistency of students' messages and understanding. For the reasons outlined above, this approach was limited in its inclusion, but provided an informative perspective.

#### Participants

Participants were selected to fall within three subgroups: fraternity members, fraternity leaders (student leadership within the organizations), and adult leaders. All participants were affiliated with the host university and its fraternity system during the period of study. As the host university engages in a delayed rush process (beginning in the spring of each year), member participants were required to be initiated members of their fraternity. I perceived that this would increase the members' knowledge of fraternity practices as well as increase their observations of behavior within the group. Fraternity member participants were enrolled in a traditional undergraduate program that requires residency on campus. All were housed in university housing of various types: standard residence hall, fraternity hall, and university-owned apartments. All member participants were in commonly perceived undergraduate ages under 25 years old. Ten total fraternity

members were interviewed. Of those interviewed, they were overwhelmingly white, with two participants who were of Asian descent. Fraternity advisors were employed by the individual fraternity organization to serve as a chapter advisor. Advisors have completed their own undergraduate education and were members of their respective fraternities during that period of their lives. Some members work for the university in other roles, but such a connection is not a requirement of their position, nor is it universal. Four chapter advisors were interviewed. University staff are those directly employed in the student affairs division of the host institution. These staff range from front-line employees with direct, daily student contact, to those employed in senior, department and division leadership roles. University staff represent a group with more extensive educational backgrounds (masters and doctoral degrees) and work experience. Five university staff were interviewed. Due to the smaller size of the host university, staff positions are often unique and individualized with one person in each role. All advisors were white and with the exception of the counselor, were male. Participants were ensured of their privacy protections to encourage an open, honest dialogue.

#### Participant Selection

Participants were selected in conjunction with the coordinator of Greek Life at the host university. Participants were chosen to represent a stratified cross-section of fraternity membership, fraternity leadership, and university oversight. As such the participants represent a difference in power roles and responsibilities within the university's Greek Life system. Within each subunit of analysis, the researcher sought to ensure diversity with representation from differing fraternities, differing fraternity roles,



and length of membership or work history. Through the interview process, the researcher sought to “consider the motivations, power and privilege of interviewees when conducting interviews” (Brooks and Normore, 2015, p. 801). Yin (2014) advocates the choice of participants based upon the perspectives that they may offer the study. This stratified purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013) permits comparison between the subunits of study as well as the ability to examine interactions amongst the groups. This cross-referencing will also be further discussed in the section on triangulation of data.

### Analysis of Evidence

The analysis of all evidence was a multi-step process by which the researcher sought to understand not only the prima facie evidence presented by research participants and underlying documents but to also to develop a clear understanding of the meaning and intentions of these resources. Analysis represents the connection individual moments and occurrences to develop a holistic view (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Further, Denzin and Lincoln note that there is not one story that is under review, but rather many stories, each with their own actors and perspectives that must be interwoven to permit the researcher to gain knowledge. To facilitate an effective understanding of the evidence presented, all interviews conducted and any associated field notes taken at the time of the interviews were transcribed the by the researcher. All documents were scanned to provide text-searching capabilities and textual analysis. Items gleaned through observation were recorded via photograph, screen capture, or field notes as appropriate. These approaches provided the foundation for two-part coding (Miles Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The

first coding step was to use values coding identifying where the research indicated value or meaning was being placed on a particular thread. This method also permitted the attribution of value or priority to institutional documents as they represent the goals, even if implicit, of the organization. The second step of the coding process was to develop pattern coding, which represents binding connections between individual data points and value codes. Such a process permits the analysis of multi-part studies, including multiple case studies and/or multiple subunits (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). For my purposes, this permitted the comparison of similar thoughts and outcomes amongst the subunits of the study. Upon the completion of the coding process, the data was examined to explore and expose networks of information. The following pages represent the specific analysis of responses and documents as contained in this study. Using the frameworks outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), I sought to ensure accurate reflection of participants' stories.

### Documents

The use of text based resources was essential to my work. Peräkylä and Ruusuvauori (2013) note that in the modern world much of life is reduced to text and that, as such, it must be a core element of the research process. Further, text provides the framework by which policies and expectations, which represent cultural values, are shared (Peräkylä and Ruusuvauori, 2013). Text based resources were analyzed to reflect the sociological tradition of the written word serving as “a window into human experience (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 259). As such, for the purposes of this study, they were considered to illuminate participants' perspectives and understandings at a point in

time. “ ‘What people say’ is often very different from ‘what people do’ “ (Hodder, 2003, p. 158). Hodder further notes that practice may, in fact, carry greater weight than written procedure. Yin (2014) notes that documents and texts, in a fashion similar to speech contain unspoken themes. Yin calls on the researcher to seek these obscured messages and consider their importance in the research process. This permitted utilization of an interpretive analysis to identify common language, themes, and traditions across the documents (Ryan & Bernard 2003). Throughout the review process, I sought to classify and divide texts based on their source: fraternity member, fraternity leader, or university leader. The division of sources reflects the subunits of the embedded case study as previously outlined. This classification allowed texts from differing sub-units/sources to be analyzed in comparison in comparison to one another and to the case as a whole. In conducting this analysis, I found Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) differentiation between documents and records to be of great importance. This definition was applied to consider records to be official items, such as university and fraternity policy handbooks, and documents to be correspondence, notes and personal communication (Hodder, 2003). By doing so, the researcher was able to make comparisons between the official stance of organizations and officials and their unofficial interpretation and or perspective. My work as the researcher was facilitated and enhanced by the use of a moderately affluent university as the host site. Electronic communications were as noted by Yin (2015), readily available and a component of the fabric of the institution. Electronic storage and transmission further enhances both the retrieval of documents and their subsequent analysis. As noted previously, documents were examined using the two-part coding

process outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). This involved seeking thematic, values rich notations and then further making connections amongst the data points. Upon completion of the initial analysis of the documentary evidence, it was compared to and connected with participants' interviews to further the understanding of the information presented.

### Interviews

Analysis of interview data began as the interviews were underway. While interviews were conducted, I made initial field notes regarding recognized themes and points of concern shared by participants. Whenever possible and when doing so would not be unduly obtrusive, I noted the time stamp to facilitate later comparison of immediate impressions with the transcript of the participant's interview. (While all participants received prior notice and gave consent that their interviews were being recorded for analytic purposes, I sought to minimize any reminders during the interview to reduce any impact on participants being forthcoming.) Upon completion of the interviews, all were transcribed to facilitate a more thorough process of analysis. Transcription resulted in a text which could be reviewed for coding and evaluation purposes. Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori (2013) provide a strong framework for the transcription of text in preparation for analysis. By utilizing these authors' processes, all interview transcripts are standardized. Further, non-verbal cues and messages are added to the written record, permitting them to be incorporated in the coding and analysis processes. Upon the completion of the transcriptions, the two-part coding process outlined above was implemented. Initial coding sought to determine values-based

language within each participant's interview (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Secondary coding investigated patterns of language and response both within and across interviews. Analysis of interviews allowed for the understanding that each subject's voice was his to share. As such, data may result in conflicted responses across subjects and subunits (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Through these procedures, participants' stories were opened to review an understanding of their decisions and the impact placed by others on those choices.

### Observations

As noted previously, the use of observation as an evidentiary source was limited in this study. Observations include the general host site and the messaging displayed throughout the campus. (For the purposes of this study, artifacts observed throughout the campus environment, were separated from documents that were directly provided by research participants and university employees.) Observations were recorded by field notes by the researcher, and where possible, by photographs of messages and displays on the campus or via social media and the internet. As with documents and interviews, observational data was examined for values and patterns in support and in contradiction of ethical decision-making. Due to the previously noted restrictions of investigating a closed, "secret" society, observations are a limited, yet important aspect of the study.

### Analytical Approaches

Yin (2014) presented three means of analysis of evidence that were useful in the review of data for this project: pattern matching, explanation building, and chronological sequences. These methods of analysis provided the opportunity to understand the

information gleaned through the research process. They permitted the researcher to better understand the actions undertaken by both fraternity members and the supervising campus leadership. They also permitted the understanding of perspectives utilized at a particular time.

The development of pattern matching allowed examination of data to determine where it was replicated elsewhere in the study. Questions for the researcher included whether a code was present in another participant's report, form of evidence, or subunit of analysis. Use of pattern matching allowed the quilt-making process of Denzin and Lincoln (2011) to begin.

Explanation building permits the examination of alternative means of understanding of the case study. Through this step, the data was analyzed to determine how it could be interpreted in alternative theories to those anticipated. The development of alternative mechanisms permitted the researcher to ensure that there were no other means of interpretation being overlooked.

Finally, the use of a chronological sequences permits the examination of the evidence presented as it is known to participants. Through a chronological perspective, it is possible for the author to examine the means by which understanding develops and that meaning is constructed. This approach gave particular focus to questions of the order of events and whether that indicated a causal relationship.

The work of Lindemann (2006) provided a framework for analysis of whether a decision represented an ethical one. As noted previously, I did not wish to constrain students to a restrictive ethical model, but rather to use one that permitted discretion in

decision. Coupled with the social, interconnected nature of the fraternities, Lindemann's feminist ethical approach emphasizing an ethic of care and responsibility was an appropriate framework. Decisions were considered in light of whether they represented care for self and/or others or responsibility for self and/or others.

Further, the data received was analyzed with an eye to an institutional policy studies approach. As action research, policy studies has the ability to examine decisions and make recommendations for the future. First (2006) noted that this incorporates a clear understanding that actions taken are value laden. Therefore, the study must understand and support the values upon which it is based. These values include the community of meaning in which the policy was situated (Yanow, 2003). These communities are based upon local knowledge and perspective, which contextualizes the research. Such a model was used by Martin and van Haeringen (2011) in their review of the efforts of an Australian university to effect changes in students' approaches to academic integrity. The authors utilized the Australian Policy Cycle, which provides for a feedback loop amongst key stakeholders of a university. While this policy cycle was not directly utilized in this study, it provides an example of the iterative nature of students' and institutions' responses. In this manner, all members of the community have the opportunity to establish a common meaning and approach to the changes that occur.

The attention to policy review also reflected the previously discussed aspects of Bertram Gallant and Kalichman's (2011) nested model of influences by the individual, organization, education system, and society. For this study, I examined whether and how the organizations and systems involved were influencing student's decision-making. The

use of Bertram Gallant and Kalichman's model was a key guide for the analysis. It provided a mechanism to consider whether students were engaging in behavior in response to the individual, organizational, or societal levels.

### Special Considerations

As noted earlier in this work, I chose to consider the fraternity men interviewed for this project a vulnerable population as outlined in the text of Liamputtong (2007). Fraternities as a whole were undergoing great scrutiny due to news reports, questionable decisions, and societal pressures. In the five years leading up to this study, these pressures increased steadily as documented in the news reports and calls for change. Recognizing fraternity men as a vulnerable group permitted and even expected the researcher to give additional consideration to several key areas of concern above and beyond their general importance in all qualitative research.

#### Establishing Rapport, Community, and Respect

Liamputtong (2007) outlines that it is vital that researchers working with vulnerable populations develop a strong and authentic connection with their subjects. Methods of doing so include the use of a gatekeeper (as previously discussed in this work) to provide entry into a community, direct face-to-face communication to encourage personal interaction, and avoidance of what (Liamputtong, 2007, pg. 44) terms a "hit and run" approach. With the designation of fraternities as a vulnerable group for this study, it is also important to recognize shared culture, which can result in a reluctance to share with an outsider (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

#### Self-Disclosure



The researcher is encouraged to utilize appropriate self-disclosure when working with a vulnerable population (Liamputtong, 2007). Disclosure permits the researcher to share pieces of his or her story to identify to the subject why there is an interest in the field. It also allows the researcher the opportunity to accurately reflect the intended goal of the study. This personal touch assists in ensuring a development of shared meaning and understanding at the time of analysis (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

### Subject Selection

Finally, Liamputtong's (2007) work helped inform the process of subject selection. It emphasized the importance of seeking the otherwise marginalized voice within the group and the marginalized group as a whole. For this study, I sought to identify, in conjunction with the Greek Life coordinator who served as my gatekeeper, a wide range of fraternity members. I wanted to ensure that I did not have only those who were in leadership roles or were "standouts" within the organization. These voices are important and should be included, but must be in balance with all members of the group. I further sought to identify a range of fraternity (adult) advisors. This again ensured a balance in the perspectives and information gained in the project.

As noted earlier, the recognition of fraternity men as a vulnerable group is a new usage of Liamputtong's work. I, however, do feel that it is a valid and important extension of previous applications. For this study, it permitted a greater connection with the men being studied and therefore provided a stronger voice for their stories.

### Threats to Reliability and Validity

Maxwell (2013) spoke to the inherent challenges of qualitative research in that threats to validity are often obscured during the preparation for the research. Further, he noted that due to the close, personal relationship that the researcher has with the subject matter, there is an opportunity for bias (on the part of the researcher) and reactivity (on the part of the research subject(s)). As such, it is important that the researcher carefully examine methods by which validity can be supported. Validity for this study used “validation” (Creswell, 2013, p. 249) as a support. Using this framework, as already identified, a case study was the appropriate mechanism of study. Further, other researchers have the opportunity to review the data collected and would, it is believed, draw similar conclusions. It is recognized, that this study, like many other similar case study projects, is limited in its opportunities for external validity and/or transferability. This limitations will be further discussed in the following pages.

#### Member Checking

Interview subjects were contacted to clarify material or intentions that were unclear to the researcher upon transcription and reflection on the interviews which occurred. Member checking permits interview subjects to guide and clarify researchers’ perspective (Creswell, 2014).

#### Triangulation

To promote a greater validity, this case study utilized the triangulation approach (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014), which asserts that through the correlation of three key areas of research, data can be corroborated. Data collection is conducted in each of the areas,

with the goal of a more thorough understanding of the collective through checks on the accuracy of the material. The triangulation approach also allows for a greater understanding of the material being examined as it provides for strengthening the connections between disparate sources within the case study.

The first area of examination for triangulation was document analysis. Through the examination of key artifacts utilized in guiding students' decision, a strong foundation for the work of this study was formed. Documentary evidence provides a stable source of information that can be used for examination throughout the work of the study. The primary source of documentary evidence for this study was the examination of written policies and procedures. These included those from the university examined as well as from the fraternities.

The second component of triangulation was the member interview process. Interviews provided first-hand accounts of both participants' recollections of their actions and their perceptions of those actions. Interviews allowed for an understanding of the individuals' perspectives. As such, it was important to consider the meanings ascribed to actions and policies as presented in interviews. These meanings and therefore, the related actions are "value bound" and have multiple realities (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Further, this leg of the triangulation process was to include information gained through leadership interviews. Speaking with those who provide oversight of the fraternities (chapter advisors) and oversight of the university's Greek Life system (professional student affairs staff). This endeavor provided the opportunity to examine the means by which members received direction and feedback on issues of ethical policy and practice.

Finally, triangulation included the observations made of the campus and the messaging provided to and by students. Observational data provided a method by which I could determine if the institution's official communication and policies was lived in its daily life. This component served as both a check against and a support for conclusions drawn through the first two aspects of triangulation.

### Reliability

Reliability in the interview coding process was noted as an additional point of concern in the data analysis process. Reliability indicates that the research process can be repeated (Yin, 2014). All interview questions are reflected in the protocols outlined in the appendices of this report. It should be noted, however, that by using a semi-structured approach, the discussion with each participant represents a one-time opportunity. Follow-up and probing questions were reflective of the initial answers provided. Through the concept of negotiated text (Fontana and Frey, 2005) each conversation is a moment in time by which the researcher and participant draw from one another.

### Transferability and Generalization

Though this research study was performed as a single case focused on one university, it is hoped by the researcher that there is transferability to other like institutions and studies. Brooks and Normore (2015) note that transferability is the transparent discussion of a researcher's expectations of outcomes if a study is replicated. For the purposes of this study, the researcher anticipates that colleagues would note varying degrees of congruence between fraternity behaviors and institutional policies.

However, this discrepancy should not be viewed as a detriment to the study, but rather, an opportunity for discussion amongst student affairs professionals and researchers. Such a discussion fits within Brooks and Normore's (2015) recommendation for greater discussion on policy and procedures to increase the usefulness of the outcomes of studies. Yin (2014) notes that rather than expecting a case study to provide probabilities in a manner that can be extrapolated, it provides a basis to generalize theories and approaches. Flyvbjerg (2011) notes that it is an unfair mischaracterization of case study research to consider it to have limited standing, but rather to understand it within the context it is situated. As such, results in other locations may vary, but the underlying theories are supported with this population.

#### Researcher Bias and Subjectivity

The researcher acknowledges that each individual brings inherent bias to the study (Creswell, 2014). As the researcher in this study, I am a Caucasian male with an educational background in student life. I attended the host university as an undergraduate student. At the same time, however, I did not participate in the Greek Life system as a student. Due to the passage of time, the university leadership in the functional area being studied were not present at the time I was an undergraduate student.

As the researcher, I further note that I do not have a known bias regarding this study, but felt that it was incumbent on me to present these items for the benefit of the reader. I further identified these characteristics to interview subjects to establish rapport and to share a common background.

## Conclusions

Using the case study approach and defined organizational group presented in this chapter, I examined the means by which students approach ethical decision-making outside of the classroom. The utilization of a case study allowed for both holistic and subunit analysis to make comparisons between the intents, communications, and outcomes of the fraternity men being studied. The use of known data checking methods reduced the likelihood of threats to reliability and validity. It is believed that these methods provided a unique opportunity of study at the host university. As has been previously noted, this as a descriptive case that provides the opportunity for future work and study. The data and conclusions presented in the following chapters serve to illustrate this opportunity.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### Overview

This chapter summarizes the findings of the research study which were obtained through a process of interviews, document analysis, and observations conducted during the winter and spring of 2016 on the campus of the host university. These investigatory tools were utilized to examine the means by which a group of fraternity men considered ethical concerns as well as how decision-making might be impacted through student life staff members and training. Through this examination, consistent themes were sought in order to code the data retrieved and then to make meaning from that data. Examination included pattern matching, explanation building, and chronological sequences (Yin, 2014). Further, this approach and research location afforded the opportunity to examine the contextual nature of the guidance students receive. Student responses could be examined against those of leaders and the documentary evidence provided through the institution.

This study was guided by the desire to better understand what frameworks are fraternity men using to make ethical decisions and the previously stated subordinate research questions:

1. What are current members of fraternities' perceptions of ethical decision-making?
2. What challenges and obstacles to ethical decision-making are presented by members of fraternities?

3. Are the perceptions of fraternities aligned within the campus community and congruent with the student affairs leadership responsible for this area?
4. What recommendations for policy are made by both members of fraternities and student affairs leaders?
5. Have the values of ethical decision-making been “institutionalized” within the fraternity men and student affairs leadership responsible for this area?

The data collection process yielded information that was both helpful in understanding the member’s perspectives and illustrative of their behaviors. Through the use of three key data points (interviews, documents, and observations), the researcher was able to utilize Yin’s (2014) triangulation approach to examine responses against other data points.

#### Setting the Stage-The Host University

This study was conducted at a small, predominately residential, highly selective institution located in the southeastern United States. The institution historically had an affiliation with a national Protestant denomination, but severed its religious ties in the early 1990s. Since that time, the college has been a private, non-profit institution. Students of the institution are overwhelmingly undergraduates, and only undergraduate students were considered for the purposes of this study. This study location provided the access needed for a successful examination of students’ approaches to ethical issues as well as a manageable campus size, which allowed for a better understanding of the impact of student life interventions.



The host university prides itself on being academically challenging, even quite rigorous, and this attitude permeates most aspects of the campus culture. As will be noted in the interviews and observations sections, students engage in a highly busy academic life, perhaps even one that is intentionally overly full. (It is as though they feel that they must demonstrate a need to show how engaged they are each day.) Throughout the campus, and especially in the student center, multiple opportunities for involvement are displayed and exhorted. Such a combination of academic pursuits and student activities can also create substantial pressure on students. As one interview participant noted, approximately 40% of the student body goes on immediately to a graduate degree program. Therefore, grades, class rank, and similar academic concerns may take on an additional pressure beyond that which they would at another institution. Strong interest in work beyond an undergraduate program also drives a highly competitive campus culture.

The university also demonstrates pride in engaging students outside of the classroom. Throughout campus, the word “engage” is a touchpoint for campus marketing, activities, and events. Engagement is stressed as a virtue of students’ campus experience. This concept is further evidenced through students’ campus life experiences. Students are expected to be actively involved in organizations and activities. This hyperactivity was demonstrated during the interview process not only in challenges with scheduling conversations, but also in students’ references to their schedules. Students and staff noted that it is not unusual for students to be engaged in multiple campus organizations and leadership roles. As will be discussed further in the findings and analysis, this also

permitted students to contrast various leadership input and to be impacted by multiple points of contact with adult staff and/or leadership.

Finally, the university, as a private institution, and as one where virtually all students live on-campus, has a high cost of attendance. With an undergraduate tuition for 2015-2016 of \$45,632 and an estimated total cost of \$61,272, the university attracts students from families of some substantial means. Having such means permits students to engage in extracurricular activities, including Greek Life. (Though not explicitly noted, financial means also frees many students from after class employment, freeing them to have more time for engagement in campus activities.) This financial backing was also evidenced as discussions occurred regarding students' financial contributions to activities. Further, the university recruits heavily from the southeastern United States, but has some students from each area of the country as well as a small population of international students.

The highly selective nature of the university is evident when on campus. Students enjoy their time in a space filled with well-kept and up-to-date facilities surrounded by a carefully manicured landscape. Many campus academic facilities have been either recently constructed or recently renovated. The student union, where campus activities are centered is freshly renovated for the third time in the past twenty years. Students enter into an expansive atrium with plush seating in a commons area. Adjacent to the atrium, one wing of the building has been dedicated to student activities. It incorporates collaborative spaces that would rival many corporate environments for usefulness and comfort. The opposing wing of the building incorporates the executive leadership for the

student life division as well as offices designed to spur student leadership, including internships and a leadership institute named in honor of the previous vice-president for student life. The campus environment contributes to a feeling that this is a place where students have access to every opportunity to both enhance their collegiate experience and to prepare them for an unlimited future.

### Greek Life on Campus

The host university has a long-standing tradition of fraternal organizations with some chapters extending over a greater than hundred year history. Such chapters include membership of leaders in many fields including large corporations, significant non-profit organizations, and political entities. The university has had an increasing interest and participation in Greek Life in recent years with a currently estimated half of the student body engaged in a recognized Greek organization. As such, the university has devoted increasing resources to Greek Life, including staffing a full-time advisor in this area. (Student life leadership is a growing personnel area at the institution, with many new and additional staff having been hired in the previous five years.) However, during the time of this study, the position of Greek Life coordinator was open, having been vacated in the mid-fall, and candidates were being actively recruited. (The Greek Life position was one of two in the student activities area open at the time. These openings clearly placed pressure on the other staff in the activities area, stretching them over many responsibilities.) The current opening was noted by several participants in their discussion on leadership provided and the need for more support of Greek Life. (The leadership impacts of the student life staff will be further discussed later in this report.)

During the time of the study, supervision for Greek Life fell to the director of student activities, who would in other times supervise the Greek Life coordinator. As noted previously, at the host university, the fraternity offices are located in the student center, which is the campus activity hub. This permits a close relationship amongst the fraternities as well as between them and other aspects of the campus organizational culture.

The university recognizes six fraternal organizations, which are considered to be a part of the campus' Interfraternity Council (IFC). The chapters currently on campus all have been a part of the university's organizational landscape for at least 20 years. In recent years, the university worked to reorganize one chapter, and this effort was in its infancy during the time of this study. This chapter, which had historically been strong on the campus had been previously disbanded. Equally, approximately one year prior to the study, the university worked with the national office of a historic chapter to close that fraternity's operations on the campus. The chapter had been the university's first recognized fraternity and second recognized campus organization. It had been a part of the university for over 140 years and its banishment was a significant rift in the fabric of the fraternity culture at the institution. The IFC serves as the student governing board for the activities of the campus' fraternities and their activities. It includes membership from each of the recognized fraternities, with each organization receiving one voting membership. The IFC's constitution notes that the fraternities must be represented on the IFC by someone already designated as an executive leader within the organization. The IFC serves as an opportunity for members of the fraternities to have a liaison to the

university's administration and also as a governing board for the behaviors of the university. The IFC was previously charged with hearing disciplinary cases that arose within the Greek Life system. (The previous system was gender-specific in nature, with only male student leaders hearing cases involving other male fraternal organizations. One fraternity advisor described the previous system as an "old boys" network whereby the votes were swayed based upon personal relationships as opposed to the facts of a specific case.) In the past two years, this responsibility has been removed, however, and a new Greek Life conduct board formed. The conduct board does not replace the general student conduct panel for the university, but rather serves to address misconduct at the organizational level for fraternities and sororities. Members of all aspects of Greek Life sit on the new board, providing a gender-balanced approach to its decisions. This change was noted by one interview participant to be a positive move for the university as it allowed for more professional consideration of violations and reduced what he perceived as a bias in the system. Overall, the Greek Life system, office, and leadership structure appeared to be well organized and effective in both promoting Greek Life on campus and in monitoring and supporting its activities.

There were several defining characteristics of the fraternities at the host institution, which should be noted for the reader. First, the fraternities currently recognized by the institution represent ones that are historically white. There is not a traditionally minority organization represented. The membership of the local chapters is predominately white as well. (Informally, some minority members of the campus identify with a historically black fraternity, but it is not recognized as an official part of the

campus community.) Second, as at many colleges and universities, the fraternities represent a closed culture from the general campus community. Members form a close-knit social group with many activities and events limited either explicitly or implicitly to others involved in Greek Life. (This closed nature was further enhanced by university programming that segregates members of the campus Greek Life community for training and education related to alcohol and drug use as well as sexual assault.) Further, within each chapter, there are specific policies, practices and rituals to enhance the members' feeling of belonging. This phenomenon makes it difficult for a non-member to gain full access to both participants and documentation. In fact, for many of the organizations, their literature and guidebooks are closely held secrets. (It was interesting to note, however, that with the ever-increasing nature of internet resources, several are now publically available either officially from national offices, or through unofficial copies posted to the internet.) To ensure access to the members and to gain trust, it was necessary to utilize the services of a member of the community as a gatekeeper. The gatekeeper's role in the study was to provide introductions to necessary participants, to support the study as a valid research endeavor, and to ensure all participants that there were not negative connotations the work. (In the current climate of high scrutiny of fraternities, including a nationally publicized incident of the death of a fraternity man in the home state of the host university, members were understandably apprehensive about potential implications of the study.) For this study, the acting Greek Life coordinator served as the gatekeeper. The introductions and support that she provided were invaluable to the ability to gain access to members and to their experiences. She granted

permission for the study to occur, notified members of the recognized fraternities, and provided introductions as appropriate. Through the gatekeeper's work, I was able to gain access and hopefully more honest responses than I might have otherwise anticipated. In gaining access, the work of Liamputtong (2007) was particularly valuable. It was essential to recognize the potential vulnerabilities of the study group and to establish a strong and authentic connection with them. It was necessary that the fraternity men and university leaders not perceive this study as a threat, criticism, or attempt to change their organizations.

The host university engages in a delayed rush process for its Greek organizations. Using this approach, students must complete their freshman fall semester prior to being considered as potential members. (This is unlike many large, public institutions which schedule rush to occur just prior to the start of the fall semester or during its opening days.) During the fall, students can become acquainted with the fraternities and attend public functions, but cannot be officially considered as potential members. (This time represents an interesting period during which prospective members and current members are unofficially working to make positive impressions on both sides, but officially cannot explicitly pursue one another.) Students rush during the early days of the second semester, allowing pledging to begin shortly afterwards. The university only permits pledges to remain in that category for eight weeks. (Interestingly, in interviews, several participants referenced fraternities working to unofficially extend this time, or at a least extend pledges' period of servitude to brothers. One advisor stated that he had to explicitly and firmly guide his fraternity's members away from trying to violate

university policy in this manner.) This timetable meant that during the interview process for this study, students moved from being pledges to being initiated fully into their respective fraternities. (No students were interviewed during their time as pledges.) Due to this timing, I had a unique opportunity to talk with newly initiated members just after their pledge instruction was completed. This allowed for insight into the formal instruction provided by the fraternities and how the men responded to that instruction. Insights gained could then be examined against the reflections of seasoned fraternity members, some of whom were reflecting on instruction received three years prior to the study. The timing also permitted examination of the instruction provided by the university's Greek Life office. As I was to discover from the participant interviews, much of the instruction from the student affairs division and its subset, the Greek Life office, is provided to potential fraternity members just prior to their rush period. Some instruction is also provided to fraternity leaders as well, with limited instruction, if any provided to the general membership on any regular or scheduled basis. While the juxtaposition of the study and the rush schedule was unanticipated in the planning of this research, it was a beneficial occurrence, providing unique access and insights.

As a requirement of the Clemson University Institutional Review Board's (IRB) oversight of this study, and to ensure access to the fraternity men needed to complete the study, contact was made with the national offices of each of the six fraternities recognized by the host university. Each national organization was requested to give permission for its members to be included in the study and to be interviewed by the researcher. The IRB's request was due to the current sensitivity of fraternities across the



nation to their image in the media and as recognition of the exposure some fraternities are currently facing in litigation, institutional policy changes, and proposed laws. (The IRB's request further substantiated the treatment of the fraternities and their members as a vulnerable population, needing special consideration, support, and protection.) Several fraternities had questions regarding the study and the use of any data obtained through the research. Some were concerned that members voluntarily choose to participate. (The study had already established protocols to ensure that participation was fully voluntary, with an invitation being issued from the university's Greek Life office inviting potential participants to contact the researcher.) Interestingly, some fraternities offered to assist in recruiting members, while others were clear that they would only permit their members to participate if the national office were not involved in recruiting participants. Ultimately, each national office gave permission for their members to participate. (Permissions were received via e-mail from a representative of the national office of each fraternity and provided to the Clemson University IRB to confirm that this stipulation had been met.) However, several national offices asked that responses of their members not be linked to the national fraternity name or the local chapter affiliate. This stipulation was granted by the researcher in order to gain access to the interview pool. As previously noted, the role of the gatekeeper was also very important during this stage of the process. Some fraternities contacted their local chapter advisor and/or the university's Greek Life office to ensure that the request for participation was officially sanctioned and fully understood. It was clear to the researcher that due to recent events, fraternities are increasingly sensitive to outside investigators and for this study needed assurances to move forward.

A similar apprehension of the intent and usage of the study was expressed by many of the member participants. It was clear that concern existed as to whether there was a malicious intent to the work. One individual was bold enough to ask directly whether I would “embarrass” his fraternity. All participants were assured that my goal was to consider how students make ethical decisions, using a group of fraternity men rather than to investigate fraternity procedures and activities *per se*. Only one employee participant expressed a similar concern. Like the member participants, he was quickly assured that there was no malicious intent to the process. For both groups, it was made clear that the ultimate goal of the research was not to question the behavior of fraternities, but rather to examine a defined group of students who have an existing leadership structure and relationship to university officials, therefore allowing me to better examine the impact of educational initiatives and outcomes.

At the host university, fraternities and sororities have the opportunity to have on-campus housing within one of the university’s traditional residence halls. (The university has converted spaces that were traditionally women’s residence halls to house Greek Life organizations. In recent years, the institution has moved to segregating housing by floor rather than by entire buildings, or even complexes as it once did.) Through this process, selected students within an organization are permitted to live amongst other members of their group. Each Greek Life organization that requests housing is assigned a floor within the building for their housing. (In recent years, the university has begun permitting the resident assistant (RA) for each floor to be a member of the assigned group. This change in practice was noted by one chapter advisor has providing greater unity for the

organization, while at the same time exposing the RA to greater ethical dilemmas. He or she is now expected to police a community of “brothers” and may struggle with allegiances to his role as a member of the university’s housing office and membership in a fraternal organization.) This opportunity begins with the sophomore year as unlike some other institutions, students may not move into Greek housing when they receive a bid or are initiated as members. Further, this housing is heavily weighted towards sophomores within the organization, as upperclassmen often choose to live within the university-owned campus apartments. Despite recognizing housing for Greek organizations in this manner, the university does not, however, offer other forms of Greek housing or common space. (For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that all campus organizations share office space within the student center, located in close proximity to the campus organization staff, including the Greek Life office.) Unlike many peer institutions, fraternities and sororities are not permitted to have on-campus houses. However, several of the fraternities maintain off-campus houses, owned by their local chapter, where a small group of members may reside. (Typically no more than 2-4 members live in each fraternity house, if any do so. Students wishing to do so, must receive special, explicit permission from the university’s student life office, as the institution has a four-year residency requirement for all traditional undergraduate students.) The lack of on-campus housing and/or fraternity common space was noted in several interviews as having an impact on students’ behavior, the university’s response, and a possible reflection on university values. These comments will be further explored in the reflections on students’ interviews.

Overall, it was clear that the university has a strong Greek Life system and that having such a system is an integral part of the campus community. Further it was evident that the student life staff support the Greek Life community and wish for it to be successful. Finally, the Greek Life community was open to the research as it occurred and to possibly benefiting from any information gleaned during the research process.

### Interviews

Interviews for the study were conducted with an intentional mix of participants, designed to represent students' perspectives, including both chapter members and chapter student-leaders, chapter adult leadership in the form of advisors, as well as university-employed staff. This distribution of interviews was intended to permit the comparison of various groups' perspectives. It was further designed to permit varying levels of thought being given to the process, with the presumption that older members, advisors, and staff may have given greater thought or weight to ethical considerations. (Such growth was recognized by one university staff interview participant who referenced students' decision-making as applied to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of stages of moral development.) At the same time, it was important that each group have the opportunity to share items of concern and interest with the researcher.

To establish a schedule of student interviews, an invitation to participate was issued from the researcher through the Greek Life coordinator to current fraternity chapter presidents and in turn from the presidents to their chapters' members. Ten current students who were fraternity members initially responded that they would be willing to

be interviewed for the study. Of this group, two subsequently declined to participate due to scheduling conflicts. Two additional student fraternity member interviews were gained through connections made by the researcher while on campus. This provided a final interview group of ten fraternity members. This group included two chapter presidents, three recently initiated members, and a variety of men with other levels of engagement with the fraternity. Each participant indicated that he was voluntarily engaging in the study and understood that there were no known risks or benefits to him for participating.

For advisor interviews, contact information was obtained from the university Greek Life office for the current advisor of record for each recognized fraternity. (The university maintains a list with one key advisor responsible for each organization, even though the Greek Life office recognizes that some groups use an advising team or other collaborative leadership structure.) Utilizing this contact information, invitations were issued to the current advisor of record for each fraternity. As outlined previously, it should be noted that some fraternities use a structure by which advising duties are distributed amongst several individuals, often with a mix of university employees and chapter alumni not currently affiliated with the university. These arrangements, which are often informal, allow advisors to select the elements of chapter leadership most suited to their interests and availability. In at least one case, it was indicated by the chapter advisor that this permitted him to disavow knowledge of the events occurring at social functions because he would not attend those events, but one of his advising partners would do so. Another advisor, who represented the sole local adult leadership for his organization stated that he left social functions solely up to the men of his chapter. For my purposes, I

contacted the person who the university officially recognizes both because this was the readily available contact information and this is the individual that is sanctioned by the national fraternity offices and the university to act on the local chapter's behalf. Four advisors responded to my request for an interview. One advisor, formerly a university employee, remains officially listed despite having left employment and moving across the country approximately a year ago. The sixth fraternity does not have a current advisor of record as they are the organization recently re-chartered on the university campus. Of the four advisors who responded that they were willing to participate in the study, three are employed on the university campus and one is employed locally in a professional field. The four advisors interviewed were all members of their respective fraternities when undergraduate students. Three of the advisors attend the host university and were members at the chapter they now assist and guide. The fourth was a member at his undergraduate university. It was noted by several participants of the study that this advising structure is not common to all institutions. Some require that all advisors be current university employees. (The Greek Life coordinator stated that a similar system had been explored at the host university for all campus organizations and that while such a change had not been implemented, it remained under consideration for the future.) Equally, not all fraternities on other campuses have an advisor who was a previous member of their local chapter, or even, in a few cases, of their fraternity at all. Again, the Greek Life coordinator noted that some institutions require an employee to be the organizational advisor, which may mean that there may not be someone on staff who was an undergraduate member of the particular fraternity. All who spoke of this issue noted

that having advisors who were members of the fraternity, if not the chapter, being assisted is the ideal approach as it permits a greater involvement with the fraternity, and especially its meetings and rituals. (Two chapter advisors noted that a non-member advisor would not be permitted to attend chapter meetings as these are considered part of the “ritual” of the fraternity and are therefore closed and secret.) The advisors represented an eclectic group, with two being very recent graduates of their undergraduate programs, one being a mid-career professional, and the fourth approaching retirement later this year from employment and advising duties. All, however, were strong resources for the work of the study.

The final group identified for interviews was university staff employed in the student life division. (Unlike the fraternity advisors who are employed in other roles and advise as an auxiliary and voluntary duty, the university student life staff represent the professionals with training in student development theory engaged in the daily support of students’ campus lives.) Staff interviews were initially intended to encompass the front line Greek Life staff and one or two more senior administrators. In the course of the study, additional staff were identified as either serving a key leaders for the Greek community of the university or as having unique insight or knowledge which could be beneficial to the study. As such I ultimately interviewed five university student life staff. These include a counselor, the acting Greek Life coordinator, two members of the division’s executive leadership team, and a staff member who straddles the division between student life and academics. This mix of staff participants is believed by the researcher to represent a diversity of roles and perspectives needed to better understand

the ethical decision-making education currently provided and any gaps which may exist in the university's offerings.

### Interview Participants

The data provided by interview participants was immensely important to the success of the study. Participants were overwhelmingly engaged in the work that was occurring and interested in being of assistance to the researcher. To permit the reader to better understand each individual who participated in the study, each person is outlined below. There were ten fraternity members, four fraternity advisors, and five university employees interviewed for the study. All fraternity advisors and university staff were white and all except the counselor were male. Eight of the ten fraternity men were white, with the remaining two being of Asian descent. All names have been changed to support the confidentiality necessary for the study.

#### **Dr. Brown**

Dr. Brown is a long-standing employee of the university within the student life division. His current work supervises disciplinary procedures for the institution, but he has worked in several functional areas of the division. He has a personal affiliation with Greek Life, having been an undergraduate member at another institution.

#### **Cal**

Cal is a freshman fraternity member. At the time of his interview, he had been recently initiated into his fraternity. He is involved primarily in social activities on the campus.



**David**

David is a junior fraternity member. He has been actively engaged in his fraternity, including serving in leadership roles. As a student, he is a philosophy major and emphasized his consideration of ethical concerns as he considers his chosen career path, medicine.

**George**

George is a senior fraternity member and is highly engaged throughout the university. During his time at the institution, he has served as a fraternity leader, student government leader, and member of several other organizations. He currently serves on the university's task force to raise awareness regarding sexual assault and harassment on college campuses. Through these roles, he has worked extensively with many members of the institution's student life team.

**Mr. Gaines**

Mr. Gaines is an employee of the institution in an administrative capacity. He is a relatively recent graduate having moved directly from being a student to being a full-time employee of the institution. He recently became the advisor of his fraternity and was a member of this chapter as an undergraduate student. The chapter with which Mr. Gaines is affiliated is considered to have a strong reputation on campus.

**Ms. Gibson**

Ms. Gibson is a member of the student life staff with responsibility for overseeing the application of the university's drug and alcohol intervention programs. In this role, she

also provides education and risk management training to the university's Greek Life system.

**Jackson**

Jackson is a sophomore fraternity member. He is currently in a mid-level leadership role within the fraternity and has been engaged more extensively as a social member.

**James**

James is a junior fraternity member. He has been actively involved in his fraternity, having served as the chapter president. Another area of involvement has been working with the chapter's recruitment system for prospective new members.

**Jeff**

Jeff is a freshman fraternity member. He recently completed the pledging process and is proud to have done so. He is an international student, which places him in the minority of the university population as well as the Greek Life system. He values opportunities to give back to the broader community, noting that he is involved in campus community service efforts as well as serving as a mentor in a program for underprivileged males.

**Mr. Lee**

Mr. Lee is a fraternity advisor who does not work for the university. As an undergraduate student, he was a member of the chapter with which he now works. He stepped away from the fraternity for several years as he pursued a graduate degree in another city. He has now returned to the location of the host university and is employed in a professional position nearby.

**Ms. McKeown**

Ms. McKeown is a member of the student life staff, having worked in various roles within the department. Officially through the student life division's organizational chart she supervises Greek Life indirectly, but as a practical matter, this year has supervised the area directly due to the departure of the Greek Life coordinator in the fall. Ms. McKeown was affiliated with a sorority at her undergraduate institution.

**Mr. Mitchell**

Mr. Mitchell is an employee of the institution in an administrative capacity. He has a background in student life, so he has a comprehensive understanding of student development theory and how it relates to the growth of the men in his fraternity. He also has a firm grasp of fraternity policies and procedures having worked for the national office of his fraternity. He was an undergraduate member at this university of the fraternity he now advises.

**Dr. Paxton**

Dr. Paxton is a long-time member of the university's faculty. He has served as a fraternity advisor for many years and intends to retire at the conclusion of the current school year. While he was a member of this fraternity, it was at another chapter.

**Pete**

Pete is a highly engaged senior student. During his time at the university, he has served as president of his fraternity as well as a leader of other campus organizations.

**Dr. Reynolds**

Dr. Reynolds is a long-standing employee of the university. Though currently employed in the academic division as an administrator, he has previously been employed in student

life and has a strong background in that area. He is not, nor has he ever been, affiliated with a fraternity.

### **Rob**

Rob is a junior fraternity member. He has been actively engaged in his fraternity as well as other campus organizations. He is recognized as a student leader and has significant levels of interaction with the campus student life staff.

### **Sam**

Sam is a freshman fraternity member, having recently completed his pledging period. He has a history of campus involvement during his relatively brief time at the university.

### **Mr. Waldrop**

Mr. Waldrop is a relatively new employee of the institution, having been employed at this site for approximately one year, but is a senior member of the staff. He works within the student life division with responsibility for guiding student development. His areas of responsibility encompass student activities, including Greek Life.

## **Interview Settings**

Interviews for this study were conducted on the campus of the host university. This location not only provided a convenient setting for research participants, it allowed the researcher to create an environment of comfort for those being interviewed. A comfortable setting allowed for more naturalistic inquiry and, hopefully, for more forthcoming and honest answers. Utilizing the host university also permitted the researcher to make subtle observations regarding the ways in which participants engaged

with others on the campus as well as to make observations on the messaging displayed throughout the campus facilities and spaces.

Fraternity men were interviewed in and around the university's student center. This location is one that is convenient to their daily lives as well as serving as the institution's student life home. Interviews took place in quiet corners and offices to afford students confidentiality in their responses. During the interview periods, the researcher noted consistent activity in the student center. This included students studying and socializing. It was also clear that at each point, students were noting the messages provided. The stairwell contains a message board for upcoming events, including fraternity parties. Large display monitors provide a scrolling advertisement of upcoming university-sponsored events. The dining hall, adjacent to the student center, permits student organizations to display large banners advertising events and activities. Each of these types of advertisement served as a point of information to enable a better understanding of the campus and its culture. Also, as noted previously, the offices of the campus activities and organizational staff are located in this facility as well as the majority of the remainder of the student life division. The center includes spaces that are student-owned for organizational use. These include conference and meeting areas that would be the envy of the most collaborative Silicon Valley enterprise. The student center at the host university clearly meets its desire to be a hub of student activity.

An unintended benefit of the student interview setting was that it permitted subtle observations of students' interactions with one another. As I waited between interviews, I was able to gain a sense of overall campus culture. Watching and noting students'

interactions was illustrative. Students were busy, even as they socialized. Further, students clearly demonstrate an interest in personal impressions. Many students were in dress clothes, despite appearing to be on their way to and from classes, the dining hall, and the residence halls. Students seemed to be busy with electronic devices (smartphones, tablets, and small laptops) and exuded a sense of being actively pursuing a purpose each day. Despite an incredibly large television in the atrium of the center, which is always displaying the news, students never seemed to be engaged in watching. Equally, I never saw a student simply lounging in the space.

University student life staff as well as university-employed chapter advisors were interviewed in their campus offices. As with students, this afforded the use of spaces with which the interview participants were comfortable. The use of individual offices also permitted confidentiality for each participant. While the interviews with student life staff were in high student traffic areas, those of other employees were often in spaces students rarely visit. This limited the researcher's ability to gain additional reflections between and during these interviews. The one off-campus advisor interviewed was met at a coffee shop of his choosing and convenient to his office.

#### Interview Protocol and Process

The interview process for all participants involved a semi-structured interview protocol for each investigated population: chapter members, chapter advisors, and university staff. (Please see Appendix A for the full interview protocols for each population.) Each interview was scheduled for up to one hour with the average conversation lasting approximately 40 minutes. The interviewer used the protocols as a

guide to ensure that each topic was covered, but not as a rigid script. This approach allowed for further exploration of topics that arose and to ensure that areas of importance were fully probed during the conversation. This method further helped to ensure that the discussion remained conversational, in hopes that this would produce more authentic responses from participants. To further increase the likelihood of honest dialogue, each participant was assured that their responses would remain confidential, and that their identity would be masked in the final analysis of the study. At the conclusion of each interview, each participant was invited to share any thoughts or reflections that had not been previously covered during their conversation and several chose to take advantage of the opportunity to provide additional information.

#### Interview Codes

Throughout the interview process, the researcher sought to analyze and code interviews to both begin a process of understanding, but also to better inform subsequent interviews. It was intended that through this iterative process interviews scheduled for later in the sequence would be enhanced through data gained in earlier discussions. In some cases, opportunities were presented to better explore topics that had arisen with other interview participants. To prepare for analysis of the data obtained, all interviews were transcribed to improve recall of key points and themes as well as to facilitate reflection upon the information presented. The researcher also found it helpful to review the interviews through their audio recordings. This permitted each participant to be heard in their own voice both literally and metaphorically.

Transcripts were analyzed for consistent topics or themes of conversation utilizing the coding methods outlined by Saldaña (2013). Using these methods, repetition of language, topic of discussion, and meaning were sought out in each participant's interview. While in some cases congruence was immediately established, in other instances, participants contradicted the meaning and even, at times, basic facts presented. Several core themes emerged immediately, including most clearly, academic integrity. An additional theme of students' adherence to and application of the university's alcohol policy also quickly emerged. As further review was conducted, these themes were considered for codes of meaning.

Further, the researcher sought to utilize the framework provided by Yin (2014) to review data for this project: pattern matching, explanation building, and chronological sequences. It was considered whether men were using the same language, terms, and themes, how they were establishing rationales for their behaviors, and how influences acted upon their beliefs. Through the use of an interview pool which incorporated students at varying levels of their university experience, as well as several chapter advisors who were recent graduates, it was possible to better understand the chronological element of students' changing views.

After all of the interviews were completed and analyzed, seven codes of meaning were identified as being evident throughout the discussion and of relevance for this report. These codes represent core ways in which the men of the study form ethical codes and decisions. Further they represent areas where there is influence upon the men by external sources, including their fraternity chapter, chapter leadership, and university



staff. These codes, their supporting evidence, and their significance to this work, are outlined in the following sections.

### **Code One: Academic Integrity**

As noted previously, the first theme and code to emerge through the interview process was that of academic integrity and how students at the host university approached this subject. Every interview conducted included this strand at least once, and in several cases many more times. It was immediately clear that at a minimum an acknowledgement of academic integrity was an important aspect of the host institution's campus culture. What was not immediately clear was whether this theme was one of actual meaning for students or rather simply one to which deference and acknowledgment must be given as a part of the campus culture. To this end, Dr. Reynolds noted that for many students, the process of reciting the academic integrity pledge at each fall's convocation served as an empty gesture. Student interview participants gave varying perspectives on the applicability of the code to their personal lives and actions. As this study considers students' ethical decision-making, it is important to further understand the value of the academic integrity pledge.

The first context in which academic integrity was discussed was that each person interviewed stated that the university's integrity code or pledge was posted in every academic space. Students noted that its presence permeates the teaching spaces of the institution. They further noted that the pledge should be familiar to each and every student due to its prominence. Most of the student participants immediately expressed the belief that students would not cheat in the classroom. Jerry, for example, stated that he

had never encountered academic dishonesty in or out of the classroom. He went on to share this his fraternity had considered and resoundingly rejected or “shot down” the maintenance of a test bank as being incongruent with their stated values. On further exploration, students often cited the university’s high academic standards. Similarly, several students noted that these standards meant that there was a high level of competition in the classroom. Jeff stated that there would be peer pressure against cheating or receiving unauthorized help. He stated that he believes the academic integrity policy applies outside of the classroom. As an example, he stated that students would have take-home tests without cheating or working inappropriately. Rob stated that cheating does not happen at the university. Cal stated that the integrity pledge is a “badge of honor” for the university. These reflections supported the strong inclusion of the integrity pledge as a component of students’ experiences.

All reports were not positive, however, Mr. Gaines noted that it was telling that the academic integrity pledge is only displayed in academic spaces and is not in any student life or other non-instructional areas. He further noted that it is an “empty statement” especially when compared with the honor codes of institutions, such as Washington and Lee University. He noted that there was not university-wide buy-in when the pledge was developed. This was contrary to Dr. Reynolds’ report that the pledge was an outgrowth of a Student Government Association (SGA) initiative. The question of whether the academic integrity pledge had widespread support was telling in considering how students adhered to its tenets. Further, as will be addressed later in this report, it exhibited a concern in whether students (and adults) perceived this to be a

general statement of the expectations for ethical behavior on the campus. It was readily apparent that this was not the case.

The second context in which academic integrity was addressed was that each participant was specifically questioned on how students approach academic concerns outside of the classroom. No member of the fraternities acknowledged having a test bank or other academic resource within their chapter, however several noted that “others” did so. As noted above, Jerry noted that his chapter had high academic standards and has explicitly rejected the development of a test bank when one was proposed in his chapter. George was more open about cheating outside of the classroom. He stated that he had received unauthorized help with assignments and that his guiding practice was that students should know to “read your professor.” He went on to espouse that not only is such a practice a matter of knowing the rules for a particular course, but also a matter of knowing how likely the professor is to be upset by a violation of those rules. George stated that such help was permissible due to a perception that no harm was caused. Equally, Cal felt that there was a, “lot of cheating that occurs”. He also noted that students hold academic integrity “on a lower regard” because they do not see long-term consequences. He also stated that it is difficult to get caught. Sam stated that he would cheat on homework assignments and that he perceives that some other members of his fraternity would cheat on major assignments. The students’ responses led to discussion on the consequential or utilitarian nature of ethical approaches within their lives. The theme of utilitarian approaches was to arise throughout several interviews, including as a point of reflection of several university leaders.

Dr. Reynolds further explained students' approaches to academic integrity with the recognition that in his perception some students violate academic integrity standards through a lack of knowledge or education. In addition to recommending further education on the concepts of academic integrity, he referenced consideration being given to involving students in the academic integrity process. In a similar fashion to the university's disciplinary conduct board, Dr. Reynolds wanted to investigate having students sit on an academic integrity board. He perceived that such a change would be helpful both to the students appearing before the conduct board as they would receive peer education, but also to the students on the board as they could assist the university in more readily identifying ethical challenges for students. Interestingly, despite a move in this direction to synchronize the two structure systems, there did not appear to be a plan to, or even consideration of, merging the two systems. The dual nature of the review boards for violations (in addition to a yet third board for Greek Life) seemed to minimize the ultimate efficacy of each. By separating various types of student conduct, students themselves could parse out how they viewed adherence to each. The university seemed to have inadvertently created a system by which students could segregate their views on ethical decisions.

In examining students' approaches to academic integrity as reported in interviews, several key strands of meaning emerged to me:

- Students recognized that the host university has an academic integrity pledge.
- The academic integrity pledge was recognized as applying to in-class assignments and activities.

- The university's placement of the academic integrity pledge only in teaching spaces had reinforced the message that it did not apply in other situations.
- Some students perceived a sense of consequential or utilitarian ethics when determining whether to violate the integrity pledge.
- The varying conduct boards allowed both a disparity in official responses from the university, but also a varied student recognition of the importance of each to their lives.

### **Code Two: The Code of the True Gentleman**

A second prominent theme that emerged related to students' ethical frameworks and development was that of the fraternity serving as a proving ground or creator of young gentlemen. Students referenced their fraternal codes and constitutions which outlined their national fraternities' and local chapters' expectations for member behavior and conduct. This also emerged as one of the clearest means by which students received ethical instruction and guidance. These codes are almost always a core component of fraternity pledges' experiences and are outlined in a variety of resources, including hefty manuals, online documents and training, as well as fraternity marketing materials. (Mr. Mitchell referenced the importance of his fraternity's code in not only developing young men, but also as a point of required study, whereby pledges learned the values of their fraternal organization. Mr. Mitchell noted that pledges were routinely quizzed on their knowledge of the fraternity's values and those who missed answers on the fraternity's code received consequences implemented by their peers.) Students referred to this training as an integral component of their personal ethical development. Many perceived

that their fraternity had either provided ethical standards and education or reinforced training received in other contexts. (In considering the reinforcing nature of the fraternity experience, it should be noted that several students referenced their chosen chapter or fraternity as having been selected due to its ethics. As such, students indicated a process of self-selecting behavior by which like-minded men chose one another and an organization that supported their views. In this way, it may be assumed that the fraternity did less to teach a particular ethical code than it did to reinforce or support a code that was already in existence.) It should be further noted that students interviewed equated exhibiting gentlemanly behavior as being a component of being an ethical person. Through statements that harkened to an earlier era of chivalry and expected courtesy, manners were exhibited as ethics. In some cases, these were supported by responses that reinforced that belief. However, in others, this seems to represent a juxtaposition of these two ideals in a manner that does not directly connect them or their outcomes.

Gentlemanly-like themes were present in both the descriptions provided by fraternity members, advisors, and university staff. Rob noted the values of the fraternity as being consistent with gentlemanly behavior. Cal noted the “brotherhood” as being important to his development. He also noted the “historical sense of ethics that are also founded in Christian values.” David also spoke of the values of his fraternity as being rooted in Christian ethics, which he specifically denoted as being a component of his ethical framework. Here the themes presented were noble in their nature and application, but perhaps not directly a reflection of ethical thinking on behalf of the members.

Upon further probing, participants spoke of a variety of meanings of gentlemanly-like behavior, including their treatment of others. Jackson most clearly described an ethic of care when sharing his chapter's responsibility for a member driving under the influence of alcohol. Jackson reported that when the issue came to the attention of fraternity members, it was addressed by peers. Rather than using official channels, such as the university's drug and alcohol counselor, or the Greek Life or Student Conduct Boards, Jackson's fraternity implemented restrictions and peer support. He described these actions as being an outgrowth of the brothers' care for another and stated such a level of responsibility should be a commonly held value. This was one of few illustrations that directly connected members' behaviors to the care ethic that I was investigating. It was far more common to hear themes of students' self-policing behaviors being couched in terms of avoiding university consequences, including the dreaded social probation. (In what may be one of the most telling examples of students' consequential ethics, social probation, the loss of the ability to host official fraternity events and especially those at which alcohol was served, was presented as one of the direst of university and national office responses.) The second major example of an ethic of care and responsibility that was exhibited in students' responses was that of Jerry's work with the campus sexual assault prevention task force. This work, which will be further explored in the code on fraternities' treatment of women, was of clear importance to Jerry. He indicated an understanding of the sexual misconduct that can occur on a college campus and the need for a community-wide understanding of a common sense of responsibility. Further, it should be noted that there were examples of the attempted

inspiration of an ethic of care and responsibility in university staff responses often couched in terms of membership in a community and a sense of common responsibility. Ms. Gibson, for example, outlined her work to encourage students to consider the impact of their decisions not only on themselves, but also on the community at large. In a similar fashion, when Mr. Waldrop and Dr. Reynolds spoke of their work with the respective conduct boards, they addressed the communal nature of the campus. This perspective was echoed by Ms. McKeown and Mr. Mitchell in their comments on the recent implementation of, and subsequent enhancements to, the Greek Life conduct board. McKeown and Mitchell noted that it had inspired a sense of self-policing which while at times utilitarian in its approach, recognized the need for a community sense of care and responsibility. While the employee responses were illustrative, in examining students' behavior, it had been hoped that there would be more examples given regarding exhibiting an ethic of care and responsibility.

In evaluating the themes used by the fraternities, it should be noted that these are lofty ideals, not necessarily reflections of current practice and life. In discussion with Dr. Brown and his work on the university's disciplinary processes, he noted that fraternity members often have to be reminded of their organizations' codes, mission, and values. Dr. Brown specifically referenced asking students whether their actions were reflective of their stated beliefs, including using the fraternities' own language to redirect their thoughts and behaviors. Ms. Gibson shared similar perspectives on this theme in addressing communication she has had with fraternities on the themes of events which they schedule. She indicated that she has helped fraternity leaders rethink and redirect



their chapters related to inappropriate themes. Ms. Gibson noted that one of the substantial challenges she has faced in this endeavor is a sense that such events were permitted in the past. She went so far as to indicate that she has shared with students that she is aware of past events and even as a member of Greek Life during her undergraduate years, participated in them. As a component of the educational process, Ms. Gibson stated that she seeks to help the fraternity members and leaders consider their responsibility to the community and all citizens of the university, including themselves and their chapter members. Further, as the documentary section of the analysis was completed, it permitted us to compare the stated and written values of the fraternities with the actions described by their members. While I did not ask participants of their fraternity affiliation, some did choose to share this information. In other cases, I could create generalized reflections using the knowledge that the men in the study came from one of the six recognized fraternities on the campus of the host university.

Further, the relationship of fraternities' stated values to lived actions was addressed by both Mr. Gaines and Mr. Mitchell. In their work as fraternity advisors, both spoke of the importance of conversation and mentoring to effecting change in students' lives. This work, along with further conversation with Dr. Brown on his desire to see enhanced small-group leadership discussions will be further explored in Code Seven: Forming Ethics. The importance and effectiveness of one-on-one discussions and small group sessions was further supported in conversation with Ms. Gibson. She noted the better sense of understanding and response gained when she addressed smaller groups. (This observation was important as Ms. Gibson also addresses the fraternities *en masse* in

regards to risk management and hazing prevention training. It will also be examined in the reflections for future practice, as gaining a better understanding and knowledge of the influence of university staff on students' ethical decision-making was an area of key interest to the study.

### **Code Three: Bottoms Up-Alcohol Consumption**

Throughout the interview process, participants shared stories related to the consumption of alcohol, which represents the third major code from this step in this research. These stories included a variety of references, such as alcohol serving as a rite of passage, a risk for liability, and as a genuine concern to students' health and well-being. Participants clearly differed on whether they felt that the use of alcohol on campus and/or by underage students was a concern or not. It should be noted that the consumption of alcohol, including by minors, was not a direct focus of study, but is considered reflective of participants' attitudes toward university policies as well as their adherence to state and federal law. Further, the manner in which students approach the responsible (or not) use of alcohol is reflective of whether an ethic of care and responsibility is in place on the campus and in their lives. To the researcher, it was illustrative to gauge whether students perceived themselves to be at risk or placing others in harms' way. Using this information as well as reflections on students' responses, implications for student affairs practice and policy may be derived in subsequent analysis.

Due to the prevalence of this issue in the interview threads, references to alcohol consumption were divided into subcodes based on the way in which it was approached

and discussed: Alcohol as Part of the College Experience, Alcohol as Illegal or Unethical Behavior, and Alcohol as Risk. These subcodes represent the spectrum of approaches and tension in the manner alcohol use is perceived. It should be noted that the report of the theme of alcohol use on a college campus is not intended to serve as a judgement for or against the current legal drinking age or alcohol use generally, but rather as a window into students' perceptions on university policy and related ethical considerations.

*Subcode A: Alcohol as Part of the College Experience*

Jeff noted that alcohol is not forced on students or unduly pervasive at the host university, but is something that is a part of the college experience and therefore expected for students to use. He described its use as rite of passage for students at the host university as well as in a broader societal context. Jeff further noted that alcohol was easily obtained on the campus of the host university, which seemed to imply that this facilitated its use. Conversation with Sam continued the theme of the availability and acceptance of alcohol use. He noted underage drinking in his fraternity as well as casual marijuana use. (It was interesting to the researcher that several students indicated casual drug use. Also, while awaiting interviews, on two separate occasions, I observed conversations on the use and availability of marijuana on the campus of the host university. In both it was implied to be readily available if one were in the know on a likely source.) Sam indicated that these behaviors were acceptable as part of the college experience. Sam stated rather than being encouraged to not drink or use drugs, that he has been encouraged to, "don't do stupid shit." He noted that this was defined in his opinion and that of those influential to him as by not being, "blackout drunk". He stated that this

admonition was because the fraternity has a reputation to uphold and that further violations could bring disrepute to the fraternity. In further support of this theme, Mr. Mitchell stated that the men in his fraternity are, “very comfortable violating the alcohol policy.” He further explained a form of deliberate indifference whereby students know that the use of alcohol is prohibited, but do not consider its use to be a concern. Through these conversations and others, there appeared to be such common disregard and disdain for the university’s alcohol policy that it was considered to be a rule in name only. This approach of limited effectiveness was also supported by the student life staff members’ acknowledgement of limited consequences.

*Subcode B: Alcohol as Illegal and/or Unethical Behavior*

As a counterpoint to alcohol being an expected part of the college experience, other students and university employees indicated concerns with its overall use, consumption by minors, and abuse. Rob stated that he is a non-drinker, which he perceived to be an anomaly on the campus. (Interestingly, Ms. Gibson indicated in a subsequent conversation that the host university has a higher percentage of non-drinkers than other similarly situated campuses.) Rob stated that he is one of very few fraternity members, or college students who do not drink. (Ms. Gibson and other university staff indicated that this statement is likely true as non-drinkers may self-select other campus organizations as an opportunity for involvement. The campus has several strong and highly involved religious groups.) Rob stated that he views underage drinking as unethical, but that it is not perceived as such by his peers due to societal norms. In her interview, Ms. Gibson shared her experiences with the fraternity men and their

consumption of alcohol. She noted that on the host university's campus there are a higher percentage of moderate drinkers of alcohol, but that the overall percentage of those with a challenge remains the same. It was interesting that despite the statistics presented by Ms. Gibson, students at the host university still felt overwhelmingly that their peers use alcohol on a regular basis and approve of its use as a part of the collegiate experience.

*Subcode C: Alcohol as Risk*

The third key way in which alcohol was addressed was as an area of risk to the fraternities and universities. In this area of discussion, alcohol and its use was not specifically noted to be an ethical concern, but rather of one liability. Several interview participants discussed the university's risk management plan and efforts. (Discussions with university staff indicated that the institution's and fraternities' risk management efforts have significantly increased in recent years.)

Ms. Gibson's office provides risk management sessions for the leadership of each of the fraternities at least once a year. These sessions include education the university's sober party monitoring requirements as well as an understanding of the effects of alcohol use. Several participants, including Mr. Mitchell and Jerry outlined these sessions as reducing the fraternities' liability exposure. While these sessions were addressed by several participants as a component of the education provided, their impact seemed limited in nature.

The inclusion of risk management sessions appeared to be an application of utilitarian ethics by the fraternities and the university themselves. While I do believe that the staff with whom I spoke care about students making strong, positive, and appropriate

decisions related to the use of alcohol, this care was not clearly exhibited in the risk management model. From each conversation where this was addressed, which included the very first interview conducted as well as the very last, this model seemed purely to identify ways to reduce liability. As I will further discuss in implications for policy and practice, I acknowledge the importance (and even requirement in a litigious climate) of reducing liability, but also acknowledge that it may have a chilling impact on the lessons observed and learned by students.

Through each of the references to alcohol, participants reflected on a common collegiate challenge. As I will explore further in the analysis, questions remain on the effectiveness of the education provided, and how it relates to students' overall decision-making.

#### **Code Four: The Code of the True Gentleman Continued-Treatment of Women**

Throughout the interviews, participants shared information regarding what they perceived to be a further area of gentlemanly-like behavior, the treatment of women. Several interview participants spoke in chivalrous terms regarding the support that they feel their organizations provide to women. Descriptions often related to societal norms, such as the holding of doors and polite conversation. However, not every conversation portrayed students' behavior so positively. Further, though never explicitly stated, the responses also indicted a potential gap in students' ethical development, interactions with and the treatment of the LGBT community.

An example of the most typical response was that of men and the protector and sustainer of women. Sam, in a manner typical of several interviews noted that his

fraternity was founded on “Christian manhood” and that it takes a stronger stance on the “respect of women” than other fraternities. He further described that he “treats women with ultimate respect.” This theme was present in many of the interviews with fraternity men and was also noted to be evident in many of the documents that were provided as well.

Promoting and protecting an image of fraternities as a better place within society, was also a related theme of several conversations. Jeff noted that fraternities have an “Animal House” stereotype, referring to the classic fraternity movie. He was particularly concerned that fraternities not be a place where women are mistreated. Jeff emphasized to him that this would be a deal-breaking issue and would cause him to not be associated with a Greek Life organization. Other student participants echoed this theme both in support of their individual chapters and fraternities, but also, it appeared in support of their personal decisions to be affiliated with Greek Life.

Discussions of the treatment of women also extended to the campus’ climate and responsibility related to sexual misconduct, including sexual assault. Cal noted that the university teaches ethics through sexual assault training. George relayed his work with the campus’ sexual misconduct education task force. He stated that such education is critical to the mission of the university from both an ethical as well as a practical standpoint. George shared that he believes that several of his peers have been assaulted during their time on campus. Dr. Brown stated that part of the university’s education efforts for men addresses predatory behavior, such as the use of alcohol to lower a prospective partner’s inhibitions prior to a sexual encounter. Pete indicated that he had

used alcohol as a precursor to sexual encounters. Exploring students' approaches to potential sexual misconduct and related ethical issues will be further noted in the implications for future review later in this report.

Chivalry, or even what would generally be considered appropriate behavior, was not always extended to women, however. In his role as a chapter advisor, Dr. Paxton stated that he observes students' weekly chapter meetings. In the fraternity with which he works, the conclusion of each meeting includes a moment of personal privilege by which members may address any subject of interest to them. If a member shares an item the other members feel noteworthy, they reward the speaker with an honor. While described by Dr. Paxton as a means by which members could celebrate small victories and accomplishments, this tradition has taken on a new standard. Dr. Paxton noted the quite unchivalrous behavior of awarding an honor for behaviors such as exposing ones testicles in the campus library and engaging in sexual activity with a fellow female student. Dr. Paxton expressed concern and frustration that these behaviors are not only reported by the members of the chapter that he advises, but also that students' peers respond in a supportive and encouraging manner.

There were two areas of further exploration that were present in this code that were of concern to the researcher. Both concerns will be further explored later in this report as I analyze the data received.

The first is that the discussions of treatment of women appeared to never consider the possibility that some members may be gay, bi-sexual, or transgender. No interview participant identified himself as a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender



(LGBT) community, but it must be clarified that there was no investigation in this regard. (It should be also noted that that researcher is aware that the fraternities being studied represent traditional white, male, cisgender organizations, therefore, it may reflect an inherent challenge within the Greek Life structure.) This, therefore, represents a potential area of further examination. Further, in some areas disparaging comments were made about members of the LGBT community, including by one of the chapter advisors. Therefore, it must be questioned are members of the LGBT community included in any way, and if so, are they treated in an ethical manner?

Second, there was a sub-theme present in some interviews of females as a calmer, weaker, sex requiring a male's attention and protection. (This was presented in a manner contrary to the ethical investigation of an ethic of care and responsibility as might be exhibited for all persons, but rather as an implied lower status.) Including the earlier referenced comments about chivalrous behavior, the clear impression was received that women needed and deserved a man to care for them. This raised the concern that there is an inherent and unethical discrimination against women.

The broader code of the treatment of women represents an area of potential ethical instruction and potential growth. While positively presented, these reflections outline potential ethical caps that are not congruent with an ethic of care and responsibility.

#### **Code Five: Hazing, with a big "H" or a small "h"**

Throughout the interviews, the concept of hazing was one that was frequently discussed. This theme was anticipated as it is one of the major public perceptions of

fraternity men and their behavior. It further represented a core area of investigation because incidents of hazing are not in alignment with an ethic of care or responsibility. As such, it was a key element for interviews.

Hazing was identified in the earliest conversations as a point of concern and study. In one of the first interviews conducted, Mr. Mitchell referenced hazing at the host university, and in the fraternity that he advises, as occurring with a “small ‘h’.” He went on to explain that he had not observed or been made aware of harmful hazing, but rather requirements of servitude to others, such as pledges or new members being required to drive fraternity brothers. Mr. Mitchell also discussed having to guide current members to understand that they could not unofficially extend the pledging period beyond that which is permitted by the university. While stating that he was working to reduce or eliminate incidents of this type of behavior, Mr. Mitchell indicated that this value was not shared by the men he assisted.

The theme of hazing continued through additional advisor interviews. Another fraternity advisor, Dr. Paxton referenced a code of silence in the chapter with which he works regarding hazing. He stated that during his many years as a fraternity advisor, no member has ever reported being hazed or observing hazing. This was despite Dr. Paxton addressing the issue each year and requesting that any concerns be reported to him. Dr. Paxton indicated that he recognizes that hazing does occur as an anticipated part of the fraternal culture. Though unsaid, Dr. Paxton’s comments indicated to me that he does not see some, at least limited, hazing as a genuine concern. He appeared to believe that a small degree would be part of the rite of passage of joining a fraternity.

A third advisor, Mr. Gaines, described a tradition of small, limited hazing on a “slippery slope” during the initiation process of the fraternity chapter he assists. Like Dr. Paxton, Mr. Gaines stated that no one had ever come to him stating that they were “uncomfortable.” However, Mr. Gaines stated that students have to be concerned because of peers’ vulnerability in ways that may be unknown. Mr. Gaines offered an insightful perspective recognizing that students have had many experiences as individuals prior to joining a fraternity. He stated that he encourages his men to be respectful of the diversity of perspectives and experiences that may exist in any group, therefore, recognizing that all must be treated with certain care. Mr. Gaines’ comments reflected a strong ethic of care and responsibility being imparted to students. Further, due to the small-group nature of this education, it appeared to be one of the more effective educational endeavors that was being undertaken in this regard.

From a student viewpoint, Jeff noted that he has had no exposure to hazing during his involvement as a fraternity member. He emphasized that his fraternity is made up of “a good group of guys” as were several other fraternities that he named by chapter. (Interestingly, the others named by Jeff are considered by many to be the host university’s most prominent and active fraternities.) Jeff, along with other participants, referenced the pledging process as “character building” and not hazing. He and others noted that hazing is something that does not happen at the host university, but rather a “state university” problem. He stated that he “wouldn’t be wearing my fraternity letters” if his fraternity engaged in hazing practices. Jeff’s viewpoint seemed to be indicative of a broader perspective among the interview participants that the behavior that they were

either subjected to or engaged in was not hazing, at least not with a capital “h” as Mr. Mitchell described it. Many, in fact, referenced historical precedents within their chapter and the university at large. In recommendations for future practice, one opportunity for growth may be educating students about what constitutes hazing (and by extension other forms of unethical behavior) so they may employ ethical constructs.

Like the reflections that were provided on students’ use of alcohol, hazing was not a direct area of investigation for the study. It was, however, a potential point of insight into the ethical approaches utilized by the participants. Hazing, whether with a small “h” or a large one, represents a challenge for the growth and development of the fraternity men.

### **Code Six: Leadership**

The next code or theme which arose in analysis of the interview data was that of leadership and its impact on students’ ethical decision-making. For the purposes of this study, leadership represents both that provided to the fraternity men by the university and their chapter advisors, but also that provide through peers, typically upperclassmen, within each fraternity. These fraternity leadership roles can include the formal structure of the organization as well as the informal guidance received from a peer. Equally for the purposes of this discussion, leadership does not always represent positive guidance and outcomes. As will be explained in this review of the data, several participants shared negative impacts of leadership and/or its absence when needed or expected. For my discussion, I recognized that leadership roles, opportunities, and responses, in either case,

reflect a point of intervention that can occur for the benefit of the students engaged in the study.

Leadership discussions and the associated impacts were divided into two subcodes representing whether the leadership and its perceived impact was positive or negative in nature. Consideration was given to a third subcode, that of absent leadership. However since the absence of leadership and its impacts is inherently negative, absent leadership was added to the negative subcode. It is believed that these codes allow us to appropriately examine the relationships between the fraternity men of the study and the impact of leadership influences.

*Subcode A: Positive Leadership Roles and Examples*

First, I examined the positive examples of leadership and leadership impacts brought forward in discussions. Jeff stated that leadership comes from all members of the fraternity, including peers and fraternity leadership. He noted, however, that he has had limited contact with the fraternity advisor of his chapter. When asked how student affairs practitioners could help students demonstrate stronger ethical behavior, he emphasized that education from faculty is important. Equally, Cal stated that his fraternity takes ethical violations seriously. He then however, described the consequences as stemming from public relations concerns. Cal talked of the importance of delegating authority to the fraternities so that they take ownership rather than it being mandated from student life.

Positive leadership themes were also discussed in interviews with fraternity advisors and university staff. Mr. Gaines described forming leadership as “setting the stage” in his work as a fraternity advisor. He advises fraternity leadership to “be

utilitarian about it” as the approach to guiding their peers. This approach is further discussed in Subcode 7: Forming Ethics. University staff indicated that there are opportunities for students to take charge of leadership roles.

*Subcode B: Negative or Absent Leadership References*

Second, I noted several areas where questions arose about the leadership provided to students. Rob stated that while, the standards board of his local chapter provides positive support for the chapter, he does not know what his chapter advisor does. (This theme of limited advising intervention was present in several student interviews. It was considered a cause for concern to the researcher as it would appear to indicate a missed opportunity for interaction between adult leaders of all stripes and students.) When reflecting on adult leadership connections that have occurred, several challenges were noted. During the student interviews, Pete was the most critical of the university’s student affairs staff leadership, stating that as a fraternity president he had concerns about the behavior of the fraternities located on the host university’s campus. Pete was further concerned by the lack of university response to concerns that arose. Pete partially attributed this to a generational gap between the university and fraternity leadership and the members of the organizations. (Pete spoke positively of the relatively recently departed Greek Life coordinator, who he perceived to be closer to the fraternity men both in age and spirit.) As an example of the perceived lack of university response to concerns, Pete stated that he had offered to provide information to Mr. Waldrop related to his experience as a fraternity man and chapter president, but that the offer had never been acted upon. Again, this interview indicated at a minimum a lost opportunity for

conversation and interaction between leadership at the university level and the students being served.

Some leadership gaps that were addressed seemed to be ones of the participants' own making. Dr. Paxton related perceived limitations to his work as an advisor. He stated that it would not be appropriate for him to attend fraternity functions where inappropriate activity takes place. Interestingly, he did not seem to see it as his duty to prevent inappropriate actions to occur, simply noting that they would. Again, this represented a gap in the leadership opportunities employed by the participants in the study. Dr. Paxton's comments further seemed to violate the ethics of care and responsibility I was seeking to identify in the research participants. In the analysis, I will further explore the impact of the opportunities for leadership intervention and impact.

The inherent tensions represented by these the two perspectives of the positive and negative/absent leadership references outline the dichotomy presented. As I will explore in the later analysis, this represents an incongruence between the intentions of the university and fraternities and the practices that are lived. This dichotomy represents a key area for future recommendations.

### **Code Seven: Forming Ethics**

The seventh and final core code which arose during interviews was that of the idea of how students had formed and applied ethics in their lives. As with several of the other codes that were explored in this study, this code represented a diversity of opinions and perspectives. Many participants indicated that they had acquired strong ethical perspectives prior to their enrollment in college. Conversely, others indicated that college

had made a significant impact on their ethical development. In a similar dichotomy, some students indicated that they recognized and appreciated the impact of college on their ethical development while others perceived that this was not the role of the collegiate environment. It was surprising to me as the researcher that this latter opinion was shared by several of the chapter advisors. In this section, I will explore how students developed their ethical codes and who those codes were applied in their college and fraternal experiences.

Several students shared how they had developed an ethical code. (Interestingly, some seemed to have given no thought to their own ethical framework and/or where and how they may have developed the constructs by which they shaped their decision. Jeff noted that his ethical code came from a combination of his parents and previous school, a Jesuit institution. Cal described his ethics as being formed as a Christian and its associated religious training and his family. He noted that philosophy instruction in high school and at the host university also helped his development. Cal described his chapter's conduct board as also having a positive influence. David, one of two ministers' children in the study, referenced this strong parental influence as instrumental in his development. Jackson stated that his faith was a positive influence on his ethical code as well as the support of friends at the university. He also referenced his parents' support and guidance. Jackson further referenced the support and guidance of peers as a positive ethical guidance. He shared the use of accountability groups through which members work to mutually support one another with stated concerns. (When questioned, he referenced, as an example, choosing not to use alcohol during a defined period of time.) This type of



peer support demonstrated to me an ethic of care being applied amongst the fraternity men.

When considering the approaches utilized by fraternity men in developing and applying ethics, fraternity advisors and university employees had other perspectives. Mr. Gaines noted that students approach ethics in a utilitarian manner asking, “What is in it for us?” He stated that students will consider whether a decision will cause concerns or problems in the future. Further, Mr. Gaines described the national fraternity process as being “congruent with values” in the way in which it defines ethics. Mr. Gaines noted that it was important to him when students can cite their values and ethics. He referenced this action as being when students can attribute their actions to specific, stated values and beliefs of their fraternity. To the researcher, this alignment of stated values with lived actions was a positive reflection on the development of the fraternity men included in the study.

In considering the long-term means by which men at the host university develop ethical frameworks, Mr. Gaines noted that there have been changes in Greek Life leadership from a “lax” perspective to a much more professional approach that matches national norms and expectations for Greek Life. Mr. Gaines stated that he felt that the university has begun programming related to ethical decision-making, however, he noted that this remains focused in Greek Life. (The theme of limited touchpoints was referenced in conversations throughout the study. It appears that the university focuses many, if not most educational efforts on three populations: first-year freshmen, athletes, and members of Greek Life.) In a similar example to that given by Dr. Paxton, Mr.

Gaines noted that students have an opportunity to speak of a subject of interest in chapter meetings. (It should be noted that the example given by Mr. Gaines was far more positive in nature.) He stated that this is, at times, an opportunity to hear students' approaches to ethical issues. In further support of the educational opportunities provided by the institution, Mr. Gaines referenced the work of Dr. Reynolds with first-year students as an opportunity for increased contact during these students' time at the university. It was noted, that despite these positive reflections, Mr. Gaines referenced ethical decision-making as "rule following". This perspective fit within a broader point of discussion regarding whether students view ethics as result of consequences and using a utilitarian framework.

A further point of consideration that arose in discussion of the development of ethics is whether the university should be engaged in providing this training at all. Prior to embarking on this research, I anticipated that there would be congruence amongst university staff that this was a role of the institution. (I did not anticipate such congruence on the behalf of the men being studied.) However, as the results will outline, there was not agreement among the university employees in this regard.

Mr. Gaines noted that it is the university's job to teach ethics. He further stated that this education is available in certain disciplines through their work. Mr. Gaines noted a need to be intentional in the teaching of ethics. He recommended that this type of instruction be incorporated in first-year programming. In making this suggestion, he stated that this may not be instruction that should come from faculty as it would tend to be focused solely on the discipline. Mr. Gaines advised using student life staff to

challenge students' thinking in seminar style sessions. (This was another example of the recommendation to use small-group touchpoints to impact students' thinking and behavior.) He noted a need for students to not only understand that college is a good place to "establish" ethical behavior, but also to understand how to apply those ethics after college. Mr. Gaines noted that in lieu of additional consequences, students should have more reflection so that they are better able to apply ethics in the future. (This departure from the more utilitarian approach employed by others in the study was a positive consideration of the ethic of care that we would hope students develop.) Mr. Gaines noted a strong role for advisors in providing leadership in their role as mentors. In making this observation, he shared examples of having advised students on ethical issues during his time as an advisor. Through the conversations, Mr. Gaines demonstrated an ethic of care and responsibility for the men of his chapter, which was a positive reflection the goals of the study.

Another interview reflected conflicted ethical approaches and considerations being employed. Rob stated that he is a minister's child, which experience has strongly influenced his ethical approaches. He stated that ethics should be carefully considered. However, he noted that his fraternity "preaches" ethics in "the sense of a college fraternity." (Here, Rob seemed to be qualifying the fraternity's ethics in a contextual manner.) In further explaining, he noted that there is a "bunch of underage drinking and drug use," but "nothing that it is unethical in a broad American college sense." It was both interesting and clear that Rob was couching his perceptions of his fraternity's ethics within a broader perceived national cultural framework. He stated that the fraternity

promotes ethics but may not necessarily adhere to state and federal law. When asked for examples, Rob noted alcohol and drug concerns. Rob stated that the university is an ethical place, but that unethical situations occur. He stated that there is a “group mentality” within the fraternity. He stated that his chapter is more ethical than others on campus.

As the interview continued, Rob revealed further areas where his perspectives were conflicted. He expressed his belief that ethics is defined by not harming someone else. He noted that he extends this as far as not harming someone else’s reputation. Rob noted that it would not hurt to have broader policies related to ethics. Rob noted that he perceives a broader national emphasis on ethics, which is reflected in fraternities. He stated that this impacts the need for fraternities to have a healthy competition, to encourage one another to raise the ethical bar. Rob stated that there is one fraternity that enjoys being the “bad boy of Greek Life”. Rob stated that part of the battle is awareness of ethical issues. He noted that there is a disparity of ethical approaches on campus. He referenced an atheist helping others and another minister’s child “snorting coke last week.”

The reflections gained through students’ approaches to ethical formation and application revealed a multitude of approaches. Further, varied advisor and university staff perspectives were also presented. As such, room for further consideration and recommendations was found to be present.

### Documents and Textual Sources

The second component of the triangulation of sources was to examine the written resources provided to students. These resources were sourced from a variety of methods, which are outlined here. First, the resources of the host university were readily available via the institution's website. These sources included the official student handbook, the college catalogue, the academic integrity pledge, and various policies and procedures made available for students via the institution's student life division. Second, the guide or standards books of four of the six fraternities included in this study were equally available via their respective websites. (Fraternity members referenced their individual guidebooks in conversation, but many noted a requirement of their organization to keep these confidential or secret. Therefore, these were obtained via other sources so as to not create an ethical dilemma of my own making for the participants.) Finally, participants were asked if they had received or given ethical instruction via direct written communication. Interestingly, all denied having done so. This was a surprise, as I had anticipated such communication and hoped to include it in the study to provide a reference to personal ethical leadership captured at a particular point in time. (The absence of such communication is further explored in the analysis.) Advisors noted that they would be more likely to require a meeting or direct conversation to address an ethical concern that arose with a fraternity member. The document sources that were

obtained are described and coded here so that their impact on students may be ascertained.

### **Code One: Academic Integrity**

As with interviews, the first code related to documentary evidence is that of academic integrity. If only by sheer number of physical placements, the academic integrity pledge enjoys pride of place throughout campus. It is physically located in each teaching space as well as many other spaces related to teaching and the curriculum. (For the purposes of this study, the researcher sampled a number of academic classrooms where it is clearly evident that this is, in fact, the case.) In addition to physical placement on campus, the academic integrity pledge is available through the host institution's website in a section devoted to academic integrity. In addition to containing the full pledge, this page offers guidance on what constitutes academic integrity, how students may avoid concerns, and how concerns should be addressed both from a student, peer, and faculty perspective. Academic integrity is further addressed through the university's academic catalogue and its student handbook. Neither document, however, incorporates the integrity pledge, though the website where it is housed is referenced.

For the study, it would be beneficial to read and examine the integrity pledge, which states:

*It is the desire of [Host] University to unite its members in a collective commitment to integrity. In so doing, [Host] University strives to teach its members to live lives of humility, respect, and responsibility. Therefore, it is the expectation that all members of the [Host] University community will conduct*

*themselves with integrity in all endeavors. In honoring these values and ideals as [Host] University's foundation, it is with utmost faithfulness and dignity that I will subscribe to them.*

The pledge was unveiled during the 2012-2013 academic year as a new “student-driven” initiative. At that time, Dr. Reynolds shared that it was promoted at the university’s Fall Convocation, where it was processed as a banner and all members of the community were asked to repeat it aloud as an oath. During the later portion of that academic year, the banner was hung in the student center, providing a clear reference in a non-academic space and building. Since that time, the pledge has been hung in each classroom, but removed from the student union. Despite actively seeking it on campus, I was unable to locate a physical copy outside of traditional classrooms and academic spaces. (While this research was not exhaustive it was sufficiently thorough to indicate that Dr. Reynolds’s assertions regarding placement were correct. Interestingly, the pledge was neither displayed in the campus library, a very traditional academic space, nor in the student union, an area frequented by students quite regularly.

There is, however, a clear disparity between the pledge as written and its implementation within the university community. The written pledge speaks of conducting “all endeavors” with integrity. It refers to holistic ideals of ethics and integrity as they apply to all aspects of life. In this manner, the pledge implies that it serves as an honor code for the university. A review of the documentation outlining the launch of the academic integrity pledge, however, explicitly denies that this document represents an

honor code for the university. This belief was further supported by interview data, including that of Dr. Reynolds.

While recognizing the university's freedom to create and implement the pledge as it chooses, the dichotomy observed represented a potential lost opportunity for educating students. The potential to apply the integrity pledge outside of the traditional academic classroom would afford an opportunity to educate students regarding integrous behavior. Further, the marketing emphasis on placing the pledge only in teaching spaces further minimized its effectiveness by inadvertently implying that it did not apply in other academically related contexts. I will further explore this dichotomy in the reflections on implications for the future.

### **Code Two: The Fraternal Code**

Just as with the interviews conducted, many of the fraternities' documents can be summarized as part of a fraternal code of gentlemanly-like behavior. Each of the national guidebooks examined used similar language to describe the intended behavior of their fraternity's men. A sampling included words such as "brotherhood," "integrity," "honor," and "sacrifice." For some fraternities, ethical codes or mandates were couched in terms of a list of ideal behaviors. One such code provided nine "fraternal expectations," with coverage of items ranging from prohibitions against hazing to academic integrity. This code, if implemented and recognized by the men of the chapter would present a strong guiding force for members' actions and activities.

Several fraternities also provided more detailed lists of rules and policies for their organization's members. In many cases, these appear driven by concerns of liability



and/or risk management. Recent additions, found in the various manuals examined, included restrictions on the provision of alcohol, and the means in which functions can occur. While these policies certainly have a place in the guiding documents for student organizations, examples were not observed that provided an underlying framework of understanding for students to then apply the use of the policies to other situations.

With these two main types of documents available, there appeared to be a two-fold gap in the materials provided to students. The first gap, which represents unrealized potential, will be explored further as I examine the juxtaposition of data gleaned through interviews with the lofty codes provided. The second gap represents the utilitarian nature of many of the communications provided. These will be further explored in the discussion on recommendations for practice and practitioners.

### **Code Three: Rules and Policies**

The final code observed the document review section of the data compilation was that of rules and policies. (For the purposes here, I am separating the rules and policies provided by fraternities from those implemented by the host university. Fraternity policies are included in Code Two: The Fraternal Code.) For the students at the host university, policies may be derived from a number of sources: the student handbook, administrative policies promulgated by the university, and organizational codes or constitutions. These policies represent several layers of oversight within the institution.

The student handbook, which is framed to be the direct source of guidance for the student body, provides many rules and policies for students. (The host university employs a model by which the student handbook is created and provided by the student life

division while the university catalogue is created and provided by the academic affairs division.) These rules and policies are outlined in a succinct language that provides a list of prohibited actions. Behaviors that would reasonably be anticipated to be banned are included as violations of rules. These include hazing, consumption of alcohol by minors, the use of illegal drugs, and others. While these may adequately described from a legal standpoint, there is no offering of a framework for the basis of such descriptions. The codes do not provide a rationale for their implementation or supporting reasons for student compliance. As with the risk management codes promulgated by the fraternities, this represents a potential gap in educating students. I will further explore this element as I consider the campus community and what other educational opportunities exist.

The organizational codes provide more guidance to students on the reasons for their inception and applicability. Beyond the fraternity documents already outlined, the primary codes examined were those of the Interfraternity Council (IFC). The host university's IFC has both a constitution and bylaws, outlining policies and procedures for the institutions' fraternities. (The host university has a Panhellenic Council with a similar constitution and bylaws to supervise sororities.) These are again proscriptive in their nature. There is no reference to ethics, integrity, or positive decision-making.

The documents reviewed were helpful in better understanding the rules and policies of the host university and its fraternities. As previously noted, it was of disappointment that students and advisors professed to have no written communications regarding ethical decision-making. However, as will be further outlined in the analysis,

opportunities still existed to understand students' current and potential application of ethical decision-making to their lives.

### Observations

Obtaining observational data was a complicated process with the chosen population and university. Fraternities by their nature are closed societies, so it is almost impossible to draw direct observations from chapter meetings and official functions. (To do so is both prohibited by the organizational codes of many of the groups and would fundamentally change the interactions the researcher is attempting to observe.) Nor would it be successful to gain observations at social events as the researcher's presence would inherently change the nature of the participants' reactions. Further, at the host university as a small, very tight-knit community, an outsider's presence would be immediately noted at almost any event.

For these reasons, early in the research process, it was determined that a system of indirect observation would be most beneficial. This included subtle observations while on the campus for interviews; a review of the publicly available web resources; including social media platforms; and observation of printed materials as they were displayed on the campus. The observational data collected was then examined whereby it revealed two main codes related to students' congruence with ethical decision-making and integrity instruction provided in other facets of the research.

**Code One: Public or Not**

The first observation was that there was a clear discrepancy and tension in what was presented publically and what might be shared directly with students. I was alerted by Ms. McKeown that many students and student organizations had begun to utilize GroupMe, a group text messaging application, to communicate. By doing so, she noted two goals for the organization were being met. First, Ms. McKeown noted that this provides an immediacy of communication often desired by millennials. (She referenced that the students at the host university no longer checked and responded to e-mail on a regular and timely basis.) Second, and most applicable to the study, such communications are limited to being viewed by a specific group. Ms. McKeown referenced student-only groups within organizations. As I was not directly privy to these communications, I can only refer to them from secondary sources, including conversations with students. This form of communications allowed for more direct, private, communications that were restricted to members and not available for this research, or more importantly for practitioners, for the support and guidance of the student body.

The fraternities' officially maintained social media accounts and websites were positive reflections of the groups. (For my purposes, officially maintained accounts were those under the chapter's name and publically available.) Chapter social media was obtained through several methods. First, I actively sought chapter platforms utilizing standard search engines. Second, platforms were cross-referenced in the examination. (It was common, for example, to find that one chapter would refer to another in posts regarding activities.) Finally, I examined the national fraternities' websites for the six

officially recognized organizations at the host university. Here, links were often provide to local chapter resources. Interestingly, in all three cases, I often found multiple representations for chapters in the various platforms. This appeared to be a reflection of changing leadership and changing social media preferences.

Postings identified included celebration of philanthropic service to the community, collaborative initiatives with other members of the university's Greek Life community, and recognition of brothers' achievements. These were overwhelmingly positive messages that reflected the fraternities' stated values of service, community, etc. Through official chapter communications, the common values of the fraternities would seem to be met.

### **Code Two: Private or Not**

Integrated in the public posts of the fraternities were often links to other actors, including other campus organizations at the host university as well as personal pages and social media accounts. Where possible, I followed these links if they were to a publically available page or account. (Some accounts—of course—were private to those who are “friends” or confirmed followers of a particular individual. These were not available for research.) There were also two, albeit now inactive, accounts identified that shared student information in a tabloid gossip format.

In examining personal, yet public, accounts, there arose questions related to students' application of ethical decision-making. Accounts often included references to alcohol use, drunkenness, and sexual activity. While it must be noted that the researcher had no independent means to verify the assertions presented, the public nature of the

comments certainly causes us to pause to question whether ethical values are being lived and exhibited in other aspects of students' lives.

### **Code Three: University Activities**

The host university is one which incorporates a requirement of student attendance at a series of educational events. A number of potential events are promoted and students must choose four per semester to attend. (As an example of the number available in one recent month, which included a week students were away from campus, 29 separate events were offered.) These events can often touch on topics related to the support of ethical decision-making.

One such example is the recent review of *The Hunting Ground*, a documentary outlining sexual assault on college campuses. This showing was accompanied by several events designed to increase students' awareness of sexual misconduct issues and to develop strategies for protection. Other recent offerings related to ethics and integrity included a session on the intersection between ethics and theology and a discussion on "Consciousness and Moral Responsibility."

Review of the university activities provides a limited perspective into the application of students' ethical decision-making as these events are often adult driven. However, they do provide an introspective into how the university and its staff seek to education students outside of the classroom and support strong decision-making in those areas.

## Conclusion

Through the various points of data received, the researcher was able to gain an understanding of the men studied, their approaches to ethical issues, and how those issues were impacted by outside influences. While it was clear that there are many ethical endeavors occurring, it was also evident that gaps in practice and policy exist. These data points and their implications will be further reviewed in Chapter Five: Analysis and Discussion.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Overview

This Analysis and Discussions chapter serves to both provide the researcher's reflections upon the data received as well as to make recommendations for future practice and policy. Through the research questions outlined for this study and the using the systems framework developed by Bertram Gallant and Kalichman (2011), the study will investigate the means by which students are making ethical decisions and impacted by others' influences.

#### Analyzing the Research Questions

This section seeks to apply the data received to the research questions developed earlier in the study. Through this application, the reader can understand the meaning gained and how it is later applied to the recommendations presented. For this purpose, I will examine each of the research questions individually.

*What frameworks are fraternity men using to make ethical decisions?*

The overarching research question is intended to provide guidance to the study and its subordinate questions. Through the study, it became clear that that was no one answer to this question. Fraternity men appeared to be using several ethical frameworks as they considered their actions and choices. Further, some fraternity men seemed to be



using a loosely scaffolded ethical framework. In such cases, this indicated the need and opportunity for further growth and support.

*What are current members of fraternities' perceptions of ethical decision-making?*

The fraternity member studied had varying approaches and perceptions to ethical decision-making. These were exhibited through their responses as well as through the information gained through influencers' interactions with the men. Varying perspectives were also made evident through consideration of observational data received.

First, it was clear that there is no one ethical code to which these men subscribe. While each fraternity outlines a variety of noble and lofty statements to describe their brotherhood and affiliation, application of these tenets is quite disparate. (Though I did not directly ask fraternity affiliation, there seemed to be varying perspectives within each fraternity as well.) Further, despite having chosen to subscribe to these codes, it was clear that not all men subscribed equally. When Dr. Brown referenced using the fraternities' own language against them, it was evident that students do not always fulfil these lofty statements. This was further supported in students' descriptions of their own care for one another.

Second, the members' perceptions of university policies was equally varied. The clearest example of this was the men's relationship to the institution's academic integrity policy. While most stated or implied that they would not directly cheat on an in-class assignment such as a test, responses to out-of-class work was much more varied. George was the most direct in stating that he would make a decision on whether to utilize unauthorized help by knowing his professors. Further, the men overwhelmingly

considered the integrity pledge to apply solely to academic concerns. It was overwhelmingly not perceived to be relevant to student life, or the men's lives, outside of the classroom.

A second prime example of varying approaches to adherence to university policy was evident in discussions of the institutions' alcohol procedures. Several fraternity members acknowledged violating the university's policies regarding alcohol consumption on campus and/or state law related to the consumption of alcohol by those under 21 years of age. Jerry spoke at length on this subject, stating that students engaged in a process whereby they utilize "calculated risks" to determine which rules to violate. When further asked about parsing decisions, Jerry stated that students use "calculated risks" to make decisions. He noted that you would never use drugs at a party because others are watching. Jerry stated that people have to think about the "risk of getting caught." Jerry stated that the second layer is whether the risk is worth it. He also stated that "consciousness" comes out when considering cheating as opposed to alcohol. These comments illustrated the means by which students may make decisions on which rules to violate and/or where ethical challenges lie.

A third key area of note regarding members' perceptions of ethical decision-making was in regards to sexual assault and misconduct. While George spoke at length regarding his work on the university's sexual assault task force, his views were not universally shared. George noted that he knows several students to have been raped while students of the university. (He clarified that not all of these incidents occurred on the institution's campus, but indicated that some had been at the university.) However,

George noted that he had not personally witnessed an incident of sexual misconduct. Conversely, Pete stated that students' perspectives in sexual encounters are often influenced by alcohol. Relating to his own behavior, he stated, "I'm not going to tell you I've never been drunk and said, 'I'm going to go after that.'" Student life administrators acknowledged that students often use predatory behavior related to alcohol. One stated that a point of education is training students that traditional norms of using alcohol to ply a potential sexual encounter is a violation of ethical norms.

Through these three core areas it can be seen that students have not formed a common or consistent ethical framework. While I did not encounter any student who stated or overtly perceived that he lacked ethics, the ethical decision-making presented substantially varied. Further, few students exhibited the ethic of care and responsibility that I had hoped to encounter. As I was working with a small, distinct case study, this observations leaves room for further research and consideration as will be discussed later. *What challenges and obstacles to ethical decision-making are presented by members of fraternities?*

Obstacles to strong and effective decision-making were evident at several key points in the study. These obstacles either prohibited or encumbered growth in ethical decision-making. In later consideration recommendations for the future, reducing these obstacles will be important.

An American culture of college as a time to sow wild oats was presented in several contexts as an encumbrance to students' decision-making. Many of the university employees, including Dr. Brown, Mr. Reynolds, and Ms. Gibson referenced a long-

standing history of college high jinks by students. Such a perspective was echoed by many of the member interviews.

Limited training was presented as a substantial obstacle to students' growth in decision-making abilities and practices. Numerous sources, including Mr. Waldrop and Ms. Gibson, noted that many, if not most, of the university's ethical and behavioral education is limited in scope to specific groups and organizations. Fraternity leadership and potential members are two of the target populations. (Athletes were noted to be another target group for education.) This limited application to education represents an opportunity for future growth and training.

Reduction of obstacles to growth in students' ethical decision-making will be key in recommendations for the future. This is not to say that good work is not occurring at the university; it is. However, there were encumbrances presented within the group of study, and I have seen that this group is a subset of the larger university student population. Further, the group of study receives more targeted attention than the general student population. These factors permit opportunities for further growth.

*Are the perceptions of fraternities aligned within the campus community and congruent with the student affairs leadership responsible for this area?*

There were two elements addressed in the study in regards to congruence of perceptions of ethical decision-making. The first was whether the fraternity members' decisions were in alignment with those of the general student population. There was some evidence to suggest that at a minimum the fraternity members' behaviors were generally in congruence with their peers in the broader student population. However, as general

members of the student body were not interviewed, it was difficult to ascertain whether decision-making congruence exists. This issue was further complicated as non-Greek Life organizations do not employ large scale marketing for events such as parties and other functions which would illustrate their beliefs and actions.

The second area of congruence examined was in regards to students' perceptions alignment with the perceptions of the university staff. There were two strands that were evident in this regards. The first is that several student life staff recognized the limitations in students' ethical decision-making. They were aware of the gaps which exist and were interested in providing additional training and instruction. The second strand that was whether there is a responsibility of the university to provide instruction and training. This strand was represented in conversations with both some advisors and some students who considered that this was not the purview of the institution.

These two major elements indicate that there is not congruence between students' perspectives and those of campus student affairs leadership. As recommendations are made, this will be an area for further growth.

*What recommendations for policy are made by both members of fraternities and student affairs leaders?*

Recommendations for policy will be discussed both in response to the research questions as well as in a later section outlining implications for the future. During the study, three core perspectives arose regarding recommendations for policy and practice. These will be explored here with relevant examples of how the recommendations materialized.

The first recommendation, which in fact was a recommendation for the status quo, was that current policy and practice sufficiently address ethical decision-making concerns that arise. This perspective was evident in several camps. It was not of surprise to the researcher that many of the fraternity men felt that the current structures are sufficient. Jerry was an example of this approach, noting the he feels current instruction to be sufficient. Equally, Mr. Mitchell presented similar viewpoints in stating that he feels that the current process is much improved over recent years and is working well. The status quo, therefore, for some participants seemed to represent a comfortable space.

The second recommendation, which was again anticipated, was that there should be more instruction on ethical considerations and how to apply those within students' lives. This approach was more often brought forward and addressed by adult members of the community. Dr. Reynolds outlined inroads that have been made in recent years to develop a more substantial first-year program within the university. This program, which is broad-based in scope and is intended to touch every new freshman of the institution, contains a variety of educational strands, including integrity and community building. (The community building theme arose in several interviews as an opportunity to teach students that they have a responsibility of care to others.) Dr. Brown outlined the means by which small groups and touchpoints have a more significant impact on students' future behavior. In doing so, he, and several other participants, outlined the challenges inherent in addressing small groups. He and Mr. Waldrop noted that the current systems provide contact with members of Greek Life and athletic teams most readily. Mr. Waldrop noted that these groups are ones over which the university has more significant

leverage if participants do not comply with requirements to participate in mandatory training. (He outlined fines and/or probation for fraternities and loss of playing time or team punishments for athletes.) From a student perspective, Pete spoke most fervently for further education and support for ethical decision-making. Pete stated that he feels there are significant gaps in students' ethical training. He further noted that he feels an intentional indifference to ethical concerns. Pete perceived that the university and/or its leadership does not wish to further address issues that arise. (As noted previously, he stated that he has offered to meet with Mr. Waldrop regarding his work as a fraternity president to share what "really" occurs within fraternity life.) This approach addressed the perceived need for additional instruction or guidance.

The third and final approach was that the university should not be engaged in ethical instruction in any case. This viewpoint was espoused by both fraternity advisors and fraternity men, but it should be noted, not universally. Mr. Mitchell stated that he does not believe that such instruction is part of the university's mandate or responsibility. This approach was affirmed by some men, including Jerry, who echoed the sentiment that such instruction is not under the jurisdiction of the institution. Jackson also shared that while he values strong ethical frameworks for individuals, he does not perceive these to be the responsibility of the university.

As a counterpoint to this approach, Dr. Paxton stated that during due to the residential nature of a small, liberal arts college, there is a responsibility of care and instruction. He perceived that there is such a need from the university's leadership, which

he noted could be a gap in the current work of the institution. Dr. Paxton represented this as an opportunity for future growth.

The diversity of opinions on ethical instruction provided by the university is an area that requires further exploration as I consider future implications and will be discussed within that section. I will address how students generally, and in this case, fraternity members specifically, can engage in more sustained ethical training and support.

*Have the values of ethical decision-making been “institutionalized” within the fraternity men and student affairs leadership responsible for this area?*

The diversity of opinions regarding ethical decision-making certainly gives the researcher pause when considering whether the values of such decision-making have been institutionalized within the fraternity men and student affairs leadership. There does not appear to be a consensus of thought on this issue.

In examining this question, I turn first to the example of the academic integrity pledge. The pledge has been institutionalized within the university in that it has been committed to writing, displayed in numerous locations, and is spoken aloud (at least theoretically) by each freshman early in their academic career. Upon further reflection however, I must consider whether its represented values have been in fact internalized by the campus population. Given the responses of the fraternity men that indicate in some cases that cheating behaviors are acceptable and in others that such integrity only applies within the classroom, I would argue that such values have not been internalized.



This question may also be addressed in examining the men's responses to issues of sexual misconduct. Whether one is considering Pete's references to engaging in alcohol-fueled sexual encounters, or administrators' references to educating students on the predatory behavior represented by plying a potential sexual encounter with alcohol, there exists a gap in internalization. This gap will be further addressed in examining implications for future research.

### Analysis

As previously noted, this research was undertaken using the systems framework of Bertram Gallant and Kalichman (2011), utilizing it as the conceptual framework to address other forms of ethical decision-making and application within the university system. This framework represents four levels of understanding and impact: individual, organizational, education system and society levels. Here, I will address the applicability of the work to each level.

#### Individual

The individual level is represented by the fraternity men of the study. As might be expected, the men come to the collegiate experience with ethical perspectives derived through their previous training and experiences. These individual perspectives are influenced by each man's history as well as his current engagement. Peer influences were noted to be key points of interest.

As we later consider further implications, the individual level also represents the means by which the greatest level of intervention can occur. This level also represents an

area where individual attention can most readily occur. As several participants noted, current individual meetings are directed primarily to select groups.

The individual level represents one of the two areas whereby university leaders may increase and improve interactions with students. As was seen during the study, this was a place where increased mentoring and support was desired and needed. Further, this type of one-on-one and small group contact was seen as an area lacking for many participants, both as fraternity members and as adults. While time consuming in its implementation, this is also an area where change can be most readily affected.

#### Organizational

The organizational level is represented by both the fraternities and the university. In the study, this level represented a varying perspectives and conflicts on what constitutes an ethical environment. These conflicts presented challenges for the studied students. For these reasons, the organizational level was the second where I make significant recommendations for future policy and practice.

In making recommendations, I echo the sentiments expressed by Mr. Wells, who attributed great responsibility to the organizational level for ethical training. Mr. Wells was clear in his belief that this is a key component not only of students' long-term growth and development, but also of the very reason for their attending a particular university or joining a Greek Life organization.

The organizational level represents a key intersection for student affairs practitioners and educational leaders. It is at this level that many student interactions occur. Further, for better or worse, this is the level where we must and most often find

our daily work due to the magnitude of assisting a large population with limited staffing and resources. The organizational level, however, does not provide the same level of individual attention required and therefore can, at times, be an easier place to affect change.

### Education System

Recognition that students do not arrive on the collegiate campus as educational neophytes is inherent to understanding the education system level as applied to these men. Students have been exposed to a multitude of impactful situations which help formulate their ethical perspective or lack thereof.

Whether one is considering Dr. Reynolds' comments on the lack of knowledge regarding plagiarism or Dr. Brown's reflections on the duplicitous approach of some parents, students have learned significant lessons prior to their matriculation. Unfortunately, these lessons have not always been positive or constructive. This leads to one of the first tasks at hand is redirecting college behaviors that may be ingrained in students. However, this is an area that some work is occurring. Through the university's efforts to educate parents during the orientation process, a first attempt at redirection is occurring. This, in turn, assists students in reframing their perspectives and beliefs.

While this is an area for further growth and exploration, it is one of the two more challenging levels of the Bertram Gallant and Kalichman framework as applied to this study. As noted above, some work is occurring in this area, and this is included in the recommendations for further growth and development.

## Society

The societal impact for the students at hand is most readily represented by the cultural lens through which the college years are viewed. As previously noted, many students perceive that a period of raucous living is not only permissible, but expected. As such, minor, youthful indiscretions, and even some major inappropriate choices are passed away as rites of passage. These perspectives are often supported by parents, including those reminiscing on their own collegiate experiences, and the media.

Due to the global nature of this element of the framework, it is the most difficult for the individual practitioner or researcher to address. It is however, an area that is ripe for attention from professional organizations and consortiums of colleges and universities. In the implications, I discuss whether it is time to work collectively to reframe the American perspective on the college years and therefore permit a more thoughtful consideration to the growth which can occur during this time in a young adult's life.

### Implications and Recommendations

As with any study of this type, there are implications for future consideration as well as recognitions of the limitations of those implications. This report presents potential implications for policy, practice and practitioners, leadership, and research.

Stated implications are limited by the nature of this work. As outlined earlier in this report, this case study was conducted on the campus of a small, southeastern university. While it is descriptive of the nature of the students studied and their

approaches to ethical decision-making, it is limited to their environment at a particular point in time.

### Practice

Implications for practice and practitioners represent the hands-on approaches which can improve students' work and lives particularly during their collegiate experience. These recommendations include not only practices that can be implemented by individuals, but also those which have a more broadly defined structure. In examining practice, it must be noted that it is of the utmost importance that each individual consider the personal responsibility and care that they bring to the ethical table.

First, we consider the role of employing an ethic of care and responsibility as practitioners. Caring, capable practice is an understood component of many student affairs practitioners' work. However, in the daily grind of life, we must question whether *we* are employing the very ethics that we wish to see exhibited in our students. How often do we get caught up in the required, mundane, and impersonal tasks rather than the individuals with whom we work and support? To this end, the first recommendation is that we invest personal and individual time and attention to these students. As Mr. Lee outlined most clearly of any interview which occurred, it is imperative that we invest in each person. This may include one-on-one conversation, mentoring, and personal development. He issued a call to arms for leaders to step in and provide this support. Having such support was strongly echoed in other threads of the research. Jackson spoke of the need for care through mutual support within the fraternity as well. In this way, he described a process by which students can hold one another accountable in a supporting,

caring environment. From a student, this was one of the most direct applications of an ethic of care exhibited in this study. Sharing a personal connection to students' development of an ethic of care is key to the long-term growth and development that we wish to see occur during the collegiate years.

Second, we must equip leaders to engage in the personal development that we are seeking them to perform with students. Throughout this study, we noted that the university offers no formal training for organizational advisors, and very limited training for academic advisors. Further, the training provided for student leadership is also limited both in scope and time. (It should be noted that some of the fraternities have national or regional training sessions to which student leadership may be sent. These programs however, may not occur until after the leader has been in office for some time, and are—of course—limited to the fraternity's members and a very small cadre of those.) Providing training on best practices, university procedures, and student support structures is necessary if we wish to see growth in this area. The current structure represents an outdated model whereby we educate leaders through on-the-job work and learning from mistakes. While they certainly learn, and are likely better leaders from doing so, we must consider the gaps or outright damage caused during the learning period. Further, while we cannot expect every adult organizational leader to be a trained student affairs professional, we can share some of the expertise present in these areas.

Third, we must include opportunities for general ethical conversation for students. At the host university, this would be a potential area of inclusion for the ongoing education program. (This reflection is not to state such programming is never included,

but rather that it can be enhanced.) Also, just as we do with other initiatives relating actions to stated missions and values, we must incorporate ethical thinking across the curriculum and academy. By doing so, we increase students' ability to incorporate such thinking in their own lives and practices

Finally, we must include opportunities whereby we may institutionalize the values of an ethic of care and responsibility. (Institutionalization may occur after the implementation of university policies and procedures, an issue which will be addressed later in this section.) Institutionalization includes developing and promulgating a shared vision for ethical thinking and consideration. Such a process must be collaborative in nature, utilizing the shared expertise of all members of the campus community.

### Leadership

The second area where I identified implications and recommendations is in the area of leadership. For this discussion, leadership incorporates several strands within the institution, including that of peer leaders within student organizations, that of chapter or organizational advisors, leadership provided by student affairs professionals, and that given from the university administration. Other opportunities for leadership must also be considered, including those of broader professional organizations and support networks for colleges and those who work in them.

First, we must prepare and train student leaders to equip them to make strong ethical decisions and demonstrate an ethic of care and responsibility. Prior to and during their leadership roles, these students are encountering challenges that they may have yet to face and need strong support and guidance to enable them to make effective and

appropriate decisions. They need, and crave, the mentorship of those who have been down this road before. Interestingly the host university provides a leadership strand for small group of student leaders selected prior to their first enrollment as freshmen. It does not, however, provide this same level of support for current organizational leaders. Developing a leadership cohort for each year's organizational leaders would be a strong effort towards providing this support and care.

As previously noted, there must also be strong support for the chapter and organizational advisors within the institution. While recognizing the challenges inherent in recruiting leadership for these groups, the role of the leader is vitally important. When advisors do not fully embrace their role and responsibility the organizations suffer. This includes lack of vision, lack of strong decision-making, and a failure to take responsibility for their actions. Further, it is important to choose advisors who embrace and model the ethic of care that we hope to see students embrace. Finally, one unintended implication of advisory leadership that must be addressed is the importance of time and distance. Many participants stressed the importance of advisors to whom students can relate. While recognizing the importance of this statement, we must not that relatability is not a product of age, but of attitude. Therefore, there is an opportunity for the inclusion of advisors who have disengaged from the university for a period as their time away may provide insight that would otherwise be lacking.

Leadership provided by the student affairs staff at the host university was clearly strong and has grown in recent years. As such, the implication inherent here is that leadership in this area makes a significant difference. One area of concern noted during



this study was the absence of a full-time Greek Life coordinator. Stretching other staff to cover an open role is certainly a choice made in many institutions on a regular basis.

Doing so, however, reduces the time, attention, and care that the individual can devote to any one role. While this is not a criticism of the individual involved in this study, it is a recognition that resources are finite. Further student affairs leadership can be addressed through the work of this division.

Administrative leadership is vitally important to the work of the institution. As such, there are several implications and recommendations for the future. The first of these, which will also be discussed in the section on policy, is the opportunity and need for the development of a shared vision and goals related to ethical development. Without such a vision, and the moral support of the campus leadership, it is easy for these initiatives to fall by the wayside.

Finally, broad based leadership must also be considered from professional organizations. (It is important to note that many professional organizations provide this type of structure through their mission and belief statements.) This type of leadership assists in addressing the outer two elements of the systems framework provided by Bertram Gallant and Kalichman. By setting goals from a perspective of what are inherently leadership organizations, there is the opportunity to change culture and expectations of the collegiate experience.

### Policy

Implications for policy are varied in nature, but center around the need for congruence in university policy and to fully implement said policies. Policy serves as the

framework for the actions of the university. One clear application of policy would be the expansion of the integrity pledge to be more encompassing of the campus community. By incorporating the policy in the broader fabric of the community, it would be possible to provide greater support to the idea of an ethical campus climate

A second area whereby policy may support future growth and understanding is the need for incorporation of leadership roles in policy. Several university staff noted the need for greater involvement with and leadership of the organizational leaders working on the campus, yet each noted that these changes had not been implemented. By creating a policy through which organizational advisors both have a direct university connection and have a required training, there is an opportunity to improve students' experiences and ultimately the ethical outcomes inherent. This is not to say that the university should legislate ethics for organizational advisors, but rather that if it hopes to have more positive outcomes from the organizations, greater thought and care must be given to this important leadership structure.

A third implication and recommendation for policy is to intentionally broaden the scope of the university's existing educational efforts. These endeavors exist, and certainly have importance in the life of the campus, but by their very design are limited in scope. As several staff noted current efforts extend to first-year freshmen, members of Greek Life, and athletes. While these groups have their own points of risk and needs, they are certainly not the only students who would benefit from training and education outside of the classroom.

## Future Research

The known limitations of this research make it applicable for further study. Further research should be conducted with multiple sites and expanded populations to further understand students' decision-making. The implications of such research are that it will present the opportunity for expanding the work to another college or university.

Future study may also include a continued examination of the applicability of ethical training for both student and their organizational advisors. It would be of interest to better examine how this training could be implemented and/or improved to facilitate strong decision-making. Further, it would be of interest to consider whether there are others within the university community who could provide additional support.

## Conclusions

This research investigated the means by which students in a specific group, fraternity men at a small southeastern university, approached ethical decision-making. It also considered the leadership impacts upon this group by advisors and university staff. Through this work, I identified a diversity of ethical approaches employed by the men as well as varying perspectives utilized by chapter advisors and university staff in guiding the men. Further, I recognized a broad range of university applications by which ethical instruction is provided.

Broadly, I recognized that one of the greatest challenges facing the men was lack of sustained, unified guidance for ethical considerations. There was no one university office, division, or grouping leading the charge for such training, nor was there even a

common understanding that such training is necessary and appropriate. However, there was a clear understanding that there is a need for such a vision and the ability to add it to the processes of the institution.

Recommendations include the need for a unified vision, strong student affairs leadership, and an understanding of the value of out-of-classroom education to the future of college students. I believe that these recommendations will permit a strong and engaged student ethical system.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A  
Research Protocol

**Current Fraternity Members**

1. How do you define integrity? Ethics? Ethical behavior?
2. Does your fraternity promote ethical behavior? If so, how?
3. Have you observed unethical behavior by members of your fraternity? If so, what?
4. Would you receive or give unauthorized help on a class assignment? Why or why not? Would other members of your fraternity do so?
5. Would you intentionally violate a university rule or policy outside of the classroom? Why or why not? Would other members of your fraternity do so?
6. When a university rule or policy is violated by a fraternity member, how does your fraternity respond? How does your fraternity's adult leadership respond?
7. What education have you been provided regarding decision-making? Integrity? Honor Codes or principles?
8. Have you received and/or can you share written direction regarding ethical behavior? For example, policies, procedures, instructions, or e-mails?
9. Do we need additional university policies regarding ethical behavior? Do we need additional instruction?

## **Current Fraternity Advisors**

1. How do you define integrity? Ethics? Ethical behavior?
2. Does your fraternity promote ethical behavior? If so, how?
3. Have you observed unethical behavior by members of your fraternity? If so, what?
4. Would members of your fraternity receive or give unauthorized help on a class assignment? Why or why not?
5. Would members of your fraternity intentionally violate a university rule or policy outside of the classroom? Why or why not?
6. When a university rule or policy is violated by a fraternity member, how does your fraternity respond? As a fraternity leader, how do you respond?
7. What education have you been provided regarding decision-making? Integrity? Honor Codes or principles?
8. What education have you provided to your fraternity regarding decision-making? Integrity? Honor Codes or principles?
9. Have you received and/or can you share written direction regarding ethical behavior? For example, policies, procedures, instructions, or e-mails?
10. Have you provided and/or can you share written direction you provided regarding ethical behavior? For example, policies, procedures, instructions, or e-mails?
11. Do we need additional university policies regarding ethical behavior? Do we need additional instruction?

## **University Employees**

1. How do you define integrity? Ethics? Ethical behavior?
2. Does Greek Life promote ethical behavior? If so, how?
3. Have you observed unethical behavior by members of Furman University's fraternal organizations? If so, what?
4. Would members of Furman's fraternities receive or give unauthorized help on a class assignment? Why or why not?
5. Would members of Furman's fraternities intentionally violate a university rule or policy outside of the classroom? Why or why not?
6. When a university rule or policy is violated by a fraternity member, how does Greek Life respond? As a university leader, how do you respond?
7. What education have you been provided regarding decision-making? Integrity? Honor Codes or principles?
8. What education have you provided to Furman's fraternities regarding decision-making? Integrity? Honor Codes or principles?
9. What education have you provided to Furman's fraternities' adult leadership regarding decision-making? Integrity? Honor Codes or principles?
10. Have you received and/or can you share written direction regarding ethical behavior? For example, policies, procedures, instructions, or e-mails?
11. Have you provided and/or can you share written direction you provided regarding ethical behavior? For example, policies, procedures, instructions, or e-mails?



12. Do we need additional university policies regarding ethical behavior? Do we need additional instruction?