AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Timothea L. Lapham for the degree of Master of Science in College Student Services
Administration presented on April 18, 2013.

Title: Experiences of Students of Color who Decide to Join and Pursue Active

Membership in an Interfraternity Council (IFC) Fraternity at a Predominantly White

Academic Institution

Abstract approved:

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This thesis explored the experiences of male students of color currently enrolled in a

predominantly White academic institution, in a predominantly White region of the United

States of America who were also initiated and involved in an IFC fraternity. The focus of

the qualitative study examined the experiences of students who have chosen to join and

pursue active membership within a housed IFC fraternity as a student of color. Utilizing a

sample of six student interviews along with a review of relevant literature, the principal

findings of this study are that students of color are fulfilled in their decision to join and

pursue IFC fraternity membership and have had rewarding experiences thus far. Many

themes emerged that highlighted the importance of a student's background and life prior

to college and the role it plays on the decision to join and the experiences that occur

within an IFC fraternity. The final finding suggested that the significance of race was

downplayed within the IFC fraternity experience and there is a focus of assimilation

amongst the students of color.

Keywords: Greek, fraternity, student of color, predominantly White institution

Experiences of Students of Color who Decide to Join and Pursue Active Membership in
an Interfraternity Council (IFC) Fraternity at a Predominantly White Academic
Institution

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Timothea L. Lapham, Author

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Experiences of Students of Color who decide to join and pursue active membership in

an Interfraternity Council (IFC) fraternity at a predominantly White academic

institution

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Experiences of Students of Color who decide to join and pursue active membership in an
Interfraternity Council (IFC) fraternity at a predominantly White academic institution

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Personal Statement

As an alumna of a sorority, I entered graduate school with knowledge and
personal experience of Greek organizations. Working with Greek organizations as the
graduate teaching assistant within the Center for Fraternity & Sorority Life allowed me to
expand upon my knowledge and learn more about the Greek community at Brotherhood
University (BU). At BU, there are multiple types of fraternities; academic-based,
multicultural-based, social-based, etc. Combining this Greek experience with my
graduate level Multicultural Issues class, I came across questions regarding student
engagement, student involvement, Greek participation, and race.

BU is a predominantly White institution and even with opportunities for
students of color to join fraternities reflective of ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage, I
found that there was a population of students of color within the Interfraternity Council
(IFC) fraternities. The IFC fraternities are social based fraternities that hold a make-up of
predominantly White students at BU. Regarding student identity and choice of
involvement; I wondered what the experiences students of color have within the IFC
housed fraternities. Initially, that is how I came about my thesis research topic.

Topic of Study

The reason college men choose to become involved in a fraternity varies for the individual. Some men are looking for a community away from home, some are looking to meet new people and network for their future, some just want to have fun and experience what college has to offer, and some join for other reasons (Syrett, 2009). Regardless of the initial reason to join a fraternity, the Greek experience can impact student development and the college career. In this study, I examine the experiences of self-identified male students of color enrolled in a predominantly White academic institution who were also initiated and involved in an IFC fraternity for at least an academic term.

The primary focus of the study was to understand the experiences men of color have as active members within IFC fraternities. Through a qualitative approach to research, I collect data from students of color within the IFC community. The primary research question that guided this study is: What are experiences of male students of color who decide to join and pursue active membership in an Interfraternity Council (IFC) fraternity at a predominantly White academic institution?

Evolution of Fraternal Organizations

Greek life has been prevalent within the United States of America since the official founding of the first fraternity in 1776. In the 18th century, the only individuals involved in academia were White, middle-class males (Rudolph, 1990). The Greek system has endured the past 237 years and though it has changed, developed and transformed to fit the needs and desires of the current collegiate population, it has

withstood the test of time. Fraternities are continually evolving, which encompasses the demographic make-up of fraternal membership.

Since the formation of Greek life, changes to society including policies, laws, and the establishing of universities have affected fraternities. By the time that people of color were considered citizens of the US or allowed to attend universities, which occurred in 1868 through the ratification of the fourteenth amendment to the US constitution and in 1869 as Howard University was founded as the first Black law School, fraternities had been in existence for almost a century (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). The membership and traditions of the fraternities existent at this point in time were White, leading to the use of term used currently, predominantly White. Because students of color were not permitted membership into the already existing Greek letter organizations, Black, Latino, Chinese, and multicultural fraternities were founded beginning in the late 19th century and continuing throughout the 20th century (Phi Iota Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Est. 1931, 2013).

Students of color were able to find community with other students who shared their same culture or ethnicity. After the Civil Rights Act was signed in 1964, discrimination was prohibited based upon race, color, religion, or national origin (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Since then, all IFC fraternities have implemented anti-discriminatory membership clauses within the fraternity's constitution and by-laws (North American Interfraternity Conference, 2013). The memberships of fraternities are diversifying, moving from what was founded as predominantly White fraternities to a more diverse and inclusive membership.

Increasing Racial Diversity in Higher Education

The number of students enrolling and attending higher education institutions is

rapidly increasing (NCES, 2012). Academic institutions are experiencing continual

growth within their student body populations. According to the National Center for

Education Statistics (2012), during the decade of 2000-2010, the percentage of 18- to 24-

year-olds enrolled in college rose from 35 percent to 41 percent. As the number of

students enrolling in college increase, the diversity of student populations also expands.

Over the past 35 years, the percentage of college students of color has also

increased: Hispanic students rose from 3 percent to 13 percent, Asian/Pacific Islander

students rose from 2 percent to 6 percent, and the percentage of Black students rose from

9 percent to 14 percent (NCES, 2012). As the percentages of students of color are

growing, the percentages of White students are decreasing. Between 1976 and 2010, the

White student population fell from 83 percent to 61 percent (NCES, 2012). As the

demographics of the overall student population expand within higher education, the

demographics of fraternity membership will also expand.

Significance of Research

This thesis seeks to examine experiences of some male college students of color

who have chosen to seek membership within an IFC housed fraternity at a predominantly

White institution in a predominantly White region of the United States of America. This

study addresses the fraternity experience as a whole, which is a unique perspective. Much

of the current research on fraternities and fraternity men are on specific, narrowed topics

such as hazing, alcohol use, and masculinity (Nuwer, 1999; Syrett, 2009). Addressing the

fraternity experience from the perception of a sub-population within the fraternal

membership will provide information to hopefully better understand the student

population, as a whole and within fraternities.

Higher education college student populations are experiencing continued growth

and diversification. This topic has relevance for higher education professionals to better

understand student populations and the changing demographics of fraternities. This study

examines a snapshot of experiences of some students of color within these organizations

that were originally founded as predominantly White institutions.

The findings of the study will expand upon current literature focusing on students

of color who are active members of an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White academic

institution. The secondary focus of this study is to utilize the knowledge and information

gathered as a result of the interviews within this research to inform student support

services and aid in understanding the experiences of students of color within Greek letter

organizations- specifically IFC fraternities at predominantly White institutions. While

there has been research on students of color who choose ethnic, race, or culture-based

Greek letter organizations, there has been little qualitative research completed looking at

students of color within IFC groups that do not focus on a specific race or culture, but a

mission or vision. Therefore a gap of knowledge currently exists.

Definitions of Terms

Below is a list of key terms that are utilized within this study. Members of Greek

organizations utilize terminology that is specific to fraternities or sororities. The

definitions of these words have been provided to support the reader in understanding how

these terms relate to this study.

- Predominantly White institution **-** A predominantly White institution (PWI) is a

  classification to describe the ethnic make-up of the students attending BU.

  According to BU's Enrollment survey taken in fall 2012, 66.6% of students at BU

  identify as Caucasian or White. This percentage is a majority, reflecting that BU

  is a predominantly White Institution. (School Enrollment Summary, 2012)

- Student of color - A student of color, (SOC) for the purpose of this study, is a

  college student at BU who has self-identified as an ethnicity other than White.

  There is no specific race or ethnic make-up defining this term for this study.

- Fraternity - According to Webster's dictionary, a technical definition of a

  fraternity is "a men's student organization formed chiefly for social purposes

  having secret rites and a name consisting of Greek letters" (Guralnik & Proctor,

  1970, p. 174). Another definition of a fraternity provided by Lucas (as cited in

  Schuh, Jones, Harper, & Associates, 2011) specifically relating to student services

  is "…small, self-selected groups of men who pledged their loyalty, secrecy, and

  support of their hierarchal organizations" (p. 62). There are many types of

  fraternities, each characterized by their purposes, membership requirements, or

fields of interests. For the purpose of this study, fraternities refer male-only Greek

organizations that hold membership within the NIC association. The fraternities

within NIC are commonly called "...social fraternities, but while the initial use of

the term social referred to social development, the term has been mistakenly

thought to refer to social functions by members and non-members..." (Baird,

1991, p. I-9). The fraternities in this study are all housed chapters on BU's

campus.

- North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) - The North American

  Interfraternity Conference is a national umbrella group or "the trade association

  representing 75 International and National Men's Fraternities..." (North American

  Interfraternity Conference, 2013, "About NIC," para. 1). The NIC advocates for

  its member fraternities through the enrichment, advancement, and enhancement of

  the fraternal experience. A specific means of contributing to the benefits of

  fraternity membership is through its relationship with Interfraternity Councils.

- Interfraternity Council (IFC) - An Interfraternity Council is a campus-based

  umbrella council representing the NIC fraternities present at the respective

  university. An IFC can "…exist where two or more NIC member fraternities exist

  on a campus. This affiliation with the NIC provides direct resources and services

  to IFC Officers and fraternity advisors to further the health and success of their

  respective fraternity communities" (North American Interfraternity Conference,

  2013, "About NIC," para. 1). The executive council of IFC is made up of IFC

fraternity leaders elected by the fraternities for an annual position who work

together for the betterment of their IFC or Greek community.

- Chapter - A chapter is an established membership unit of a national or

  international fraternity. Once a fraternity has expanded to a campus and has

  successfully colonized and created a membership group there, the group is

  chartered and becomes a chapter of that respective organization. Each fraternity

  can have multiple chapters spread throughout various campuses all over the

  United States of America and some in Canada.

- Recruitment/rush - Recruitment is a process through which college students can

  learn more about fraternities, fraternity men, and fraternity life. At BU, there is a

  formal recruitment period for IFC fraternities at the beginning of the school year

  with organized activities put on by IFC Executive council. During this recruitment

  period, potential new members can meet men from various fraternities and

  determine which fraternity is the best fit for them. After the designated

  recruitment week, potential new members can still visit fraternities and explore

  fraternity options, but there is less structure or organization. At BU, it is common

  for the IFC fraternities to take part in summer recruitment, which is comprised of

  activities over the summer break between academic terms. Because of summer

  recruitment, it is possible for incoming first-year BU students to already be

  pledges/new members by the time school starts in the fall. The term rush is also

  commonly used referring to the recruitment time period or as the act of going

through recruitment. Though this is not the correct use of the word, men within

the IFC at BU use it in that manner.

- Potential new member - A potential new member refers to college man who is

    interested in joining a fraternity and has met current pledges or initiated members

    of the fraternity. A potential new member usually attends multiple chapter events,

    meets numerous members, and visits the chapter house before offered a formal

    invitation, also known as a bid, by the fraternity. Within IFC fraternities, a

    potential new member can seek membership during the formal recruitment period

    or any other time throughout the academic year. A man will remain potential new

    member until he has been offered and accepted an invitation for membership.

- Pledge/new member - Once a man accepts his bid from a fraternity, he becomes a

    pledge/new member. The term pledge is synonymous with new member. Many

    fraternal organizations prefer the term new member, because there are fewer

    stigmas than those associated with the term pledge. The verbal use of the word

    pledge is prevalent within the IFC fraternity community for identification.

    Individuals will identify as a pledge or new member throughout the pledge

    process or the new member period. This is a set amount of time during which the

    pledge/new member goes through an educational process learning about the

    fraternity, its history, core values, and the requirements of membership.

- Initiate/active member - After the pledge process/new member education time

    period, there is initiation. Once a pledge/new member has met all of the

    requirements for fraternity membership, he is initiated through a fraternal ritual

also known as initiation. After completion of initiation, the man can be referred to

as an initiate or an active member of the fraternity. At this point, he has full

knowledge and privileges within the fraternity that were limited during his time as

a pledge/new member.

- In good standing - The term in good standing refers to the status of a member. A

    member must meet all the responsibilities and standards of the chapter and

    fraternity to be in good standing. There are privileges associated with being in

    good standing and those privileges are taken away if a member is not in good

    standing. An example of good standing and its implications is: a member does not

    meet the required grade point average to be considered in good standing, therefore

    his fraternity voting privileges are removed until a new grade point average can

    be calculated meeting the fraternity's requirements.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction

of the study, the significance of the study, and a set of terms and definitions utilized

within this study. This initial chapter will also provide a layout for the following chapters

within this thesis. Chapter two contains background information, history, and review of

literature and educational theories relevant to this study. The information provided within

chapter two offers a historical and educational lens to aid in understanding the study. In

chapter three, the research methodology of the study is explained as a qualitative study

conducted through a grounded theory approach. Within this chapter, explanations are

provided for participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, and limitations of the

study. The findings and discussion of this study are explored within chapter four. Chapter

four includes an examination of participants, information provided by the participants and

themes that emerged from the data collected. In the final chapter, conclusions and results

of the study are presented providing recommendations and suggestions for further

research and practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review relevant literature and background information to create a comprehensive framework from which to understand this research study. In order to offer context for this study, the two topics of Greek IFC fraternities and students of color will be assessed in how they interface. Individually, each of those topics has been studied in-depth within the realm of scholarly research, but there is little research examining the connection and experiences between students of color who are actively involved in an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White institution.

I found within research that many articles and studies that examine Greek life did not specify ethnic breakdown or identities of the students. There was much more research based on narrowed topics, organizations, or regions of the country. This literature review is organized in four parts: (a) the historical founding of Greek fraternities, (b) the historical founding of racial or ethnic-based fraternities, (c) relevant background information including data and trends from related research, and (d) student development theory.

History of Greek Fraternities

A historical approach of the foundation of fraternities, the development and behaviors throughout time, and focus on the Greek community to keep up with norms of ever-changing society will reveal comprehensive information to provide a better understanding of Greeks as a separate society within current collegiate life.

Greek-letter fraternities were initially created by students for social and literary

purposes and though focus and fraternal activities have drastically changed over time, the

organizations are still a social outlet for collegiate students today (Baird, 2012). The first

secret Greek letter society, Phi Beta Kappa (PBK), was founded at William and Mary

College in Williamsburg, VA, in 1776 (Baird, 1915). PBK, recognized as the initial

chapter in the American Greek system, was created as a College Literary Society who

held frequent and regular meetings (Copeland, 1907). At this point in history, the name

fraternity referred to a group of men who gathered together to read and discuss literary

topics in order to seek wisdom and expand their learning.

During this same time, America was in the midst of the Revolutionary War, and

though education was viewed as an important attribute, survival and securing freedom

from Great Britain was the focus (Martin, 1928). Because of those external factors, the

fraternity system saw little growth or expansion until 1820's (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). At

Union College from 1825-1827, Kappa Alpha, Delta Phi, and Sigma Pi were organized

and became active by initiating members. These three societies are referred to as the

Union triad and were the pattern for the American fraternity system (Syrett, 2009).

Though each fraternity was unique, the foundational framework on which they

were created all included secrecy, requirements for membership, chosen Greek letters,

colors, a grip, a symbolic badge, armorial bearings, and adopted principles (Baird, 1915).

Each Greek organization embraces their framework and heraldry; many times the

meaning or description is concealed so only initiated members have full knowledge

(Baird, 1915). Though rituals, symbolism and meanings may remain secret and define a

certain organization; there are many other aspects of fraternity life that are comparable to

one another: a focus on academics, community service, philanthropies, social events, and

athletics and "the kindred pleasures of one another's company" (Anson & Marchesani,

1991, p. I-2).

Though the idea of fraternities emerged from literary societies, fraternities were

founded as social organizations where students could come together and find

companionship (Rudolph, 1990). Students gravitated towards fraternities because they

offered an escape from the strict and often monotonous routine of the college curriculum

and presented privacy, which was non-existent in the dormitories (Rudolph, 1990).

Though a main purpose of fraternities was socializing, the fraternal organizations were

built on Christian values emphasizing personal development, integrity and scholastic

achievement (Barry, 2007).

Fraternity members were expected to uphold their own personal values as well as

live by the creed or purpose of the fraternity, therefore presenting themselves in a refined

manner. Based upon the individual members of a fraternity at any time, the personality of

the chapter would vary (Anson & Marchesani, 1991). Some fraternities were zealously

academic while others focused on building a lively social reputation; before joining a

fraternity, men would be aware of the emphases of the chapter, aligning their own wants

to the depictions of the fraternity (Anson & Marchesani, 1991).

The appeals of fraternities were growing and throughout the mid 1800's dozens of

Greek-lettered fraternities were founded throughout the United States (Baird, 1915).

Though fraternity membership numbers were rapidly increasing, this was without any

consideration of the university presidents; universities found that the undergraduate

students had created a social system and integrated it into the college community

(Rudolph, 1990). The secrecy surrounding Greek organizations irritated university

leaders because there was no way of regulating fraternity meetings, therefore a lack of

authority (Syrett, 2009).

Fraternity men, on the other hand, highly regarded this aspect of fraternity life;

they were able to "provide themselves with entertainments and activities that were

otherwise forbidden" (Syrett, 2009, p. 31). These "forbidden" acts existed long before the

foundation of fraternities, but through brotherhood the fraternal system redefined these

behaviors (Rudolph, 1990). Through providing a secret environment where there was a

high level of loyalty and little authority, fraternity men had minimal restrictions.

Rudolph (1990) states that "fraternities institutionalized…drinking, smoking, card

playing, singing and seducing…that the fraternity gave a *new* meaning to a cigar, a drink,

a girl, a song and in time it was not really possible to distinguish purpose from

manifestation" (p. 147). The independent characterization and rebellion against the norms

of society at the time were liberating for fraternity men and articulated what it meant to

be a fraternity man.

With no threat of communal or collegiate consequence, those fraternal behaviors

and actions transformed into normalcy for fraternities. Without fear of retribution and the

revolution of those behaviors into typical fraternal actions, a sense of entitlement

emerged within the Greek system. The freedom and privacy that ensued with

membership provided an environment in which fraternity men could do as they pleased.

Though the Greek system was established upon an already privileged framework, there

was competitive nature within fraternities to be the most sought after, the most elitist.

Fraternities, in the selective environment of membership, chose men based on

successful attributes such as "good looks, good clothes, good family, and good income"

(Rudolph, 1990, p. 149). The image of the fraternity man was quickly forming, insisting

that talent, charm, ability and masculinity among other attributes were necessary to be

considered a true man (Dorr, 2010). Many fraternities espoused a pretentious visage

becoming exclusionary to only those who fit the sought requirements. Through setting a

degree of expectation, the chapter could ensure that only men who could prove

themselves worthy in the eyes of the chapter would receive membership. So, the

exclusiveness of fraternity membership in the mid 1800's was viewed solely as a means

to maintain overall success, though constructed in a particular manner according to their

prerogative.

Contributing to the competitive nature, fraternities not only strived for excellence

within their specific chapter, but also harbored the desire to be better than other chapters

(Syrett, 2009). Trying to become the best fraternity without set criteria to follow

encouraged and possibly originated the image of superiority within the fraternal system.

Kiesling (1996) found that "fraternity men construct powerful identities because of the

ideology of their community organizes the world into competitive hierarchies" (p. iv).

The competitiveness of fraternities has an impact on individual identity developments.

Fraternity chapters wanted to have fellow students perceive them as: being the best, having the most, and perceived as the most popular. It was expected of fraternity men to exude a certain confidence and manliness to reflect their respective affiliation (Syrett, 2009). Though there was rivalry between fraternities as to who may be the best, the prestige associated with membership in any fraternity radiated appeal to students.

From the basis that fraternities were founded as social organizations, it has been evident through history that fraternity men enjoy a good time. Whether that was in the capacity of bonding during a brotherhood event, partying at the chapter house, or dancing at a co-ed event, fraternity men emanate that they know what they want and will seek what they desire, at the cost of rebellion, religion, and potentially safety. Though the types of socialization have changed over the past century, the underpinnings of fraternal (social) life are staged and have been conformed to modern society.

Though the background information provided is limited, the historical context covers some themes from the beginnings of Greek life 18th and 19th centuries and depicts what a typical fraternity man or fraternity chapter may have looked or acted like. I would like to redirect the focus from the behaviors and actions of historical fraternity men to the environment and setting in which the foundation of fraternities were developed. Within these two centuries, White males dominated life within America, especially within academia. The system intact began with a structural issue of oppression, excluding all people of other races and women and children of their own race.

These fraternities were founded over two centuries ago, yet they are still known as

White fraternities. The identification of White prompts the question, if the description is

because of the historical population of membership or if there is an underlying possibly

subconscious intent to maintain a predominantly White membership and so thus the

continuation of the name predominantly White. The expectations or intentions of White

men, at that point in history, were not questioned as they were perceived as the content of

mainstream society, yet this system of oppression is still in effect currently.

History of Racial or Ethnic-Based Fraternities

The latter part of the 19th century, attempts for equality and justice for people of

color emerged with the signing of the emancipation proclamation, the passage of Jim

Crow laws, and the founding of the first historically Black college, Howard University

(Rudolph, 1990). These progressive strides for educational access for people of color

allowed more opportunity for students of color to attend universities. Soon after students

of color started attending universities, the development of the first ethnic-based secret

societies and fraternities appeared. Similarly to the reasons why White men founded

fraternities, the students of color connected with one another for community, social

environments and study groups (Ross, 2000).

The main motive for the creation of ethnic-based fraternities was the need and

desire for a support structure. Though legally the U.S. government had passed

segregation laws, the enforcement of these laws was situational and regionally dependent

(Jim Crow laws, 2011). The supposed separate but equal status of these laws propagated

disparity of resources; disfavoring people of color. Students of color "…were isolated

and segregated from the general student population…" (p. 6), excluded from all other

organizations leaving only one choice of turning inward for support and solutions (Ross,

2000).

   The racial hostility of the late 19th century and early 20th century instigated the

founding of the first documented ethnic and cultural based fraternity. Phi Iota Alpha

Fraternity, Inc. (PIA) was founded as the first Latino fraternity in 1898, at Rensselaer

Polytechnic Institute (Phi Iota Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Est. 1931, 2012). The primary goal

of PIA was to foster a cultural environment for students of Latin America and Spain

based on the ideology of Pan-Americanism, "unification of all the Latin American

nations and all Latin American people" (Phi Iota Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Est. 1931, 2012,

"Fraternal History," para. 2).

   Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. was founded as the first African American

fraternity December 4, 1906, at Cornell University as a support network to help African

American students prosper despite the racial inequality and social disadvantages present

(Ross, 2000). This fraternity has provided a voice and vision to struggles of African

Americans around the world (Alpha Phi Alpha, Inc., 2008). While continuing to

emphasize the pursuit of academic excellence, Alpha Phi Alpha, Inc. also recognized

other social, political, educational, and economical injustices faced by African Americans

and other minorities. Alpha Phi Alpha, Inc. was at the forefront of the fight within the

civil rights movement through transformational members such as Martin Luther King, Jr.,

W.E.B. DuBois, and Thurgood Marshall (Alpha Phi Alpha, Inc., 2008).

Rho Psi Fraternity, a fraternity created by Chinese American men, was

established at Cornell University in 1916 (National APIA Panhellenic Association, 2013).

At this time, people of Asian heritage were experiencing stigma and repercussions from

United States policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Gentlemen's

Agreement of 1907 (National APIA Panhellenic Association, 2013). These types of

policies made access to higher education difficult for people of Asian heritage. The

climate of this time was hostile towards people of Asian heritage and because they were

barred from joining any other Greek organization, the men formed Rho Psi Fraternity.

The reasons portrayed for the creation of the first Latino fraternity, the first

African American fraternity, and the first Asian American fraternity are depicters of how

students of color in the early 20th century were feeling and reacting to their environment.

Similar to the initial expansion of White fraternities, after the founding of the first couple

ethnic-based fraternities, many more were founded shortly thereafter.

Eight out of the nine fraternities and sororities who hold membership within the

National Pan-Hellenic Council were founded by 1922 (National Pan-Hellenic Council,

2010). In 1930, the National Pan-Hellenic Council was formed by five of the historical

African American fraternities and sororities for "Unanimity of thought and action as far

as possible in the conduct of Greek letter collegiate fraternities and sororities, and to

consider problems of mutual interest to its member organizations" (National Pan-Hellenic

Council, 2010, "Mission," para. 3). Asian fraternities and sororities saw a consistent

growth in the 1920' and 1930's, because students of Asian descent wanted the same

opportunities as students in other Greek organizations (National APIA Panhellenic

Association, 2013). Since the creation of African American and Asian fraternities, there

have been dozens of other fraternities founded as ethnic or cultural based Greek

organizations.

After a review of the history of the first racial and ethnic-based Greek fraternities,

a comparison can be made between the similarities and differences between what are

known as the White fraternities and the ethnic-based fraternities. During the two decades

when the first Latino, African American and Asian America fraternities were founded,

men of color were prohibited membership in any existing IFC fraternities. Because of this

exclusion, men of color joined together to form a fraternity through which they could find

support.

Background Information and Related Research

Taking into account the historical and current framework and make-up of

membership within White fraternities, the experiences of students of color who choose to

pursue and join an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White university is a topic worthy of

investigation. There have been few other pieces of research and literature that address

students of color within predominantly White fraternities. Reviewing some of the

relevant studies and their findings will inform my study and provide context to readers.

The amount of literature and media published around Greek letter societies, the numbers

of students in America who have chosen to become Greek and the current strong

presence Greeks have on University campuses show that fraternities and sororities are

engrained into the American collegiate culture and are valued as significant

organizations.

A stigma has fallen over the Greek system. The Greek system, as a whole, is synonymously associated with topics including: alcohol abuse and underage drinking (Alva, 1998; Capone, Wood, Borsari, & Laird, 2007; Fairlie, DeJong, Stevenson, Lavigne, & Wood, 2010); hazing (Campo, Shelly, Poulos, Gretchen, & Sipple, 2005; Kimbrough, 2009; Nuwer, 1999; Roach, 2000); patriarchy, sexism, sexual assault (Syrett, 2009); and exclusionary practices (Hughey, 2010; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004; Syrett, 2009).

The current markers that designate individual achievement within fraternities consist of charm and good looks, sexual performance, romantic and sexual conquests, consumption of alcohol and amount of alcohol consumed, familial background and societal status (Syrett, 2009). Though, currently more explicit expressions are used, the criterion for a fraternity man has not changed much over the past 185 years. These symbols may not hold importance within non-Greek communities, but within individual chapters, brothers are often chastised or prodded until they meet certain unspoken expectations. The fraternity system within America's colleges has earned an undesirable reputation for itself and though the incidents that feed this detrimental status are often the acts of one or a few men, a single chapter, or an individual organization, the entire community is tainted by those individual decisions or behaviors (McAdory, 2009).

The nature, in which fraternities were founded, including attributes of secrecy, rebellion, and allowance (sometimes even encouragement) of deviant behavior, solidified a base that has influenced the growth and development of current fraternities (Syrett,

2009). The historical journey of fraternities exposes prevalent themes that have become

so entwined in the functioning and existence of fraternities that it is difficult to separate

foundational principles opposed to adopted mindsets. Centuries have passed since the

introduction and growth of the major fraternal movement. Throughout that time the

American society and culture has drastically changed. In most every way (legally,

technologically, educationally, monetarily, economically, socially, politically) institutions

and organizations have had to adjust their operation in order to keep up with changing

times and maintain societal success. With some aspects, including exclusionary

membership practices, exertion of masculinity, and condoning of irrational behavior, it

seems as if time within the fraternity world has not passed at all (Syrett, 2009).

Homogeneous organizations. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Peddersen and Allen

(1998) stated that at many predominantly White institutions, fraternities and sororities

have been a part of campus life far longer than people of color. Over time, the White

Greek organizations have become deeply involved in campus activities, student body

politics, and university organization socials. Many times Greek organizations have their

own house where members can congregate and live. It is mystifying how even through

major social movements and passage of equity and inclusionary laws that fraternities

have molded to maintain a similar framework of functioning as fraternal chapters a

century ago and continue to grow.

The lack of expedient change exemplifies the value and importance that some

individuals and sectors of society rest on the Greek system, even if mainstream America

views fraternities in a negative light. Chang and DeAngelo (2002) found that many White

Greek organizations still remain segregated, even after the passage of time and laws that

prohibited discrimination. It seems the traditions imbedded in membership of White

Greek organizations lack transition to match current student populations. Sidanius et al.,

(2004) found that White students were overrepresented in Greek organizations and noted

"… sororities and fraternities tend to serve as ethnic enclaves for White students" (p.

100).

To put into context the variables surrounding fraternity membership, one could

perceive that discrimination (of any sort) was not perceived as an exclusionary tactic but

rather a way to succeed in acquiring who or what was desired, similar to the mentality of

the idiom "survival of the fittest." Over the past two hundred plus years, it seems as if

this selective, privileged mindset is still in place. Prior to the 1960's, racism and societal

segregation prevented students of color to join or hold membership in existing White

fraternal organizations (McClure, 2006). By the end of the 1960's, all national social

fraternities had eliminated discriminatory policies involving race and religion (Newsome,

2009). Despite the legal allowance for integration, fraternities still lack racial diversity.

Kimbrough (1997) stated that universities still "struggle with a racially dichotomous

Greek system" (p. 229).

Conformity is often seen within fraternities, regardless of moral implications. In

most aspects of fraternity life, members are afraid they may be tainted by the action of

another brother, "being known, as they are, by the company they keep" (Syrett, 2009, p.

294). The mass mentality of the brotherhood is often instigated by one or a few brothers

who hold social power in the chapter reflecting the reputation of the house created by

peers and other Greek chapters (Syrett, 2009). Fraternity men would rather stay within

the realm of inclusion than risk voicing an opposing opinion at the cost of potentially

being ridiculed or worse, ostracized.

Lack of integration. Even with the progressive civil rights movements and

affirmative action, Greek membership discrimination is still occurring. The following

quote by Hughey (2006) accurately describes the lack of cohesion in Greek membership,

underpinning a tone of racism:

> "…Although law prohibits de jure membership bias and exclusion based
> upon race in both U.S. educational institutions and their corresponding
> fraternities and sororities, racial separation prevails de facto through
> custom, tradition, and preference in a Greek system comprised of
> historically racially homogenous organizations along a White/non-White
> dichotomy" (p. 10).

Identifying prejudice or racism within the context of membership selection in a

predominantly White Greek organization can be very difficult to name, because it can

casually be justified as any other variable, i.e. grades were not high enough, not enough

previous community service, not athletic enough, personality was not a right fit for the

chapter, or simply there was a common feeling of dislike towards that potential new

member from initiated members.

The desire to improve the chapter or house is often the highest priority during

fraternity recruitment. Even if there is not outright prejudice remarks or visible actions,

students will do whatever is within their capacity to reach the unattainable perception of

what a "perfect" Greek organization looks like. Even with the elimination of

discrimination policies, social fraternities that were founded as White fraternities lack

racial and ethnic diversity (Maisel, 1990).

The White privileged historical foundation upon which traditions and

expectations were derived is often intrinsically racist without requiring any additional

words or actions to accompany. Laird (2005) described "fraternities and sororities

(particularly historically white fraternities and sororities on historically white

campuses...) through their structures and activities encourage homogeneity and

discourage interactions across difference" (p. 373). The indoctrination of racism within

the American society and how White students are taught, or not taught, to view their own

race makes racism imperceptible to a White student who has never been educated about

White privilege or racism.

To move forward for a more inclusive, diverse Greek system, integration needs to

occur alongside student identity development. Park (2008) stated that breaking the self-

perpetuating cycle of homogeneity found within the Greek system would take

intentionality that runs the risk of "…making students of color feels like token

minorities" (p. 127). As Chang (1996) found, there is a limited amount of published

research or literature regarding racial integration in social fraternities.

Chang's (1996) study on membership of students of color in fraternities and

sororities focused on racial integration in predominantly White Greek organizations.

Chang (1996) found that the acceptance of students of color in White fraternities is

predicated on the student's view of the world and shared interests with the White Greek

members. Students are more likely to self-engage and interact with students who have

similar interests as them. Chang (1996) noted in a description of the participants within

his study, "It is not surprising that they are more inclined to join exclusionary social

groups, despite the history of discrimination and racial exclusion of these organizations"

(p. 21). Chang also described a possible strategy used by students of color who join

White fraternities and sororities as assimilation (Chang 1996).

As students develop within college, they will create strategies and attain positions

that help them navigate a racially diverse society. Hughey (2010) states that there is an

"implicit assumption that conflates cross-racial membership with that of full integration

and acceptance, argues that nonwhites must "assimilate" in order to achieve full

acceptance…" (p. 654). Students of color who choose to join predominantly White

fraternities are placed in a White-inclusive environment and must transition in the best

way they find possible.

Student Development Theory

Student development theory is used to inform educators on phenomenon

surrounding student growth and understanding. Addressing some college student

developmental theories as well as a racial identity development model relative to the

experiences of student of color in IFC fraternities at a predominantly White university

provides an academic framework for understanding what factors are present and where

students fit in the theories.

Student development theories cover the breadth of different types of development

and Wijeyesinghe & Jackson (2001) explained that development theory has benefitted

from the inclusion of racial and ethnic identity development theories. Utilizing theory to

analyze student experiences may allow behaviors or actions to be named therefore

creating a starting point to strategically create positive change, inform interactions, plan

for educational programming or expose gaps in knowledge where further research is

needed. The following four theories will be described in relation to college students:

Astin's theory of student involvement, Schlossberg's transitions theory, and

Schlossberg's marginality and mattering theory, and Helm's White and people of color

racial identity models.

Astin's student involvement theory. The fraternity experience offers college

men the opportunity to become involved as students (Rudolph, 1990). Involvement

within college raises a student's perception of quality, opportunity, and his own personal

direction, which, in turn, directly affects attendance, retention, and ratings of the

university (Astin, 1968). Alexander Astin created the theory of student involvement to

bring clarity to the importance of student involvement in higher education. Astin's (1984)

student involvement theory consists of five postulates: investment of energy, occurrence

along a continuum, quantitative and qualitative features, opportunity of involvement, and

the effectiveness of student involvement programs. The combination of these five areas

contributes to the level and type of involvement and how the student may personally

develop.

Greek organizations were established as a vehicle for students to meet and engage

with other peers, becoming involved while at college. Astin (1993) also found that

fraternity involvement encourages leadership development. The investment of energy is a

blend of time, effort, and mental and physical energy that a student contributes to a

certain endeavor, which directly relates to their sense of belonging (Astin, 1984). The

extent and quality of student involvement devoted to educationally related activities or

student organizations is an important predictor of personal development (Astin, 1993).

The devotion and interaction with members of a certain community allow the student to

feel integrated as a meaningful contributor, which boosts morale and encourages greater

involvement.

Many students pledge a fraternity their first year in college, often in the first

couple weeks of fall term during formal recruitment. The timing of fraternity recruitment

is intentional to gather interest and engage new students soon after they come to college.

From the initial pledging of a fraternity, a student is involved with the organization. The

amount of time and effort students contribute to their academics and extracurricular

activities lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success (Manning,

Kinzie, & Schuh, 2006).

Students who are involved on campus have more interactions with other students

and faculty. Through these interactions, they are making connections and building

relationships that directly relate to personal development. Chang (1996) stated that

fraternities, as a peer group within college, could play a significant role for participation

and potential for leadership development.

Schlossberg's theory of transition. Schlossberg's theory of transition contains a

"framework that would facilitate an understanding of adults in transition and aid them in

connecting to the help they needed to cope with ordinary and extraordinary process of

living" (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 213). Every individual

experiences transition, but the process is not always positive and can cultivate confusion.

By applying Schlossberg's theory to fraternity membership, one can better understand the

transition; the types of transitions and what four factors specifically influence transitions

(Evans et al., 2010).

Transition is defined as "any event, or non-event, that results in changed

relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson,

2006). Entering college and joining the Greek system are both transitions and are

formative to student development. Individual perception plays a large part in how the

individual considers the event. If a person does not attach much significance to the event,

it is regarded as change instead of a transition (Evans et al., 2010). The event of fraternity

membership will include activities, socials, new member education, possibly living in a

fraternity house, as well as many others. The manner through which the student navigates

these transitions will influence personal encounters and perceptions of themselves and the

world around them (Goodman et al., 2006).

Schlossberg (1981) stated that her theory can be used as a vehicle for analyzing

human adaptation to transition. How a student copes with the transition is largely

determined by the 4 S factors: (1) situation, (2) self, (3) support and (4) strategies

(Goodman et al., 2006). Within the context of Greek membership, the (1) situation will

be defined by the brotherhood and what activities are pre-determined as rites of passage

to obtain membership. The connection and perception of the situation may be different

for each student according to what meaning is attached to fraternity membership. (2) Self,

the behaviors, thought processes, and actions of the individual are dependent on personal

identity development, which includes self-confidence, background, and motivation.

(3) Support, for a student transitioning into a fraternity, will most likely come in

the form of his pledge class or possibly a roommate or best friend. Having friends and a

support system allows each member of the group to experience the same external

situations, therefore sharing a commonality from which to relate and process. Another

form of support for some students is their parents and/or siblings. Depending on their past

and familial relationships, a family unit can provide a dependable, intimate type of

support (Evans et al., 2010).

(4) Strategies are described as coping methods to modify the situation (Goodman

et al., 2006). The strategies utilized by fraternity men adjusting to their transition could

vary; from mental encouragement, justifying the end goal of membership, conversing

with family members, friends or fellow pledges. The assessment of the 4 S factors of an

individual may lead to a better understanding of individual development and the impact

of transition.

Schlossberg's theory of marginality and mattering. Schlossberg (1989) pointed

out the importance of the two concepts of marginality and mattering. The theory was

created as a means to understand the themes of marginality and mattering within college

students. Marginality and mattering are addressed within Schlossberg's theory to address

if a student experiences marginalization, he/she also may develop the perception that they

do not matter.

Marginality, described by Solorzano & Villalpando (as cited in Torres &

Mitchell, 1998, p. 212), is a complex location and process where people are subordinated

because of their gender, race, or class. Feelings of marginality can occur when

"…individuals take on new roles, especially when they are uncertain about what the new

role entails" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 31).

Mattering, as defined by Rosenberg & McCullough (1981), is a perception that, in

some capacity or in a variety of ways, an individual is a significant part of the world

around him/her. It is central to the sense of an individual to acknowledge their place in

the world and to be able to say that others think about them, recognize their presence,

seek advice, or would care about what happens to them. Elliott, Kao, and Grant (2004)

further explain that when the feeling of mattering does not occur, the individual must

cope with the realization that their place in the world is irrelevant. If this experience

occurs, an individual may do "…almost anything to matter to others" (Elliot, Kao, &

Grant, 2004, p. 339). Mattering and marginalization fit together because when a student

feels he/she does not matter, he/she has the perception of marginalization. Summers

(2010) found that "…marginality ends when mattering occurs" (p. 123).

Students involved within a Greek fraternity are known and recognized by their

brothers; this distinguishable identifier leads to a sense of mattering. Fraternities provide

the environment of a selective membership base, through which students can identify

with that group. Membership in a fraternity allows the student to be known and build a

community outside of the classroom; finding a place of belonging both physically and

mentally while at college (Astin, 1985).

   Helm's White and people of color racial identity models. Researching students

of color within IFC fraternities in a predominantly White academic institution presents

dynamics associated with race and racial identities. As there are multiple identities and

ethnicities represented within the IFC fraternities, I chose to utilize Helm's (1992 &

1995) White and people of color racial identity models to inform this study. Including a

racial identity theory within this study was intentional to acknowledge that race is a

sociopolitical and cultural construction, through which groups of people are categorized

by certain criteria (Helms, 1995). Within IFC fraternities at a predominantly White

institution, the topic of race is present, whether it is in obvious manner or hidden.

   Racial identity development theories are comprised of stages or statuses that an

individual progresses through dependent on their perception of the world, their place

within the world, and race-related behavior (Helms, 1995). Helm's racial identity

development model initially was created with stages, though Helms transitioned stages

into statuses as that term is interpreted to be more permeable and interactive (Helms,

1995). Racial identity development is a fluid process for individuals and individuals may

exhibit attitudes, behaviors, and emotions reflective of more than one stage (Helms,

1989; Parham & Helms, 1981).

The statuses within the racial identity development model "…differ between racial groups due to power differences that have existed, and continue to exist, among socioracial groups in U.S. society" (Helms, 1995, p. 183). The statuses range from least developmentally mature to the most mature dependent on "…management of racial stimuli within oneself as well as within one's environment…" (Helms, 1995, p.183). As an individual interacts with others, each encounter and exposure influences personal perception and meaning making surrounding identity development. How the person interprets a racial event will directly relate to which status is reflective of their behavior.

Though there are different levels of racial identity, there is always room for learning or growing surrounding one's own racial identity development. Identity development is an ongoing process that can occur throughout the entirety of a person's life. Helms (1995) expressed that racial identity models can be utilized to explain racial discord within societal relationships. The value of examining societal racial interactions through Helm's racial identity models is "…that such situations may be rendered less mysterious and, thus, more manageable…" (Helms, 1995, p. 196). Considering student development is impacted by level of involvement during college, membership within an IFC fraternity will impact racial identity development as well (Astin, 1968).

Implications for this study. This study examines the experience of students of color in an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White institution. Utilizing student development theories to better understand the analysis of data collected within this study is beneficial by providing a research-based framework from which to assess the

experiences. Acknowledging the different developmental concepts and levels that

students may experience throughout college, the experiences expressed by the

participants in this study can be compared to theory. For professionals who work with

fraternities, an assessment of how these participants fit or do not fit into student

development theory may shed light on future direction or necessary avenues of education.

Conclusion

As more students of color are attending universities and joining the Greek system,

there needs to be more research surrounding the experiences of these students of color

and student development. The first step in changing the racially homogeneous paradigm

is to acknowledge and bring to light the major factors contributing to the continuation of

the current system. In order to determine what those specific factors are, research and

assessment must take place. As an emerging student affairs professional, I concur with

the suggestion given by Taylor (2008) that "…institutions of higher education should be

responsible for educating students not only about differences among people, but

educating all students deeply about understanding themselves as well" (p. 19). How can

an education system encourage external learning without offering opportunities for

internal learning and reflection as well? Educational leaders and national Greek leaders

need to analyze what the best approach may be to meeting the needs of students within

the Greek system and facilitate strategic change.

This chapter included information on the history of White fraternities, the

foundations of racial or ethnic-based fraternities, published research relevant to this study

and three student development theories that can be utilized to better understand students

of color within IFC fraternities. Reviewing current literature and research, the history of

the Greek system and relevant student development and identity theories provided

adequate information to create a knowledge base from which I performed this study. In

this study, experiences of students of color who are members of IFC fraternities at a

predominantly White academic institution in the Pacific Northwest was examined. In the

following chapter, the methodology and research process will be explained.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this study, I examined the experiences of self-identified male students of color enrolled in a predominantly White academic institution who were also initiated and involved in an IFC for at least an academic term. Within the first chapter, the topic of study was explained including the significance for this study and set of terms found within this thesis. In chapter two, background information, along with relevant research was provided to set a framework for this study. The intent of this chapter is to reintroduce the purpose of the study and the research question, and describe the methodology utilized for this study. In chapter three, the research perspective and design are described followed by data collection and the strategy for data analysis.

The primary focus of the study was to understand the experiences men of color have as active members within IFC fraternities. The findings of the study will expand upon current literature focusing on students of color who are active members of an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White academic institution. The secondary focus of this study is to utilize the knowledge and information gathered as a result of the interviews within this research project to inform student support services and aid in understanding the experiences of students of color within Greek letter organizations- specifically IFC fraternities at predominantly White institutions. While there has been research on students of color who choose race or culture-specific Greek letter organizations, there has been little qualitative research completed looking at students of color within IFC groups that do not focus on a specific race or culture, but a mission or vision. Therefore a gap of knowledge currently exists.

The primary research question that guided this study is: What are experiences of

male students of color who decide to join and pursue active membership in an IFC

fraternity at a predominantly White academic institution?

Research Perspective

The methodology of this study is qualitative and was intentionally selected to

support the desired research of exploring the experiences of students of color within an

IFC fraternity within a predominantly White university. Through qualitative research, the

study was created and written through my perspective. The reality of the study is

influenced by the constructive approach taken with the interpretation of the data

(Creswell, 2009). The ontological position is therefore constructed as the data is analyzed

and interpreted. My education, lived experience and epistemology all affect the manner in

which I learn, perceive and interpret the findings of this study. I have a different lived

experience than any of my participants. I identify as White, female, and as an alumna of a

Panhellenic sorority. Those three identities have highly impacted me and thus have

informed my interpretation and execution of this study. This chapter expands on the

research design, the sample and target population, data collection and data analysis.

Research Design

The approach to qualitative research for this study is grounded theory; which is

theory derived from data, which is then analyzed and interpreted (Corbin & Strauss,

2008). The first component of grounded theory research is data. As the researcher, I used

audiotaped, one-on-one interviews to gather qualitative data from the participants for this

study. The interviews are the environment where all the information is collected with the

intent of receiving information to address the initial research questions of the study. This

method was chosen because it allows subjects to express individual thoughts and

opinions. The purpose of this study is to gain insight on mentalities, behaviors, and

overall experience of male, Greek students of color involved in IFC fraternities.

Providing a method through which students could share and explain themselves

supplied me with a large pool of information from which to draw themes and similarities.

It was necessary for me to be well prepared as to gather the most information possible

including observations of body language and facial expressions. The semi-structured

format of the interview allowed for some flexibility to follow the flow of conversation,

which permitted the students to express additional thoughts or opinions on the topic.

Along with the audio recordings, I took hand written notes to express thoughts,

perspectives or follow-up questions they wanted to ask.

The second component of grounded theory is the procedure of analysis (Corbin &

Strauss, 2008). During this procedure, I studied, identified and classified the data, which

can be separated into themes from which conclusions may be drawn. Organization in that

manner allowed me to make sense of the collected data. The details of this study will be

discussed later in this chapter within the data analysis section, as well as within chapter

four.

The third component of grounded theory focuses on the final outcome of the

research project; a final report is created and can be delivered through written means. For

the purpose of this study, the written means will be in the form of a master's thesis. The

challenge with reporting findings is the balance and technique required to translate the

results of the research in a manner that others are able to benefit.

Study Site

This study was conducted at a large public research university in the Pacific

Northwest that will be referred to as Brotherhood University (BU). This institution fits

this research because of (a) demographic make-up of the population of the region and

university; (b) an increasing number of students of color attending BU; and (c) the size

and evolution of the Greek community at BU.

Though the Pacific Northwest is a predominantly White region, the demographics

are constantly increasing regarding the percentages of people who choose an ethnicity

other than White. The growing ethnic diversity influences the number of students of

color who choose to attend BU. Ten years ago, 2,463 students of color reported attending

BU; this was 13% of the total student population of 18,789 (School State University

Enrollment Summary, 2002). In 2011, 4,721 students of color reported attending BU;

this was 18% of the total student population of 24,977 (School Enrollment Summary,

2011). Each year, as BU admits new students the fraternities have a new pool of

candidates from which to recruit new members. As more students of color attend BU,

more students of color choose to explore Greek life at BU. Students of color who join an

IFC fraternity raise the numbers of membership and the ethnic diversity of the

organizations.

The IFC community is also growing, through individual chapter numbers as well

as a steady increase of IFC fraternities present on campus. As of fall 2011, there are 18

fraternities governed by the Interfraternity Council, with a membership totaling 1213

(Lapham, 2011). Both local and national fraternities have been at BU since as early as

1882, though the state legislature where BU is located refused to allow fraternities to be

officially organized and recognized until 1911 (*Fraternities*, [ca. 1963]). The IFC has

functioned as a governing council for over 70 years (IFC, 1942). The growth and

changing climate of the IFC fraternities at BU provided for ample male students of color

from which to recruit as participants.

Sampling

The target population for this study were individuals who (a) self-identified as

male, (b) at least 18 years of age, (c) a current student at BU, (d) identify as a student of

color, and (e) have been initiated and are actively involved for at least a term in an IFC

fraternity at BU. The participant population was restricted to males involved in IFC

fraternities to narrow the learning objectives and specificity of application of results.

Students that fit the parameters of the study are a subpopulation of the general fraternity

population because of their experiences as students of color within an IFC fraternity.

I determined a target enrollment of 10 students, which was deemed adequate due

to the small subpopulation from which to gather study participants and the timeline to

complete the research. The qualitative nature of this study allowed for a smaller number

of study subjects as in-depth interviews elicited adequate information to study the

experiences of male students of color involved in an IFC fraternity.

Participant Recruitment

Study participants were recruited through an intentional convenience sample. I

chose an intentional convenience sample because it is a "…potential source of

participants that is easily accessible to the researcher" (Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger,

2005). I was intentional in selecting the method of recruiting that would be simple, yet

allow me to find participants who fit the required criterion. Participant interest in taking

part in a study is important to me, as the students will be critically thinking and

answering questions about their personal life.

In order to reach students of color involved in IFC fraternities, identifying the

relevant organizations was pertinent. The IFC is a council that governs eighteen

fraternities at BU. After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval on October 23,

2012, a recruitment email (Appendix) briefly describing the study and outlining the

required criterion of student participants was sent over the Interfraternity Council email

listserv. All students involved in a fraternity within Interfraternity Council have the

ability to subscribe to this list serve; therefore the email potentially reached students who

fit the qualifications of this study.

Due to specific parameters for the student population, I also sent emails to

professional faculty and staff, presidents of fraternities, and leaders of the Interfraternity

Council student population at BU. The initial invitational email explained the purpose of

the study and provided an email address where participants could inquire about possible

participation in the interview portion of the study.

Six students responded with an indication that they were interested in being part

of the study and fit the required criterion were sent a second email. The purpose of the

second email was to obtain a time and date that fit into the students' schedules for the

interview, and to provide them with an electronic copy of the Informed Consent

document (Appendix) so that they had the opportunity to review it prior to setting up and

participating in the interview.

Data Collection

The next step after students who had fit the study criteria accepted the invitation

to participate in the study was to set a time and date to perform the interview. Location,

time, and day were decided upon via email and text between the participant and myself.

The interviews were conducted in a private office on campus to ensure privacy, as well as

sound quality for audio recording for the duration of the interview. Through recording

technology available from Student Media Services at BU, I had access to digital

recording devices free of charge and was able to reserve an audio recording device for

each session. The interviews took place in the fall of 2012 and winter of 2013 on campus

at BU. Each interview lasted between a half hour to an hour with an exact range of 30

minutes to 54 minutes. Handwritten notes were also used as a supplemental means of

gathering data from the interview. It was also used as a backup in case there were any

faults with the electronic digital recordings.

To facilitate a comfortable, open environment for the interview, I sat across from

the participant to create opportunity for eye contact and clear conversation. Before the

participant arrived for the interview, I set up the audio recording device in preparation to

check functionality. The interview started on time once the participant arrived, in respect

of their commitment for participating. At the beginning of the interview, I began with an

introduction of self and brief agenda of what the participant could expect for the next

approximate hour.

At that time, I also discussed confidentiality, participants' rights and expectations

for participation in the study. These three components are important to remain in line

with research ethics as well as protecting the participants. After explanation of

confidentiality, I asked the participant for him to choose his own pseudonym to be

utilized in the written analysis. A confidentiality waiver was presented individually for

the participant to sign giving the researcher the consent to record the individual.

I led the interview with a list of pre-determined questions and transitioned from

question to question. The set of questions were comprised of all open-ended questions to

gather the broadest responses. I wanted the participants to answer openly and fully.

Strategic and ordered questions were presented to produce responses reflective of the

desired answers. To ensure that the participants easily understood the interview

questions, the questions were piloted prior to the first official student interview. It was

also expressed that if at any time throughout the interview the participant did not feel

comfortable, that he could leave at any time. I conveyed to each participant he could ask

clarifying questions at any time and if he feels uneasy to state that he does not want to

answer that particular question.

I concluded each interview with the opportunity for the student to ask any

questions or receive clarifications. Once any questions were answered, I thanked the

participants for their time and provided my contact information in case future questions

arose. Any personal or demographic information shared was utilized to portray a holistic

view of the subjects who took part in the study and what variables may have had an effect

on the end results. The demographic components will be described in detail in the

participant section in chapter four.

Data Analysis

The significance of the collected data lies within identification of patterns or

commonalities within the group. The results of the study were written based upon the

analysis of the data, so it is important that the data collected was dissected to reveal

consistencies or inconsistencies within the answers of the participants.

The process of data analysis occurred post data collection. I chose a data analysis

that involves "…three steps: (1) preparing the data for analysis, (2) analyzing the data,

and (3) interpreting the data…" (Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005, p. 198). Upon

completion of data collection, I was charged with making sense of what information was

shared during the interviews. The results allowed me to draw conclusions through which

more research can be conducted or suggestions could be placed.

Preparation. In order to prepare the data for analysis, the audio recordings were

transcribed into a script via Express Scribe. I saved the written transcriptions in Microsoft

Word to provide organization and easy access to the files. Each transcription was labeled

separately to identify the interview, under its pseudonym, to prevent confusion. Responses to recruitment emails including any demographic information or verification of alignment with research criterion was transferred from email into Microsoft Word and saved. These files were labeled carefully and appropriately placed within the respective folder. Any hand-written notes were typed at the end of the corresponding interview document. The physical copies of the notes were combined with the participant's signed consent form and stored within a locked office on campus.

Analysis. My principle objective with data analysis was to translate the provided information from the subjects of the research into a comprehensive form that an uninformed person could understand. Strauss and Corbin (1998) portray analysis as "…the interplay between researchers and data" (p.13). This step of data analysis was influenced by my knowledge and interpretation. Combined with my prior experience as an active member within a sorority, I currently hold knowledge surrounding Greek life, fraternities, and the Greek community at BU. The analysis of the data was conducted upon that framework.

For analysis, I coded the data with the intent of creating categories through comparison of "…incidents with incidents until categories emerge[d]…" (Creswell, 1994, p. 156). I isolated a set of topics prevalent within each interview and evaluated what conversations evolved from or centered on that topic. I studied the interviews individually and recorded key words, ideas and themes as they arose and reoccurred.

Once the six student interviews had been individually read and categorized, the

researcher examined the interviews as a whole. Through relating the keywords, ideas, and

themes, I had the opportunity to identify trends within all of the participants. Comparing

and contrasting the data gathered from the six student interviews will explain similarities

and differences providing clarity to the results that explained in depth in chapter four.

Interpretation. After the data was analyzed into results, I interpreted those

results, specifically relating to the initial research questions. There is an importance that

the results are explanatory and conclusive identifying the successes and limitations of the

study, yet showing that there were appropriate measures set forth prior to the study to

provide relative responses to the initial research questions. I drew upon the

comprehensive collected data for compilation of chapter four. During the interpretation, I

distinguished how end material will be described and labeled, what material will be

included, what order it will be presented and how it will be distributed.

Strategies to Ensure Protection of Human Participants

With research that involved human participants, it was important for me to be

cognizant of and proactive in trying to ensure privacy and confidentiality. In the best

interests of the participants, I was up to date on human subject protection training.

Throughout the research process, I took necessary steps to align the study with proper

research procedures as to protect the identities of the participants involved.

One measure taken to ensure protection of identity was the use of pseudonyms for

the university at which the study took place, the participants and their respective

fraternities and any other individuals mentioned within the interviews. To express the

importance of confidentiality, I gave the opportunity to each participant to choose a name

for themselves to be used in the written analysis.

This study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB)

of the institution from where the participants were gathered. IRB approved the study

protocol, the recruitment documents, the Informed Consent Form, and the interview

questions on October 23, 2012. The interview questions, the recruitment email, and the

informed consent form can all be found in the appendix. I also worked with my thesis

committee comprised of faculty at BU who all had prior experience with human research.

Limitations of Study

Variables were present throughout the data collection, analysis, and interpretation

of this research. Through acknowledging what variables were present throughout the

duration of the study, I was able to identify some of the limitations that existed for the

study. Some of those variables include: the specificity of the target population, the size of

the sample, the type and location of the university where the study was conducted, the

length of contact, including email and in-person interviews with the participants, the

nature of qualitative research, as well as possibly more. By expressing the boundaries of

the study, a holistic frame of reference can be set in which to process the outcomes.

Generalizability. Acknowledging the limitations in the proposed study allows the

results to be used for its intended purpose with precision. The narrow scope of the target

population of this projected research is the main limitation to this study. The data

collected and results produced only have significant validity at BU. Though the data

collected may be transferable to other university campuses with similar student

demographics or Greek populations, a level of speculation would be present.

Although I put forth measures to obtain a representative sample of participants,

there are variables present that were out of my control that could potentially influence the

data. The desire for willing participation of students skewed the subject pool to those who

volunteered, making it a convenience sample. The results of these participants cannot be

generalized to the entire Greek population. This is a narrow case study that provides a

snapshot of experiences of students of color in one campus in one region.

Future research may address these limitations by using a broader, more

representative sample or expanding the target population to other universities. Future

research may include looking at experiences of students of color in groups in different

regions of the US, and within different institution types. Through employing different

measures to obtain data or expanding the question set further research could achieve

different results.

Biases of Researcher. The information gathered in the interviews was interpreted

and analyzed through my epistemological perspective as a graduate student, a sorority

alumna and professional in higher education. Prior to and throughout the duration of this

research study, I was employed by BU in the Center for Fraternity and Sorority Life. I

currently work with the Greek population and have daily contact with students in IFC

fraternities and sororities. There are many pre-founded relationships with Greek students

and thus presents a strong bias for the research. These existing relationships may have

had an effect on the gathering of participants, the participation of Greek students, the

follow-up questions that may be asked within the interviews, or questions asked by

students within the interviews and potentially the responses given by the students.

Though there is personal interest that biases the research, professional

commitment to BU Greeks may also have an impact on the level of response or

involvement of students. Previous interactions show that many Greek students feel

comfortable talking and sharing with me about Greek life, so therefore may be more

willing to share about personal experiences surrounding their Greek experience. This

association might have had a positive effect on participation and response.

As a White female, there is an important acknowledgement that my identities may

impact the participant responses. The dynamics that may arise with a woman

interviewing men as well as the dynamics of researching across race can be complex. The

lens through which I conducted this study is privileged, as a White woman exploring the

experiences of students of color. I was cognizant of my approach when asking students of

color to share their personal experiences with a White person.

Even though I utilized care in my approach, the underlying factors of race and the

systems of oppression may have impacted what the participants decided to share, or how

they explained their lived experiences as students of color within an IFC fraternity at a

predominantly White academic institution. Being aware of White privilege and the

systems of oppression within the American culture allow me to recognize the

intersectionality and the layers of identity that will be present during my research.

Though it is difficult to articulate how my identities and prior knowledge may have

impacted this study, there is personal bias present.

Summary

The methodology of this study was reviewed within this chapter. Within this

study, I examined the experiences of male students of color enrolled in a predominantly

White academic institution who were also initiated and involved in an IFC fraternity for

at least an academic term. The primary focus of the study was to understand the

experiences men of color have as active members within IFC fraternities. Six students

who fit the criterion were selected as participants and interviewed. After the interviews

were transcribed, the data was coded and I was able to identify themes throughout the

interviews and separate into categories. Protective measures taken to maintain ethical

research and the limitations that were existent in the study were listed. The time frame of

this study consisted from October 23, 2012, the date of IRB approval, through all the

research steps concluding with the defense presentation of the thesis on April 18, 2013.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the results of the study. The results section

will include details on each participant and themes that emerged from data analysis. The

information provided by the participants combined together provided a base of material

from which I could decipher themes. The themes will be explained in chapter four,

supplemented with quotes and explanations.

Chapter 4: Results & Discussion

As stated in previous chapters, this study focused specifically on the experiences

of students of color involved in an IFC fraternity at BU. The focus of this chapter is on

the results of the study including insights into the participants as well as the thematic

categories that emerged during data analysis. This chapter begins with descriptions of

each of the participants and follows with research analysis and the findings based on the

data collected.

In this study, the primary question addressed is: what are experiences of male

students of color who decide to join and pursue active membership in an IFC fraternity at

a predominantly White academic institution? The findings answering this question are

separated into five themes, with sub-categories under two of the main themes. The

themes are listed below in the order they are described within this chapter:

- IFC fraternity brotherhood, with three categories of benefits that each include

  three sub-categories: (a) interpersonal relationships: brotherhood, connection,

  networking, (b) involvement: chapter, community, campus, and (c) individual

  benefits: academics, leadership, leaving a mark

- growing up in a predominantly White setting

- expectations of students of color within IFC fraternities at a PWI

- emigrant parents and first-generation – implications of joining a fraternity

- being a student of color, with five sub-categories: (a) openness, (b) perception of

  differences, (c) the surprise of having other students of color in same fraternity,

(d) the role surrounding recruitment of other students of color and (e) reactions to

1) racial comments, 2) themed parties, or 3) stereotypes.

As I analyzed the data, I found that the participants' responses often related to

more than one area of experience in the fraternity. The interconnectedness of the data

collected provided a challenge when separating themes. I chose themes that were most

representative of the group of participants as a whole, which addressed the research

question. The themes will be presented and examined using direct quotes from the

interviews and concurrent information derived from participants.

Participants

Six participants participated in this study. Each of the six participants met the five

requirements of the study: (a) self-identified as male, (b) at least 18 years of age, (c) a

current student at BU, (d) identify as a student of color, and (e) have been initiated and

are actively involved for at least a term in an IFC fraternity at BU. The six participants

were representative of three different IFC fraternities at BU.

To maintain confidentiality, I took necessary precautions so that the fraternities

and participants could not be easily recognized within this study. The participants and the

fraternities were all assigned pseudonyms. The participants were asked during the oral

interview to choose a pseudonym for themselves. The table of participant information

(Table 1) and participant descriptions are listed in alphabetical order based upon the

pseudonym chosen by the participant. I assigned the fraternities pseudonyms based on the

first three Greek letters, Alpha, Beta, and Gamma, in no particular order. I duplicated the

letters, so that when the fraternities are referred to, they are not in conflict with any

nicknames of other actual fraternities.

An overview and comparison of the six participants is portrayed in Table 1.

Parallel information about each student and their experience emerged whilst sharing their

stories during the interviews. All participants expressed positive experiences within their

fraternity and were very open and willing to discussing with me specific stories relating

to those experiences.

I chose to highlight the descriptive factors that came forth for all six participants

to offer a collective view of the participant pool without breaching any confidentiality.

Any individual identifying data that could potentially disclose the identity of the

participant was not included. Any names referring to the fraternity or any fraternity

brothers were removed and referred to by pseudonym or replaced with the word fraternity

or member in [brackets]. The use of brackets was also used to provide context or clarity

for the reader within quotes. Within the participant overviews, brackets are also utilized

for verb and pronoun shifts, so sentences are grammatically correct.

The participants are organized in Table 1 by: (a) pseudonym for this study, (b)

fraternity in which they hold membership, (c) academic year in college, (d) length of

involvement in the fraternity, (e) age, (f) culture with which they identify, (g) ethnicity

with which they identify, and (h) perceived percentage of student of color within his

fraternity.

Table 1

Participant Information

Pseudo-nym	IFC Fraternity	Year in school	Length of involvement in fraternity	Age	Identified Culture	Identified Ethnicity	Perceived % of SOC in fraternity
Adam	Alpha Alpha	Junior	3 years	20	Arabic/ American	Arabic	10%
George	Beta Beta	Senior	1 year	23	Hispanic	Hispanic	10%
Jamie	Gamma Gamma	Junior	1 year	20	African American	African American	5%
Reza	Alpha Alpha	Senior	4 years	21	Iranian	Iranian/ Caucasian	20%
Nemo	Beta Beta	Sopho-more	1 year	19	American	Indonesian/ Dutch	10%
Ted	Beta Beta	Junior	1 year	20	White	Thai	5%

Though the requirements of the study did not specify culture or ethnicity within

student of color, a differentiation became apparent as each participant discussed his story.

As shown in the table, the answers given by each of the participants vary between having

matching identification of culture and ethnicity. A common piece of information given in

each of the interview was the percentage of perceived students of color within his

fraternity. These numbers offer the perspective of how members perceive the make-up of

their organizations differently and that each member has a unique experience.

Adam. Adam was born in the same state as BU, but moved shortly after. He spent

his elementary and middle school years in Lebanon. He came back to the US with his

family for high school and as a first-generation U.S. student chose to attend BU. One of

his closest friends encouraged him to go through summer recruitment and knew that

"…after [he] started rushing fraternities, [he] knew that [he] was going to be part of

Greek life. Entering the Greek community and Alpha Alpha fraternity, he didn't foresee

any leadership involvement, but after acknowledging, "…there was some room for

improvement, [he] kinda took the positions hoping to makes things better…" In his third

year in Alpha Alpha fraternity, Adam holds an executive position within his chapter as

well as an executive position on Interfraternity Council. One of Adam's mentors in the

fraternity also identified as Middle Eastern and Adam has tried to "…basically follow his

footsteps..." and set a good example for others within Alpha Alpha fraternity.

George. George is from a small town and transferred to BU as a sophomore from

a community college. He identifies with a Hispanic background, with both of his parents

emigrating from Mexico. George is bilingual and first generation in his family to go to

college. He labeled himself during the interview as "…not exactly that social of a

person…" and mainly spent his first year at OSU focusing on homework and school

without any idea that he would join the Greek community. When some of his friends

from high school, who were already members of Beta Beta fraternity, invited him over to

the fraternity, he accepted. Through that connection, he was able to meet new people and

make new friends. He initiated into the fraternity as a junior and is currently a senior.

George related the camaraderie and connection he found within the brotherhood in the

fraternity to that he had experienced on his high school football team. After high school,

he had not been able to make relationships similar to that until he joined the fraternity and

formed brotherly connections.

Jaime. Jamie is originally from a large city in the South and his family moved to

an affluent suburb somewhat close to BU when he was in middle school. As a freshman

at BU, Jamie knew about fraternities and went to a couple parties, but "…didn't really

think it was for [him]…" Jamie wanted "…something different, something new…" and

so he decided to go through recruitment his sophomore year. After he initiated and told

his coworkers and community at the Black Cultural Center that he had joined Gamma

Gamma fraternity, he received backlash because he did not choose to join an African-

American fraternity. Jamie was unaware prior to this point that any historically African

American fraternities existed on BU's campus. He "…always wanted to do something

that [he saw] in all the IFC fraternities that are on campus…that they are well known,

they are visible…to campus. Just simply because they are a big part of the community."

Now a junior, Jamie enjoys "…the brotherhood, having a fun time and just kickin' it…"

with his brothers.

Nemo. Nemo is from a "…relatively small town…" in the same state as BU and came into college knowing he wanted to join a fraternity. He and his older sister are first generation college students who grew up in a household of emigrant parents and grandparents. His older sister joined a Panhellenic sorority and told Nemo about what Greek Life had to offer. Nemo "...definitely wanted to get the whole college experience…and felt a fraternity was a great way to learn things that you don't necessarily learn in the classroom." He participated in summer recruitment and found that he had the most fun with the guys of Beta Beta Fraternity. Nemo pledged that fall as a freshman and is a sophomore this year. Nemo described himself as a team player. He will put in effort to make something important happen, but doesn't acknowledge the leadership position in itself as important.

Reza. Reza was born in the same state as BU, but spent some of his childhood in Iran. His parents and grandparents came to the United States to flee the Iranian revolution. He is "…fundamentally an only child…", but has older cousins who were members of Alpha Alpha Fraternity. Prior to college, Reza knew of fraternity life and wanted to try something new in college, so he decided to go through recruitment fall of his freshman year. He was drawn to fraternities because of the idea of "…having 50-60 to a million international brothers." Reza is currently a senior and the president of his fraternity. He has spent the past four years actively doing his part to create a "…strong house and be [a] strong role model in [his] community…" He had positive involvement experiences in high school and "...if [he is] in something and engaged, then [he is] going to be fully engaged…" He expressed that the two presidents before him encouraged him

and "…saw a lot of hope in [him]…" and he wants to pass that concept onto the younger

Alpha Alpha fraternity generation.

Tim. Tim is from a suburb of a larger city area in the same state as BU and

transferred to BU as a sophomore. He knew one friend from high school at BU who

invited him over to Beta Beta fraternity. The only thing he knew about fraternities

stemmed from the movie Animal House and that "…it was all party…" After being

warmly welcomed into Beta Beta fraternity and viewing the relationships within the

brotherhood, Tim concluded, "…I came here and I didn't need to go anywhere else. I felt

this is where I had to be." He joined as a sophomore and is currently a junior. Tim

cherishes the relationships he has made in the fraternity and he "... [doesn't] know where

[he] would be without Beta Beta.." Tim's mom emigrated from Thailand, so Tim is first

generation in the United States. He is also first generation to attend college.

Research Analysis

Upon completion of transcription of all six interviews, I read the transcriptions to

start analysis. During the data analysis, I studied and classified the data. I separated the

content of the interviews into similar topics, drawing out commonalities. The more I

compared and contrasted these commonalities; I was able to narrow content into five

themes with categories under two of the main themes. As I describe each thematic

category, I will provide an interpretation of the theme, a connection to the study, and

participant quotes as examples supporting the theme. Quotes from all participants will be

used, but only the most poignant examples will be displayed for purposes of

accompanying each theme.

IFC Fraternity Brotherhood

When looking at the experiences of students of color within an IFC fraternity,

multiple topics came up surrounding interpersonal relationships, involvement, and

individual benefits. In all aspects, these topics were discussed as things each of the

participants had received or learned from membership within the fraternity. I created the

overarching theme, IFC fraternity brotherhood.

Within this theme, there are three categories that are separated each into three

more specific categories. These nine categories closely relate to each other and all stem

from membership within the fraternity. This multifaceted theme provides a multilayered

approach to what experiences students of color have within IFC fraternities.

IFC fraternity brotherhood: interpersonal relationships. During the

interviews, the topic that was referred to most, both directly and indirectly surrounded the

notion of friendships, associations, brothers, relationships, and connections. I labeled this

theme interpersonal relationships to describe the benefit of different types of relationships

within the fraternity. Three categories are identified within interpersonal relationships;

brotherhood, connections, and networking. The level of and types of interactions differ

within each one.

Brotherhood. Fraternities are known for the social aspect of relationship building,

bonding and brotherhoods (Syrett, 2009). Within the context of this study, the theme

brotherhood relates to a group of fraternity men within the same fraternity at the same

time and the bonds and relationships they have with one another, alongside all of the

shared experiences that occur within the fraternity.

> "The past year has been one of the best years of my life and I know that as
> long as I am in a house, it's gonna be the best years of college I think,
> because of the times I have had here, the friends I have made, the
> memories I have made." Tim

The term fraternity originates from the Latin word frater, meaning brother. The

members are able to relate to one another in a specific way, unbeknownst to outsiders.

Pledge classes are encouraged to get to know each other and are told from the beginning

of pledge-ship that the men with them through this experience will be their brothers

forever. Beyond individuals forming bonds with each other, the fraternity as a whole

encourages and drives the creation of those relationships. The relationships that are

formed are described as stronger than a friendship, but more similar to a sibling or

familial relationship. Below is a quote describing brotherhood bonds and the hope that

this experience is shared with future members:

> "I have a friend who I have known since I was three, but there are a couple
> of my best friends from my house that I probably know better than him,
> yet I only met them three years ago. And it is just something that you can't
> mimic outside a fraternity or a sorority, so I would just hope that ya know,
> they just they get to know each other as well I feel like I have gotten to
> know my brothers because ya know, that's ultimately what we are all there
> for, we are here to go through this experience together and it's nice when
> you just know someone so well." Reza

For many men, college is the first time they are living on their own. It is impactful

for individuals to be placed into a selective group known as their pledge class and

commit their lives to the same organization. For these men to choose to become involved

as a new member within an organization creates the environment where relationships can

easily be formed, nurtured, tested, and developed. For example, George described how he

feels about the brotherhood within his fraternity.

> "I found that camaraderie and brotherhood connection with the fraternity
> and uh, to go along with it, one of my favorite things we do is brotherhood
> events whether it's out helping the community or just, what we like to call,
> "bro-ing out." It could be anything from playing video games to having an
> IM football game or sports or anything." George

The formation of a brotherhood fosters an environment of unity, friendship, and

common purpose. This inter-relational framework solidifies the functioning and

continuation of the fraternity. The bonds within a brotherhood are expressed through

activities, events, any place or setting where the members can be authentic with each

other and have fun.

> "…the general camaraderie and the um, I dunno, the amount of fun that
> was had. And it wasn't like a fake fun, it was like a genuine, you know, we
> are awesome, um, we all like each other, and it seemed very real, as
> opposed to everyone was putting on a front…" Nemo

Verbalizing brotherhood is different for each individual, but the fulfillment

described from all the participants was overwhelming. The men involved in this study

expressed that being part of a fraternity and the fruitions of being a member of an IFC

fraternity are important. To have an environment where a person can connect and make

friends with others, especially being a new individual on a college campus is invaluable

to personal and social development. For example, Jaime explained that he has received

fulfillment from the relationships he found within the brotherhood of his fraternity.

> "Going over to the house and like everyone being excited to see you. Just like the involvement and the relationships you have built with people over time. I guess personal relationships…people being excited to see you, asking how your day was, what you have been up to. I guess personal connections is what I get the most out of being in this fraternity so far. So, having the brotherhood, having a fun time, just kickin' it." Jaime

Connection. Within the theme of interpersonal relationships, the category of connection emerged based on the word used by the students. The word connect was mentioned within the interviews in two different ways. One of the uses of connect is connection, referring to avenues that have been opened and opportunities that have been presented through membership within the fraternity. The other utilization of connect is connected referring to a close bond with another, understanding and relating to that person.

Connections are found with a couple brothers, whereas the brotherhood refers to all members of the same fraternity. Though the use of the word connect varies, the theme of students connecting, being connected to, and having connections is prevalent throughout the study. Nemo utilizes connections to describe how many avenues have been opened that he had not planned on prior to college. Being a member in the fraternity was a bonus for making connections within college.

> "…doors that opened as far as connections that are involved and how much help you can get in every aspect of college that you wouldn't necessarily foresee going straight into college…" Nemo

For George, membership within the fraternity made social connections possible. It was an environment filled with many people whom he had the opportunity to meet and get to know.

"And social life wasn't that big for me in community college and now
there is, I had people that I knew and they introduced me to new people
…the more um, I came around, I guess I was looking for more of the
social connection that college, especially a university would bring."
George

The way George speaks of connections is a combination between the two

utilizations of connection. Having the structure in place where he is able to find and build

relationships and the actual process of meeting new people and creating those

connections. Building personal relationships and having connections within the fraternity

was described multiple times during the interviews. In the following quote, Jaime

describes connections synonymously with feeling close to others within the chapter.

"…personal relationships. I have bonded with a lot of people very
quickly… After being initiated you feel and stuff, you feel more closer
and connected with everyone in the house. Like I don't know, I feel like if
I were to leave, I would be burning relationships that you have already
established." Jamie

The theme of connections is relevant because regardless of how the word is

intended, fraternity membership leads to opportunities to build connections on multiple

levels.

Networking. Networking was a commonality that arose during the interviews.

The potential of networking and the benefit of networking were discussed by participants

as a benefit of membership. Networking, for the context of this theme, is utilizing the

brotherhood bond and expanding it to other members of the fraternity, across generations

and across location. IFC fraternities are national or international fraternities holding

memberships in the hundreds of thousands. Networking is an expansion of brotherhood;

the bond of brotherhood specifically relates to members within the same chapter at the

same time, where networking allows all fraternity men to connect with each other

regardless of chapter affiliation or age. George shared an example of how he views the

expanse of his fraternity:

> "Because our fraternity is national we have chapters in every single state
> and a lot of campuses all over the US is just the, you can go to Oregon or
> Cal Berkeley down in CA or all the way to Pennsylvania, I know we have
> chapters out there and just that unique connection you can get by finding
> out they are a fellow [Beta Beta]. I think that is a great benefit because
> each of you are going to connect on that and then you can build a
> relationship on that." George

Accomplishments of alumni fraternity men set a standard of potential for

collegiate members. The fraternity bond allows collegiate members to aspire for their

own goals while having examples of successful fraternity men to follow. Many IFC

fraternities have an annual conference, a leadership academy, or some sort of annual

gathering where collegiate members as well as alumni and professional members of the

fraternity come together in the name of the fraternity. Nemo related to this experience

when explained the opportunity he experienced to meet and learn from famous or

successful members of his fraternity.

> "…at [title of national fraternity conference], because we are very strong
> as a national fraternity, we have that opportunity to meet with other
> chapters within the nation and get to learn from distinguished members
> who have been very successful you know, billionaires, millionaires,
> founders of important companies, professional athletes, servicemen, and
> that is a very, very um, unique experience and very informative
> experience…" Nemo

Networking allows collegiate fraternity men to seek out opportunities in fields,

careers or places that without the fraternity involvement, they may have never had

otherwise. The significance placed on fraternity membership extends the collegiate years

and some alumni stay involved post-college. As post-collegiate fraternity men in the

professional world, they are able to help, teach, and hire collegiate members as a means

of staying involved with their fraternity. When speaking with the participants, they all

acknowledged the amount of potential in working with alumni to find internships, jobs or

start a career.

> "There is always these alumni who are involved with all different
> professions and they kinda help me find either internships or research jobs
> and I succeeded in doing that last summer through an alumni for
> example." Adam

Beyond the opportunities that can be found through networking, Reza speaks to a

different level of networking in the quote below. The brotherhood association is so

esteemed that there is an immediate confidence when it arises. The value attached to the

fraternity allows strangers to trust one another, to offer internships or jobs, to work

together initially based upon membership in a certain fraternity.

> "I have worked a couple sales jobs and when you meet a[n] [Alpha
> Alpha], they are instantly latched onto you and they trust you with
> anything.... [Alpha Alpha] has opened a lot of doors for me…even if it
> ends up being a mistake, you grow from it, but majority of the time, they
> are opening a door for you that you wouldn't have had elsewhere. So, you
> gotta jump on those opportunities." Reza

IFC fraternity brotherhood: involvement. Pledging and joining a fraternity is

involvement in itself. For the context of this study, I am addressing involvement as any

additional activities, positions, sports, events, philanthropies, or others that have been

made available through initial involvement with the fraternity. To provide clarity to this

theme, I have further separated it into three levels of involvement: chapter, community

and campus. The participants concurred that their membership within a fraternity directly

impacted other involvement and the number of opportunities they have been presented.

     Chapter involvement. At a chapter level, the structures of IFC fraternities consist

of an executive council made up of elected or appointed positions. The members who are

chosen to fill those specific roles delegate responsibilities out to committees, which

consist of other members. The business and daily functioning is discussed and

determined by the leaders and committee members. The number of committees and types

of committees vary from fraternity to fraternity, but there is always an opportunity for

any member in good standing to become involved. For example, Tim explained the

structure in which his fraternity utilizes to engage all members.

> "We have a pretty good system as far as officers, committee heads, and
> people on the committees. So everyone, well most of everyone is
> involved…like everyone has a voice in something. It is great because you
> get new ideas from different people and even if you aren't in the
> committee, you can go to their meetings and still have a voice and pitch
> ideas to people." Tim

     Community involvement. Fraternities have values, purposes, and missions that

charge members to maintain a standard of helping others and giving back to the

community. Within the Greek community, the fraternities and sororities support each

other's philanthropies by participating in organized activities that raise money for the

philanthropy.

> "I definitely got more involved in the community through our
> philanthropy activities being, well we have done stuff with the boys and
> girls club, that's definitely something that I would not have been able to do
> if I had not joined a fraternity, so being more involved in the community."
> George

Membership in a Greek organization provides the opportunity to take part in

community service and philanthropic efforts as group. Having organized occasions where

men can give back to the community or volunteer increases participation and

volunteerism. Students in IFC fraternities do not need to individually seek out service

opportunities. Philanthropy and community service committees, at a chapter level as well

as an IFC level, organize and market these opportunities to IFC students.

"…the opportunity that helps with… philanthropy and being able to do service hours and
help out, in that case…"Nemo

Campus involvement. Being part of a group, in this case a fraternity, allows

students to access group involvement opportunities as well. Intramural sports for example

are popular on BU's campus. All participants recognized that their fraternity participates

in Intramural Sports. Whether or not they individually participated, they all expressed the

opportunity readily available to them. Adam expressed how his fraternity is involved

within Intramural sports and there is participation in most every sport.

> "We are really big on Intramurals. We have teams in almost every sport
> and also sports events like football and basketball games, we will get
> together and go as a bunch of boys." Adam

The Greek community at BU is the largest student sub-population within the

entire study body. For other organizations and campus clubs, the Greek community is

perceived as a pool of participants and leaders who are known to be involved around their

campus and community. The following quote describes how opportunities for

involvement and participation grow after initial involvement.

> "I feel like other organizations reach out to you already, I mean, once I
> became president, I was getting emails everyday of "HI, you have been
> selected for this board, you've been selected for this committee" and it was
> almost overwhelming. Every day I would have 20-30 emails and a handful
> of them would be for joining something else, so that definitely made it
> easy." Reza

IFC fraternity brotherhood: individual benefits. As the third sub-category

within the main theme of IFC fraternity brotherhood, individual benefits specifically

focus on the individual and their development within the college experience. The three

aspects of personal identity benefits highlighted within are academics, leadership, and the

concept of leaving a mark. As an individual developing from a teenager into an adult, the

experiences during the collegiate years can have a lasting impact. The participants

expressed how the fraternity experience has supplemented their college experience by

offering opportunities, help, and room for growth.

Academics. All six participants expressed that their main reason for coming to

college or their focus initially is academics before other activities. Gaining an education

is the purpose of attending college. Scholastics are held in high standards within

fraternities as well, with most fraternities requiring a certain grade point average to be

considered for membership and maintain good standing within the fraternity. Tim

expressed that he always has a brother to study with or that the chances that one of his

brothers is going to the library at any given time is high.

> "I think one of the best things about being in the fraternity is the fact that
> if you wanted to go to the library, you could asked anyone or ask around
> and there's usually 2 or 3 people who want to go with you. Um, there's
> almost always in your class, so you can study together or there is an older
> person who has taken the class and you can ask them for help also." Tim

IFC fraternities, built upon a membership of students, share a common goal of

excelling in academics. The participants are able to find a support network through their

fraternity to study and succeed in college. For example, the quotes below reflect the

plethora of opportunities regarding people to study with or asking questions about

classes:

> "I have multiple people that I can always study with, almost any hour of
> the day. So, being able to get through some of the more difficult classes
> within my curriculum definitely helps having people to rely on… It's very
> convenient to have someone that you live with also be able to study the
> same material as you…" Nemo

> "Ya know living with 50 guys there has to be someone who has previously
> taken some classes, so there is a lot of help when it comes to academics
> from older members for example. And also people hold you accountable
> and they want you to get the highest grade just because it counts into the
> average GPA for the house. We also do study groups, tables for ya know,
> particular majors so that has always been helpful too." Adam

The Center for Fraternity and Sorority Life at BU publishes a quarterly Greek

community grade report posting the average grade point averages of each fraternity and

sorority. Referencing the quote above, fraternities have a competitive mindset to achieve

the highest grade point average on campus. The topic of academics came up often in the

interviews and there was an agreement that membership within the fraternity helps the

men study and achieve in school.

Leadership opportunities. The way in which fraternity chapters are constructed

require leadership positions to be filled to guide the chapter. Each IFC fraternity has an

infrastructure of a council of executive positions to maintain order, achieve goals, and

take care of chapter business. Collegiate fraternity men have the opportunity and are

encouraged to volunteer or apply for these leadership roles. The participants spoke to the

need of leadership and the desire to get involved as a leader within their organization.

> "I wanted to get involved with the chapter more than just being a member
> that comes in and votes or whatever else, just someone who is that much
> more involved with the structure with our meetings and everything."
> George

Beyond individual fraternity leadership roles, the Interfraternity Council also has

an executive council made up of leadership positions that are filled by members of any of

the IFC fraternities on BU's campus. This annually elected council is responsible for

leading and engaging the IFC community. Many of the students who apply for positions

on the IFC executive council have previously held leadership roles within their respective

IFC chapter. There is a natural progression from being a chapter leader to becoming an

IFC leader. For example, Reza explained that once he became involved with his

fraternity, he knew that there was potential for leadership opportunities and that he

wanted to take full advantage of them

> "Once I sort of decided to join a fraternity, I knew instantly that I wanted
> to sort of climb the ranks in that leadership and that eventually evolved
> into IFC leadership as well. I am usually pretty active in what I join. I
> don't like just being, just a stand aside member. If I am in something and
> engaged, then I am going to be fully engaged." Reza

Membership within a fraternity offers the opportunity to take on leadership roles

and help shape the future of the chapter. Students take on leadership roles as a means of

giving back to their fraternity as well as challenging themselves to grow and try

something new. Leadership experience during college can strengthen the men's skills,

confidence, and breadth of experience and knowledge.

In the following quote, Adam described that once he became involved he felt the urge to

take on leadership roles to help improve his fraternity.

> "I always saw that there was some room for improvement and um, I kinda
> took the positions hoping to make things better, especially around my
> fraternity and I would, I would like to say that I have achieved some of
> these goals, but there is always some room for improvement…sometimes
> there is just some lack of leadership that you see and then you feel
> obligated to fill in for that position and you know, take initiative." Adam

Leaving a mark. Fraternity membership is known to be a commitment. Men who

pledge fraternities pledge more than living in a chapter house or participating in fraternity

activities. Individuals who choose fraternity membership are pledging to align their

behavior and actions to those of the fraternity without end. The ability to call oneself a

brother within a fraternity holds an honorable weight.

> "It's a matter of proving yourself that you deserve to belong here and you
> deserve to bear a title and be a brother in the fraternity, in this case, [Beta
> Beta]. Now [that he has been initiated] it's not so much proving yourself,
> but living up to the vows and creed that you've been sworn in on and it's
> also a matter of sometimes you'll get or you'll develop respect more from
> certain members who see you do that and you also will see members
> develop as well and possibly give them more respect and more credit to
> how they have built their character through their experience." George

Once initiated or activated as a full member, the fraternity membership often

becomes a part of one's identity. The time and energy put forth impacts the individual.

The experience of being a fraternity man can lead to pride in the organization and a desire

to leave a legacy for future members.

> "I just get really happy and proud to be a[n] [Alpha Alpha] when I hear
> people compliment my house or when I tell them I'm a[n] [Alpha Alpha].
> Um, I am always proud to say it…I say it proudly and a lot of times I'm
> met with, "oh, that's a very strong house," or I definitely love it when

people from a completely different area of the world are "oh, I knew
[Alpha Alphas] and they were great guys." That is just something I try to
maintain here, especially being president. I feel like we have a lot of
pressure to be a strong house and be strong role models in our community,
so something I preach to my members." Reza

With a new class entering college each year, the membership in a fraternity is

cyclical. It is the responsibility of the older, more senior members within the fraternity to

teach the younger members what will be passed onto the new generation. Legacy is what

is left behind as an individual or class for the future to follow and further grow upon. In

the following quote, Nemo shared how he wants new members to build relationships and

make the most out of their fraternity experience:

"Want them to experience the brotherhood of the fraternity and how
closely you can form bonds and relationships um, and be able to rely on
each other. That is very important and also for them to experience the
connections that occur. Getting to know your brother's families, having
them to get to know your families is a very good experience and it helps
build relationships with people. Especially in ways that you wouldn't first
suspect as far as job opportunities, experiences like that." Nemo

When a person has a personal connection and commitment to something, there is

vested interest. This interest propagates into the desire to give back to the organization or

leave something behind for the sake of betterment. This cycle contributes to the

continued existence and success of fraternities for centuries. Older members influence

younger active members through their involvement, commitment, and actions. Adam

shared that he is amazed at the dedication of members who have been out of college for

decades:

"The main thing that kinda struck me was whenever we would have
alumni come to the house and some people in their 70's and men who
were 70 and 80 years old that would still come down and still cared a lot

about the fraternity and expressed their interest, seeing how things were
going and working and around the house…I saw basically the fact of
Alpha, brotherhood, full on. These people basically were formed for the
rest of their lives, which is very cool in my opinion, a lifelong
commitment in my opinion." Adam

Summary of IFC fraternity brotherhood. The theme of IFC fraternity

brotherhood overviews three categories of benefits that each include three sub-categories:

(a) interpersonal relationships: brotherhood, connection, networking, (b) involvement:

chapter, community, campus, and (c) individual benefits: academics, leadership, and the

concept of leaving a mark. By creating an overarching theme of brotherhood, I was able

to organize what the participants had described regarding how fraternity membership had

helped and supplemented the collegiate experience, what opportunities had been

presented because of the fraternity, and the growth, experience and personal development

as an individual within fraternity. Within the nine categories, I described different types

of benefits that the participants have experienced as a student of color member of an IFC

fraternity at a PWI.

Growing up in a Predominantly White Setting

Growing up in a predominantly White setting was a commonality that emerged

from data analysis. All participants identified Oregon as their home state where they

spent much of their childhood. Oregon is located within a predominantly White area of

the United States of America.

The theme growing up in a predominantly White setting was unexpected because

none of my questions related to the demographics of their community as a child or

adolescent. I found that upbringing and demographics of their community as a child and

adolescent may have had an impact on the initial reasons of joining and pursuing

membership in an IFC fraternity. When asked to describe what it is like to be a student of

color within your fraternity (question five, Appendix) responses were given that implied

that the student's surroundings growing up, especially demographics, impacted their

perception. For example, the following three quotes portray how the participants were

accustomed to being a minority or one of the few people of color in their community:

> "For me personally, growing up in a community where we were the minority I am kind of used to, I really don't see much of a difference in how White my fraternity is." George

> "I mean growing up with being one of the only people of color in my school, so it doesn't really change much. I went to a school of 2700; I was one of 4 Thai kids. So being around White people is normal, that is what has been typical." Tim

> "…I have always grown up in the suburbs, so there wasn't that many Black people where I was at for all my life. So, for me, to do a predominantly White thing was just, simply normal to me." Jaime

Lived experience correlated to how the student chose a community once at

college. Uses of words like normal and typical infer that what that student has become

accustomed to in their life. Choosing to become involved with an IFC fraternity was not

out of the ordinary for these individuals. Transitioning from being around White people

growing up to being in a predominantly White fraternity appeared to be a natural

progression for some of the participants.

Expectations of students of color within IFC fraternities at a PWI

In order to assess the whole experiences of students of color who join and pursue

membership within an IFC fraternity, I inquired about expectations coming into the

fraternity (question six, Appendix). I found that initially the men did not think they had

any expectations surrounding joining an IFC fraternity. When given time to think, they

recalled expectations about membership within the fraternity, but none that truly reflected

the aspect of joining an IFC fraternity.

Surprisingly, many of the expectations shared within the interviews were not

intrinsic expectations, but expectations placed upon them by others. The experiences

expressed surrounding expectations all related to ethnicity or skin color as a salient

factor.

"Initially, no expectations. Just figuring out how to be the only student of color in the
house that was like the only thing." Jaime

Within this example, though the participant mentions he had no expectations, the

rest of his statement implies there was an expectation that he was going to be the only

student of color in his respective house. He had acknowledged that he was a minority in

that situation and was moving forward by figuring out what he needed to do to succeed as

possibly the only student of color. This next example portrays the notion of grouping

individuals into a category based upon physical appearances.

> "…some people [within the fraternity] would expect you to have a certain
> knowledge or expertise that they are unaware of… [based on]…like, skin
> color, or something like that. Most people assume that I know how to
> speak Spanish, or I'm Mexican. When in reality, I am Dutch and
> Indonesian so I have NO idea…" Nemo

In Nemo's experience, others used his physical appearance as a deciding factor of

his abilities. In this case, the ability to speak another language was assumption made

because his skin color is similar to many people who speak that language.

A similar example of others placing an assumption on an individual based on skin color

is Jaime's experience. The Black community that Jaime is a part of did not understand

why a Black person would join an IFC fraternity. The only factor considered in that

expectation was skin color, not the student's lived experience or desires.

> "I guess a lot of the Black people in the Black community didn't
> understand that [joining an IFC fraternity], so they just expected me to
> join one of the Divine 9 simply because I am a Black person on campus I
> should be joining…I got a lot of backlash from that. Other than that,
> basically I got more side looks from the Black community than from the
> Greek community." Jaime

The next example, though the expectation was based solely on ethnicity, was

expressed as a positive and empowering expectation. Adam expressed that former

leadership within his chapter inspired him to be a leader within the house.

> "When I came in, um the current president um was actually Middle
> Eastern too and you know he was a really bright individual actually um,
> very involved with Greek life around campus and he had a great resume
> and everyone kinda had this assumption of our fraternity oh like, ya know,
> the middle eastern men that we bring in are very smart in school and going
> to do good things for us, um...He set a very good example. Um, ya know, I
> try to basically follow his footsteps um, carry that ya know that
> stereotype." Adam

Adam felt that there was an expectation for him to succeed, because of his

ethnicity. He viewed this expectation as a positive challenge, to maintain and carry on

that image set by another member of Middle Eastern descent. For his fraternity, having a

Middle Eastern member had already occurred and a mindset or stereotype had been

created based upon his ethnicity.

Though the types of expectations varied from intrinsic to extrinsic and were

presented from individual, group, and community, a similarity throughout was the factor

of skin color or ethnicity. This theme directly correlates to the overall experience that

students of color have within an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White institution.

Emigrant parents and first-generation

A theme that emerged that I did not foresee was the implication of students of

color having emigrant parents and being first generation college students. Five out of six

of my participants mentioned that their parents at some point in their adult lives

emigrated from their home country to the United States with the intent of staying. For this

theme, I chose to utilize the word emigrant versus immigrant because the definition of

both varies depending on the perception of the individual. The term emigrant is utilized

to describe a person who is leaving their home country and moving to a new country. The

term immigrant is utilized to describe a person who is moving into the home country of

another individual. For the participants and/or their families, since they all moved to the

United States of America from another country, they are emigrants.

This theme arose when I asked how their parents reacted to joining the fraternity

(question two, Appendix) or how their experience as a student of color differs within

their organization than that of White students in their organization (question nine,

Appendix). The acknowledgement of this theme raises the realization that parental

background or status can affect the experience of joining an IFC fraternity at a PWI.

Adam shared that the main difference he perceives between himself and other fraternity

brothers is that he came from a background where there is no knowledge of Greek

fraternities:

> "The only differences in this experience ya know, coming from my
> background I don't really have the full support of my parents compared to
> all the White students on my organization. A lot of them, a lot of my
> friends actually have parents who were in Greek life, so they understand
> the aspects of Greek life." Adam

Because fraternities were founded and expanded within the United States of

America, the parents of these participants grew up in countries and cultures where IFC

fraternities did not exist. For many of them, their son informing them that they were

pledging or joining a fraternity was the first time they had any firsthand knowledge or

experience with fraternities. Nemo explained that because his parents and grandparents

were emigrants, that he has a difference experience. He didn't have the privilege of

having other family members or generations before him who were Greek. For example:

> **"**Growing up with emigrant parents with emigrant grandparents, um, it's
> probably a different experience than most people that are White growing
> up that have families that have lived in the states for long periods of time
> generations passed down, traditions passed down, legacies passed down."
> Nemo

For students of color with emigrant parents, the reality exists that the knowledge

base for Greek life may come from news or media sources. Regardless of accuracy, many

images and stereotypes portrayed in media highlight negative or exaggerated aspects of

Greek life. Adam expressed that his parents did not know about Greek life prior to him

joining and initiating his fraternity:

> "My parents…they didn't really know what fraternities really were and I
> didn't really tell them until… if I actually had told them prior to my
> initiation and you know they didn't really like it or if they had heard
> something from someone around them who has an influence on their
> opinion, they probably would've asked me to not be a part of an
> organization that promotes that whole social aspect." Adam

Adam also shared that he waited until he was fully initiated to tell his parents

about his fraternal involvement, just in case they did not approve. He wanted to be

involved with the fraternity, but did not want to go against his parent's wishes, even

though he did not know what they would say about fraternity involvement. He knew that

the stereotypes associated with Greek life could have negatively impacted his parent's

perception.

Tradition and legacies are valued within fraternities. Students who are first

generation students to the United States as well as first generation students to college

most likely do not have any relatives who are fraternity men. The selective membership

process, including the significance of legacies, excludes first-generation students. For

example, Nemo explained about the uncertainty of not having a legacy in the fraternity or

even relatives who had attended college.

> "That was one thing that I was… unsure about, was the aspect of a legacy
> within a fraternity and people were talking like "oh my grandpa and great-
> grandpa were members of this college and this fraternity so yeah," and I
> was like " what? uh? what? my parents didn't even go to college, I don't
> even know what's going on." And so, I mean that was a different
> experience for me in just coming to college itself." Nemo

Each student has a unique experience as a fraternity member and his family

situation can greatly impact that experience. The home country, emigrant status,

knowledge-base of Greek life and culture of parents affect the student throughout the

process of choosing to join, pledging and membership within an IFC fraternity.

Being a student of color in an IFC fraternity

Addressing various dynamics that emerged as themes within this study

supplements the understanding of what experiences a student of color in an IFC fraternity

may have at a PWI. Within this theme, there are five categories: openness, perception of

differences, the surprise of having other students of color in same fraternity, the role

surrounding recruitment of other students of color, and reactions to a) racial comments,

b) themed parties, or c) stereotypes.

These five sub-categories relate specifically to narratives and examples that were

given during the data collection. Though I didn't know what findings would be presented

before analysis, these five sub-categories offer a glimpse into some of the dynamics

students of color experience with membership in an IFC fraternity at a PWI.

Openness. The category of openness was refreshing when analyzing the

experiences of students of color in IFC fraternities. I chose the theme openness as a

singular word labeling what the men described as the atmosphere within their chapters.

The quotes relating to this theme stemmed from discussion around the make-up of the

fraternity (question four, Appendix). The following three quotes demonstrate how the

participants perceive that there is no favoritism or discrimination within their fraternities:

> "ya know as far as our fraternity goes, we are completely open for
> anyone, everyone. We are really welcoming. There isn't any like any like
> kind of racism or anything, any of that at all...discrimination against
> anyone..." Adam

> "In terms of ethnicity, I don't think we really focus much on that on a day
> to day. Nothing gets serious in regards to ethnicity or nationality. Um, I'd
> say we don't really judge each other in terms of ethnicity or background.
> We basically talk to direct each other based on their character or them as a
> person." George

> "From what I know of, no one is judged for anything…I think it is more of
> we all come from our own backgrounds and personal experiences and we
> all mesh and click together pretty well…" Jaime

Within these examples, the men portrayed that they feel they are addressed and

communicate with their fraternity brothers without judgment. The atmosphere that is

collectively created from these quotes is welcoming; members are treated as individual

persons. The character of an individual, along with the acknowledgement that each

person comes from a different background is of more importance than any factor.

Perception of differences. The category of perception of personal differences

stems from the question regarding how the participants' experiences differ from those of

White students (question nine, Appendix). A commonality that is represented in each of

the quotes below is the expression of there being no difference.

> "I don't think it's too different. Like I said, I think I definitely had a
> different upbringing and different values and um, I think I have been able
> to share those, but I think just fundamentally I don't see too much
> difference. We are a really open community here. It's not like I have been
> treated differently ya know, for better or for worse than anyone else. I just
> think that even White students, they differ in their upbringing. So I think
> that we all stand to ya know, teach each other something different, but I
> think the experience is the same because we are all together sort of
> learning from each other so I think that everyone stands to benefit, but I
> think the experience as a whole is pretty much the same." Reza

Reza expressed that each member of the fraternity comes from a different

background, but everyone can learn something from one another. Despite the differences

in racial, ethnic, upbringing, background, values, and any other variables, the participants

believe that their fraternity experience is the same as the experiences of White students or

other students of color.

"I don't think it [his experience] differs at all. I mean other than skin complexion,
compared to some, there is no difference in where it matters." George

George mentioned that the only difference in his experience is the skin

complexion. The last part of his quote, he stated "…where it matters," was referring to

the character of an individual.

The next example is concurrent with the theme echoing that his experience and

how he is treated is no different than others within his fraternity. This quote portrays

another dynamic of how his experience may be different than White students though; it

highlights how his community external to the fraternity treated him differently once he

joined an IFC fraternity.

> "I haven't been treated differently. I don't feel that way. The only thing
> that I felt like I had been treated differently was only because like from the
> Black community actually, not from the people within my own house… I
> would say it is more of the opposite. Being in the house everyone is cool
> with it, but being an African American that's in a White fraternity, I guess
> you could say, people from the Black community I guess would say would
> have more of a problem with it than I have." Jaime

Though there is an acknowledgement of differences between individuals,

especially prior to fraternity membership, there was a consistent perception that the

experiences within the fraternity were no different than those of White members.

Surprise of having other students of color in same fraternity. The category of

surprise of having other students of color in same fraternity was unexpected. I had not

entertained the idea of the impact students of color could have on each other within IFC

fraternities. The participants were all asked what they were surprised by entering the

fraternity (question six, Appendix). For example:

> "It was definitely refreshing. It was nice to know that they found other
> people of color who were interested in joining a fraternity. I guess it was
> just refreshing to have another person of color in the house like not being
> the only representation of that specific race. So the fact that they had
> multiple races in there, it kind of, it doesn't put you on the spot. You have
> variety with the way people act." Jaime

Jaime's first statement encompassed the notion that he acknowledged that he was

minority entering into the IFC fraternity community. He was not expecting there to be

many other African American students or other students of color involved with the

fraternity. Having other students of color within the same fraternity naturally created

support for one another. None of the students of color would have to be sole

representations of their race or culture.

> "I was surprised to meet so many guys like me from the Middle East,
> especially… A couple [members of another fraternity], just kinda all
> around. Um, definitely sort of have a different connection with them and
> we all sort of became friends instantly. It was sort of fun to meet someone
> who, ya know, shares your upbringing that is now part of the same culture
> here. It's just nice to kinda be able to talk. We definitely enjoy speaking
> Farsi to each other in the middle of a big party, so that's always something
> kinda fun." Reza

Reza also found a community within his new community of the IFC fraternities.

He was able to connect with the other Middle Eastern fraternity members on multiple

levels; Greek life, upbringing, language, and culture. These connections supplemented his

Greek experience as well as his collegiate experience.

The final example does not overtly align with this category, but it demonstrates

how Tim's perception is that members are close despite any specific identities or

identifying factors:

> "I was just surprised by how close people were. I mean, that's one of the
> main reasons why I joined because everyone was close regardless of age,
> where they came from, regardless of their color." Tim

Though the membership within IFC fraternities at the study site is predominantly

White, there are a growing number of students of color. The presence of the students of

color in IFC membership affects the experience of potential new members who want to

join a fraternity. As the participants shared, having other within their same organization

was a positive, refreshing surprise when they joined their IFC fraternity.

     Role surrounding recruitment of other students of color. Building upon the

previous categories, students of color have an impact on other students of color within the

IFC fraternity community. When asked to describe their role within the make-up of the

fraternity (question four, Appendix), a theme arose around their role with recruitment.

Not all the participants explicitly expressed during their response for this question that

they recruited other students of color, but during the interview all six participants

conveyed that they have connected with other brothers or fraternity men of the same

ethnicity. For example:

> "…I feel like as far as recruitment went, it was a lot easier for me to talk to
> people of a minority just because I had that um, edge, against someone
> who was predominantly White cultured. And um it was very easy for me
> to um recruit different ethnicity pledges because I had that common
> ground…like people seeing, "oh, you're brown, he's brown, get 'em." Like
> there isn't an expectation, but..."" Nemo

     Nemo's experience with recruitment portrayed that a similarity between

individuals can impact communication and recruitment, specifically in this case the

commonality of being a student of color. Adding to what was concluded in the previous

theme; students of color find community and connect with one another, which is

important during recruitment. The last part of Nemo's quote stating that he didn't feel

there was "…an expectation, but…" implied that because he can connect with some

potential new members as a minority that he felt that he should use that to the benefit of

the fraternity's membership. Here is another example given by a participant who

recruited other students who shared his ethnicity:

> "I personally have probably rushed about 3 or 4 guys…who were Middle
> Eastern also. They are all members now in the house. Um...[identify with
> them] ya, especially with their parents because a lot of their parents um
> pretty like against it and you know from my background ya know, I set up
> meetings with their parents and um ya know talked to them and was like
> hey, I am successful in school and I have everything that I.. I am
> accomplishing everything that I came here for and at the same time am
> having fun. The biggest thing for them was networking and you know,
> give your son the chance to use these relationships he's building now for
> his future." Adam

Adam expressed that he was more involved than just the recruitment process; he

offered support to the new pledges by speaking with their families. Because he shares a

culture and background with the other Middle Eastern students and families, he could

explain and validate the fraternal experience.

> "…I was talking to one of the guys in the house, and the other African
> American in the house and we were like ya we need to recruit more people
> of color. We were joking about it, but it is nice to ya know, have a well-
> rounded group of races in one house, that way you aren't always going
> after the same type of people over and over." Jaime

Jaime shared in the last theme that he was refreshed to have other students of

color within his fraternity. In this quote he shared that as the two African Americans in

their fraternity, they have discussed recruiting more students of color. Along with having

more students of color in the fraternity, there is more diversity, more background

experience, and "…a well-rounded group of races." As more students of color join IFC

fraternities, students of color who are interested in joining a fraternity can acknowledge

that there is the potential for a community within the Greek community.

Reactions to a) racial comments, b) themed parties, or c) stereotypes. When asked to reflect on a time when a) racial comments, b) themed parties, or c) stereotypes were present, the participants as a whole gave responses related to all three topics. The examples encompassed brothers within their house using derogatory racial terms, racial comments perpetuating negative stereotypes, culturally mis-represented Halloween costumes, and themed parties where the theme was not accurately representing the intended culture or nation. The fact that examples were given relating to all three aspects gives insight to experiences as a student of color member of an IFC fraternity.

Considering that question was an intentional part of the data collection, I was not surprised by the answers I received. What was surprising however, was the commonality of the responses when asked how they individually reacted when incidents like this occurred. For example:

> "You know a lot of brothers, I mean we are all brothers and we all joke around and sometimes like they would say something in an attempt to be funny but comes off like racist sometimes, but you know I understand that they are joking around. You know some people may not take it the same way that I take it and can be offended." Adam

The participants expressed that even when racist remarks are spoken, or racy comments are said, the initial reaction is to acknowledge that it is a joke. Realizing that the intentions of the person were to create humor and not to degrade is a common theme throughout the participants. Another example shared by a participant in which he perceived the comment to have been made in a joking manner:

> "It [racial comments] never really comes up, ya know, at all, and even when it does I know it's totally in a joking manner so it's never really offended me. It always sort of comes up during Halloween. Everyone

always either jokingly or seriously comes up to me and asks if I have my
turban or my magic carpet. I know they are totally kidding, because I have
dressed up as both Aladdin and worn a turban at one point during
Halloween, It's never, ya know, been derogatory or meant to degrade me,
it's just sort of a joke. Being one of the 3 or 4 quote-unquote brown guys
in the house." Reza

None of the participants related to a feeling of being offended or hurt in these

instances. Analyzing how the participants shared their experience and how they chose to

express what they did, or how they felt immediately post racial incident fell into two

reactions. The first type of reaction was to laugh along with them and to join in on the

conversation and humor. Below are a couple examples reflecting some of the

participant's positions:

"Because people make fun of people and it's like human nature and it's
like finding the good side of it…the stereotypes are always going to be
there, so I am just trying to have fun with it. No hard feelings. I know they
are just kidding and trying to give me crap and so I am just going to give
them a hard time about it." Tim

"Personally, honestly, I could care less. I think it's funny also, but ya
know, I kinda of give people a hard time every once in a while when it
comes to crossing some boundaries that people, that some people think are
offensive." Adam

Within these two examples, both participants mention that after the fact, they

"…give them a hard time." It seems that a way that students of color are able to express

themselves to their fraternity brothers regarding crossed boundaries, particularly relating

to racial-based boundaries is to give the other person a "hard time." None of the

participants went into further explanation as to what that means or entails.

The second type of reaction was to neutralize or dismiss the situation. Not

allowing oneself to get personally involved with the situation may be a means of

distancing from the content of the situation. Through not personally reflecting or

responding on the comment allowed the participants to disengage from the racial

situation. George shared how he reacted and justified that feeling:

> "I just let it play out. I didn't feel, explaining to them, I don't think they
> would have understood too much and I know that for traditional Mexican
> style or whatever they would have needed more than they could've gotten
> at Good Will, so I think they were trying to do the best with what they
> could, but I don't think they used the proper, well I guess they used the
> wrong stereotype I guess." George

George did not think that if he took the time to explain the misrepresentation of

his culture that was occurring, his fraternity brothers would understand. Instead, he goes

on in his statement to justify his brothers' actions that "…they were trying to do the best

with what they could…" The justification of his brothers' actions may have been to try to

understand why they were throwing a party with a culturally misrepresented theme.

Another example of dismissing the situation is demonstrated by Nemo's quote.

> **"**I generally don't think about it too hard. I don't want to um, make anyone
> else feel uncomfortable. I, myself, don't generally feel uncomfortable
> when it happens, um, because when stereotypes are present, or racial
> comments are made, I don't play it off as something that is attacking me. I
> think of it as something that someone else is ignorant about and it doesn't
> make me angry, it makes me almost, what's the word, sad. Actually, I have
> pity towards them for not being educated as to what they actually are
> meaning against it." Nemo

Nemo states that he does not want others to feel uncomfortable, so he does not

dwell on it or think of it on a personal level. He goes onto explain his feelings

surrounding ignorance. Nemo is the only participant that expressed reasoning behind why

he does not take the comment/joke/situation personally. Nemo's statement demonstrates

a need for awareness and education within IFC fraternities.

Summary

The chapter discussed the participants involved and research findings associated with the experiences of students of color who decide to join and pursue active membership in an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White academic institution. I categorized the research findings into five themes with sub-categories found in two of the main themes. These five themes and sub-categories inform the primary question of this study.

The next chapter will continue to discuss the experiences of students of color who decide to join and pursue active membership in an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White academic institution. The overall findings and conclusions will be discussed along with recommendations for IFC fraternities and Greek professionals and suggestions for further research on this topic.

Chapter 5: Findings & Conclusion

Through this study, I have examined the experiences of six students of color who chose to join and pursue membership an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White institution. Building upon the themes that emerged from the data presented in chapter four, this final chapter will build upon what experiences students of color have who are involved in an IFC fraternity at BU. This chapter will provide (a) a discussion of the findings, (b) general conclusions based on the results of this study (c) implications for practice in student affairs, and (d) limitations to this study and recommendations for further research.

This study was qualitative in nature with a sample size of six students. The six students were willing and excited to volunteer to participate within my study, especially since it involved discussion about their fraternity. Each of the students seemed eager to talk and share examples and stories during the one-on-one interviews. Some of the students were curious as to how many students I was going to interview and a couple of the participants suggested other students of color they perceived to be a good fit within the study. A couple of participants mentioned they would tell a fraternity brother about their interview experience and encourage them to reach out to take part in the study.

General Findings

Throughout the process of data analysis, I was able to draw findings that reflect upon and answer the research question: what are the experiences of students of color who chose to join and pursue membership within IFC fraternities at a predominantly White university. Some of the findings that emerged were anticipated while others were not.

May the findings of this study contribute to the understanding of this student population

and provide content for discussion of implications, student services, and future research

areas.

      Anticipated Findings. As I created the proposal and started the process of

conducting this study, I anticipated that some themes would surface based upon the

nature of the study. Within this study, I examined the experiences of students of color

who are members of IFC fraternities. The two findings that I expected to surface related

to students of color and fraternity life. The majority of the conversations within the

interviews revolved around their fraternity, their involvement within the fraternity and

their personal experiences as a student of color within the fraternity.

      The first anticipated finding was the experience surrounding membership within a

fraternity, often referred to as brotherhood. The various aspects of fraternity life including

social relationships, opportunities, and support systems were all expected findings based

upon the purpose of fraternities. Fraternities were initially created to bring men together

to find community with one another after leaving the home setting (Rudolph, 1990). Each

participant expressed their fraternity experience positively impacted their entire college

career through the community they had found and the relationships they had built. The

theme of brotherhood presented in chapter four gave a plethora of examples by the

participants of their perception of the value and benefits associated with fraternity

membership.

      The second anticipated finding surrounded the student of color identity. One of

the initial reasons I was drawn to this research was that there are few students of color

within IFC fraternities at BU, so I wanted to learn about their fraternal experience.

Therefore, I expected to find that the students of color have experienced situations

relating specifically to the topic of race within fraternity membership. As a minority

within the membership of predominantly White men, I anticipated that there would be

situations where the student of color expressed acknowledgement of underrepresentation.

For example, the following quote is the response to the interview question relating to the

make-up of the participant's fraternity and where he fits in that make-up (question four,

Appendix).

> "…Most people are from relatively small towns in Oregon. I think that we
> are fairly even, we are predominantly, um I'd say middle class, White,
> Caucasian fraternity, we have some outliers… So I fit into most of those,
> but as far as cultural diversity or ethnicity, ethnic diversity, I feel like I am
> in the outlier…" Nemo

Nemo described that though he felt he fit into most of the categories he used to

describe the make-up of his fraternity, he identified as an outlier within culture or

ethnicity. Students of color have unique experiences as members of a student population

at BU and specific examples were shared throughout the interviews. Many of the students

discussed how they had recruited other students of color to become members of their

fraternity. It was articulated during the interviews that it was easier for the participant to

relate to other students of color. For example:

> "I definitely bring some diversity to my house and also I feel like I help ya
> know, new members who come from different backgrounds kinda fit in or
> feel accepted basically, um, just because of the histories of the fraternities
> and what not and that can sometimes be overwhelming for people from
> certain backgrounds." Adam

Adam acknowledged that for some students of color, who come from different

backgrounds, the transition between what the student has grown up with and the

environment of the fraternity may be overwhelming. He eludes that the history of

fraternities may have not always been accepting and welcoming to students of color, but

he does what he can to make those new members feel comfortable and fit in the

fraternity.

As I created this research study, I did not focus on forming hypotheses about what

findings would arise. I did not think it appropriate for a White woman to assume or place

anticipated findings on the potential experiences of male students of color who hold

membership in an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White university. Though I was not

expecting these exact examples, I did anticipate the participants sharing stories about

their student of color identity along with their fraternal experience.

Unanticipated Findings. Though I anticipated two of the major findings, unanticipated

findings arose during the data analysis. Many of the themes discussed in chapter four

were not expected. The unanticipated findings were commonalities between some or all

of the participants that were not expected answers or results to the questions asked during

the interview.

Emigrant parents. Five of the six participants disclosed during the interviews that

their parents were emigrants to the United States of America. Prior to this study, I had not

taken into consideration that the parental status of the participants would have an impact

on their experience of choosing to join and pursue membership within an IFC fraternity.

First-generation. Relating to the prior unanticipated finding, the discovery of

first-generation is two-fold. Some of the students were first-generation of their family to

have been born and raised in the United States of America and some of the students were

first-generation to attend college. Reflecting on data from the National Center for

Education Statistics (2012), the increasing percentage of students of color attending

universities, it is congruent that many of the participants were first-generation students to

college. Comparing the first two unanticipated findings, it is understandable that the

students would be first-generation citizens of the United States of America and first

generation students to attend an American university since their parents were adult

emigrants to the United States of America.

Other students of color. The next unanticipated finding was surprised of finding

other students of color within their fraternity. Many of the students expressed during the

interviews that they grew up in predominantly White neighborhoods and had attended

schools where they were racially the minority. Being one of the few students of color was

the environment in which all six participants had been raised. The experience of finding

other students of color in same fraternity was expressed as refreshing. The participants

acknowledged that they were a racial minority, so they were surprised to find other

students of color within their organization.

Perception of differences. Though the students acknowledged that they were a

minority in the fraternity, a commonality that arose throughout the interviews was that

they were similar to all the other members of their fraternity. Despite their race, or having

a different skin tone, the men perceived themselves as no different as anyone else in the

fraternity. It seems as if the men have a sense of assimilation within the fraternity in
which they try to be alike instead of sharing their differences. Similar to a finding within
Summer's (2010) study, the significance of race is downplayed for students of color who
hold membership in a White fraternity. The men all viewed themselves as equals within
their fraternities, which highlights an experience that collectively they have as members
of IFC fraternities at a predominantly White institution.

   Reactions to a) racial comments, b) themed parties, or c) stereotypes. Of all the
unanticipated findings, this was the most surprising. This question was specifically asked
in the interview, so I knew that I would be receiving information that addressed it. What I
did not expect were the types of answers given by the participants. The participants
acknowledged that racial comments, themed parties and stereotyping do occur on a
regular basis within their IFC fraternities. They also mentioned that some people may get
offended, or they could understand why some people would be offended at situations that
arise or comments made.

   All of the participants though mentioned that, as individuals, they acknowledge it
as a joke and that there is probably no intention of harm, just brotherly bantering. This is
surprising because I did not expect students of color to initiate, participate in, or egg on
derogatory jokes or comments reflective of their own culture or another culture. This
unanticipated finding raises the question of identity development and identification of
salient identities. What is the reasoning behind the students making fun of or joining in
racist jokes or situations?

General Conclusions

Based upon the themes that emerged in chapter four and the anticipated and unanticipated findings, I am able to draw three conclusions to this study.

Background. A student's background has huge impact on their collegiate decisions. For the participants in this study that was apparent and relative to the main question. What experiences the student has in the fraternity are informed by what prior experiences they have had. Within the themes in chapter four and unanticipated findings section, the commonalities of having emigrant parents, holding the status of first-generation student, either to the United States of America or as a college student or both, and growing up in a predominantly White area all reflect the students background. For all six participants to share what aspects of their background that affected their experience as a student of color within an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White institution reveals that past experience and identity is important.

As students enter college, they bring with them prior knowledge and lived experience through which they transition into a new environment. Relating to Schlossberg's theory of transition (1981), the four elements of transition are situation, self, support and strategy. Each of those influences a student's transition and overall experience. When examining what experiences students of color have within IFC fraternities at predominantly White institutions, a student's background is a vital component of how they transition; individually development level, familial or friend support, and what skills they have learned that can help them cope and make the best of the new situation.

The importance of a student's background was not the type of answer I intended

to receive when asking the main question of this study. After multiple answers from the

students kept relating to their past, I realized that their background reflects and impacts

the experience a student of color has within his IFC fraternity at BU. This conclusion also

impacts the next two conclusions.

Fulfillment of fraternity selection. The next conclusion surrounds the students'

choice and satisfaction of fraternities. Each student expressed the personal fulfillment

they received because they were a part of their fraternity. A commonality that arose was

that once the student started the recruitment process, they wanted to join an IFC

fraternity, even if initially the student never thought he would join a Greek organization.

The decision of choosing an IFC fraternity versus other independent fraternities or

multicultural fraternities seemed to be a non-existent issue for the students.

The participants who were seeking fraternity membership entering college knew

they wanted the experience that was advertised by the IFC fraternities, it was just a matter

of deciding in which one they felt most comfortable. This included having a large

brotherhood with many men, a house in which they live and gather, and an organization

that has visibility on BU's campus. The participants who did not know they wanted to

join a fraternity mentioned that now they are involved in a fraternity, they would not want

to trade that experience for any other experience on campus.

When the option of membership within a multicultural fraternity was addressed,

some of the men were aware prior to joining their fraternity that there were opportunities

to become involved in a fraternity founded upon membership of a certain ethnicity or

culture. Though, the size and scope of the Greek community at BU holds limitations to

what ethnicities and races are represented by fraternities. Some of the participants, if they

would have wanted to join a fraternity reflective of their own background, culture, race or

ethnicity do not have that option. At BU, there are Latino based fraternities, Asian based

fraternities, and historically Black fraternities. There are multicultural fraternities who

pride themselves on recruiting and having a diverse membership, but there are still many

ethnicities or races that do not have a fraternity that is based upon their individual

attributes.

Even though they knew that joining an ethnic or racial based fraternity or a

multicultural fraternity was a possibility, they did not choose to pursue looking into those

fraternities. The amount visibility and lack of exposure or advertising of the multicultural

fraternities on BU's campus may play a role in student's lack of knowledge or interest in

those organizations.

For the men who did not know prior to joining an IFC fraternity that there were

multicultural specific fraternities, they said that it would not have made any difference if

they had known before their initial decision. They did not have any interest in becoming

involved in an organization based around their ethnicity, racial make-up or cultural

heritage. Once introduced to fraternity life, the participants within this study had an idea

of what type of fraternity experience they were looking for and pursued it.

Significance of race downplayed. The third conclusion I drew from this study

has prompted more questions than it provided answers. The conclusion involves the

students' thoughts, opinions and reactions relating to their perceptions and interpretations

of racial comments, themed parties, and stereotypes. As discussed in last theme of

chapter four and within the unanticipated findings, the participants expressed that in some

capacities they viewed themselves the same as everyone else in their fraternity. It was

described that they did not perceive themselves to be any different than anyone else. For

example:

> "I don't know. I really don't see like, people of color being different
> because like, I may be Asian, but like I grew up in a White town." Tim

There is the recognition that he identifies as Asian, yet does not recognize that

people of color are any different than White people. It seems as if the significance of race

is downplayed throughout students of color within this study. This situation raises

questions of racial identity exploration and personal identity development. Has this

student had the opportunity to explore his Asian identity? How has his background of

growing up in a White town affected his perceptions of people of color? Is ethnicity a

salient identity? Another example that stemmed questions about identity development

and ethnic and cultural identity congruence is:

> "My mom was surprised I joined, I guess you could say a dominantly
> White one instead of a Black one…I think that she would know since we
> have been growing up in predominantly White neighborhoods my whole
> life that it would be okay if I were to join a White fraternity." Jaime

Jamie concluded that he was surprised that his mother did not realize why he

would have joined a predominantly White fraternity. There was an expectation that

because he had grown up in a predominantly White neighborhood that he would continue

to do other predominantly White things.

Jamie also expressed that he received backlash from other African Americans because

others perceived him as acting White. He asked them:

> "Why are you so worried about my experience and what I am doing,
> because I personally have had a different experience from you. I have
> always been around predominantly White people and you have always
> been around predominantly Black people, and so a lot of people… think
> that all Black people are supposed to be acting the same, so I guess they
> think I was acting White because I came from a White neighborhood.
> They put a lot of stigma on Black people on how they are supposed to act
> when they are not here. But it's like we have all had different experiences
> so you can't expect us to all be on the same level playing field I guess you
> could say." Jamie

In these examples, it seems as if the student's prior experience conditioned them

to see a lack of difference between themselves and other students. Are thought processes,

behaviors and actions a result of their background, an alignment with the mainstream

society in which they find themselves? There is a desire to fit in amongst a community

and be involved with something that is perceived as important (Astin, 1968). Have these

students adopted a certain mindset to fit in with the community they desired? Could

internalized dominance or privilege play a part in the thought process or decision?

Another realm of this conclusion involves the general reaction to racial or

derogatory comments and jokes that emerged during analysis. One of the themes in

chapter four discussed the banter and teasing that occurs within the participants'

fraternities. Yet, when a racial remark arises, the students acknowledged that they

perceive it as a joke between brothers.

Mirroring a conclusion Summer (2010) found in his study examining the

experiences of African American members of Historically White fraternities, within this

study, it was expressed that no offense is taken and that the student of color will laugh, go

along with the joke, or add onto the joke. Within Summer's (2010) study, he found that

"participants responded to the racial issues when they occurred with denial, by laughing

off the attack, or choosing not to confront - remaining silent" (p.116).

That the participants would be willing to negatively represent or laugh about

disparaging remarks or displays made of their own or another race or ethnicity raises

questions. Is this a common occurrence within IFC fraternities in general or at

predominantly White institutions? Are the men reacting this way to prevent themselves

from getting hurt or showing vulnerability? Is there a level of development present that

does not allow for the understanding of cruelty or racism behind the joke?

This conclusion invokes a need for further understanding of the thoughts

behaviors and actions of students of color who are members within IFC fraternities at

predominantly White institutions. To address some of these questions, an analysis of

student identity development is needed. Within the conclusions of this study, the

student's background shaped their decision to join an IFC fraternity as well as continues

to influence their experience as a student of color within the fraternity. In order to better

understand the experiences of students of color within IFC fraternities at a predominantly

White academic institution, addressing the whole student, including identities and

background is pertinent.

It is acknowledged that the students sought the experience they wanted and were looking for, regardless of ethnic or racial make-up. The third conclusion shines light that there is a topic that the students view themselves as fitting in and similar to others within their fraternity, often to the level of taking part in joking and mockery at the expense of other students or populations.

Implications for Practice

The results and findings of this study will add to the research surrounding students of color involved in IFC fraternities at predominantly White institutions. There has been minimal research on this topic. With the growing student of color collegiate student population, it is relevant that universities know how to support students of color at a Predominantly White institution. This study focused specifically on involvement within housed IFC fraternities and can inform work with that population.

A major implication that stemmed from the three findings is that there is a need for student identity development for college men. Many questions arose surrounding student development. Opportunities and encouragement need to be presented to IFC fraternity men, White students and students of color, to learn more about their salient identities. Within the realm of student development are categories for specific types of development such as identity, cultural, racial, cognitive, moral reasoning as well as many others.

Though IFC fraternities have their own new member education process as well as educational programming that is executed within the chapter, there is not standardization

between fraternities as to what is required within this education. There is room for

student affairs professionals working with Greek students to provide developmental

support as well as educational programs that encourage self-reflection for fraternity men.

One role of student affairs professional is stated as fostering cultural diversity

within higher education (Jones, 1991). The numbers of students of color attending

universities are increasing, and simultaneously the numbers of students of color within

IFC fraternities are also increasing (NCES, 2012). Because the student population is

growing and diversifying, it is imperative that student affairs professional embrace their

student support role.

As the student population is diversifying, it is imperative that the development

surrounding diversity is also growing. Jones (1991) highlights cultural diversity

programming, awareness and advocacy as approaches student affairs professionals can

take when working with students. With more opportunities for all fraternity men to

develop, they will grow individually and as a whole organization. Presenting various

types of developmental reflections or activities cultivate understandings of one another,

strengthening the brotherhood and hopefully establishing holistic development.

Higher educational professionals who work with Greek students should be

cognizant on student development, how transitions impact student success and how the

interface of variables impacts the collegiate experience. Within this study, the themes that

emerged in chapter four and the conclusions discussed in this chapter can be utilized to

inform current and future practices.

Limitations of Study

There were several limitations to this study. The first limitation was

generalizability; there were several factors present that do not allow the findings to be

generalizable to other Greek communities or campus. This study was conducted at a

predominantly White academic institution located in the Pacific Northwest region of the

United States of America, where the IFC fraternities are all housed structures. The

demographic make-up of the university and the fraternities present a particular setting

specific to this study. The narrow scope of the target population, students of color within

the IFC fraternities, confines generalizability. It is unknown how many students fit this

parameter at U, but six students volunteered for participation within the study. The

interviews of six students of color provide stories, examples, and individual perspectives

on their fraternity experience, but do not encompass the entire target population.

Another limitation of this study was the amount of time to conduct research and

write a graduate thesis. The IRB application, the research process, and the writing of the

thesis were completed in year two of a two-year master's program. The limited time

contributed to the small number of participants as well as restricting the study to one

campus. With more time available, more individuals could have been recruited and a

comparison of data between campuses may have been possible.

Another limitation was the fact that the data collected focused primarily on the

present experience of the student. The study did not examine the social identities,

challenges, or prior experiences of the students. Though the study specifically looked at

the present fraternal experience, other aspects of the participants' lives are influential.

The knowledge or examination of additional dimensions of the student's identity would

have provided a more holistic picture of their experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

In order to continue to engage students of color on a predominantly White

campus, further research and assessment is necessary. This study examined the

experiences of students of color who chose to join and pursued membership in an IFC

fraternity at a predominantly White institution. Based on the construction and limited

scope of this research, there remains a need for additional research in the following areas:

Location of research. This study was conducted at one predominantly White

university located in the Pacific Northwest of the United States of America. The

experiences of students of color within IFC fraternities are going to vary depending on

the type of institution, the demographics of the university, and the make-up of the Greek

community. Conducting studies on students of color within IFC fraternities at other

predominantly White institutions could provide additional data that could be utilized for a

comparative analysis.

Length and type of research. The data collection of this study consisted of one

interview per participant. The interviews were semi-structured in nature with eleven pre-

determined questions. The length of the interviews ranged from 30 to 54 minutes. In

order to gather additional data to supplement this study or future studies, I recommend

that a longitudinal study, interviewing participants multiple times throughout their

fraternal and collegiate experience. By interviewing participants multiple times, the depth

and breadth of the questions could be expanded providing a more holistic picture of their

experience.

Utilization of racial identity theory. As specificity to the recommendation of

length and type of research, I propose that a research study is created that examines racial

identity development within men in IFC fraternities at a predominantly White academic

institution. A study that is created with a purposely to addressing racial identity

development could have intentional questions that examine aspects that may or may not

affect racial identity development. This study examined the experiences of students of

color in general, but was not created to analyze in-depth influences of identity

development. A racial identity theory could be utilized as a frame to understanding the

identities of the participants.

Narrow target population. The target population for this study were students

who fit the following requirements: a) self-identified as male, (b) at least 18 years of age,

(c) a current student at BU, (d) identify as a student of color, and (e) have been initiated

and are actively involved for at least a term in an IFC fraternity at BU. An area for

additional research is to narrow the student population to a specific race or ethnicity.

Within this study, I looked at experiences of students of color in general. The

examination of experiences of students of a certain ethnicity who chose to join and

pursue membership in IFC fraternities at a predominantly White institution could provide

specific results reflective of their identity. Examining specific ethnicities, backgrounds,

or experiences could be compared to and/or added to expand upon current literature.

Specific results would supplement the basic research and informational framework

focused on fraternities and fraternity men.

Broaden target population. Similar to the prior limitation, another area for

further research is to broaden the target population of the study to women. This study

specifically focused on the experiences of male, students of color. By performing this

research with female students of color, a more holistic picture could be painted for what

experiences students of color have as they choose to join and pursue membership within

Greek organizations at predominantly White institutions.

The male Greek organizations chosen within this study were IFC fraternities, so I

recommend if this study were expanded to women, that Panhellenic sororities be utilized

as the female Greek organizations. Panhellenic sororities are similar to IFC fraternities in

historical contexts, construction, and governing bodies. Conducting this study with

female participants would allow study results to be broadened to both sexes providing

room for comparability between fraternity men and sorority women.

Conclusion

This study examined the experiences of students of color who chose to join and

pursue membership an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White institution. Information

was collected on this topic through six semi-structured interviews. Each of the six

participants shared his individual story, examples and experiences regarding being a

student of color in an IFC fraternity at a predominantly White institution. I hope that this

study will further conversations about engaging students of color in organizations at a

predominantly White institution, specifically within Greek fraternities. As more students

of color are attending colleges and universities, the membership of fraternities will

continue to grow and diversify. I hope the findings of this study offer perspective and

insight for student affairs professionals who work at predominantly White institutions.

Acknowledging what type of experiences students of color may have can inform

best practices for those working in higher education. As professionals within higher

education, it is the responsibility of those working with students to support the academic

mission of the university by providing quality services to students through non-academic

avenues (Ender, Newton, & Caple, 1996). The findings of this study can be utilized as a

resource to better understanding how to provide services to this student population,

strengthen the Greek community, and increase racial and ethnic diversity within student

organizations at a predominantly White institution.

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Appendix

The appendix contains three documents: (a) the interview questions, (b) the invitation

email, and (c) the informed consent form. These three documents were utilized with each

participant. Each participant read and signed the consent form prior to the interview and

received a copy. The participants were also provided a sheet with the interview questions,

so they could read the question at the same time I read the questions.

Interview Questions

OSU
Oregon State
UNIVERSITY

Office of the Dean of Student Life
Oregon State University, A200 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-2133
Telephone 541-737-8748 | Fax 541-737-9160 | http://oregonstate.edu/deanofstudents/

Interview Questions

STUDY TITLE: Experiences of male students of color who decide to join and pursue active
membership in an Interfraternity Council fraternity (IFC)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Mamta Accapadi

Eleven semi-structured interview questions (with prompting questions):

1. Tell me about your fraternity.

- Mission, Creed, Values?
- Philanthropy, Community service?
- What is your fraternity known for?
- What is your favorite tradition in the fraternity?

**2. Can you describe the reason(s) that you initially decided to become involved in the Greek
community?**

- How did you choose this specific organization?
- How did you know this was the organization you wanted to join?
- What fraternities did you look into before deciding?
- Does the fact that this fraternity has a house carry weight in your decision?
- Did you know there were unhoused fraternities?
- When did you join your fraternity?
- What did you like most about the brotherhood as a pledge and then as a member?
- How did your family and friends react when you told them you joined this fraternity?
- What would you say to a prospective new member about your organization?

3. What kind of college involvement experience were you looking for or considering?

- Did you know you wanted to join a fraternity?
- How has being involved in your fraternity allowed you to get involved as a college
  student?
- What, if any, leadership roles or positions have you taken on in your fraternity or
  IFC? Why?

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4. Describe the make-up of your fraternity.

- Income, home town, major, identities
- What role do you feel you play in the make-up of the fraternity?
- How do you think the brotherhood functions around the make-up of the fraternity?

5. What is it like to be a student of color in a group in your fraternity?

6. Initially, what were some of your expectations as a non-White student member of this organization?

- Have these expectations been met?
- If not, how did they differ?
- What were you surprised by?
- Have you seen yourself playing any roles relating specifically to your culture?

7. Can you describe what brings the most fulfillment or benefit to you from your involvement with this organization?

8. Can you describe the reason(s) that you stayed involved with your organization, or have you ever consider leaving the organization? Why or why not?

9. How do you think that your experiences differ within your organization as a student of color compared to that of White students in your organization?

- Can you recall any aspects of your identity that may allow you to think differently about these experiences?

10. Can you reflect on a time when a) racial comments, b) themed parties, or c) stereotypes were present?

- How are you affected?
- What is your general reaction?
- When incidents like this happen in the Greek community, how is the Greek community affected?

11. What experience would you want new members to have that you had?

- What experiences would you want new members to have that you did not have?

Invitation email

To: Students of Color involved in an IFC Fraternity

Subject: Volunteers needed for research study

OSU
Oregon State
UNIVERSITY

Office of the Dean of Student Life
Oregon State University, A200 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-2133
Telephone 541-737-8748 | **Fax** 541-737-9160 | http://oregonstate.edu/deanofstudents/

Recruitment Email

Dear Student:

My name is Timothea Lapham and I am a graduate student in the College of Education. I will be conducting a research study titled "Experiences of male students of color who decide to join and pursue active membership in an Interfraternity Council fraternity (IFC)." The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of male students of color who decide to join and pursue active membership in IFC.

The principal investigator of this study is Mamta Accapadi. The results of this research study will be used to write a thesis as partial requirement for the completion of a Master of Science (M.S.) degree in College Student Services Administration at Oregon State University.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. The study would ask that you participate in an individual, one-on-one, audio taped interview for the duration of about an hour during the next few weeks of the Fall 2012 term. There will be no compensation for the completion of the study interview.

Qualifications to participate in this study include:

- Must be a male

- Must be at least 18 years of age

- Must be a student at Oregon State University

- Must identify as a Student of Color

- Must currently be an initiated, active and involved member of an IFC fraternity and have at least one term of experience with this Greek organization at ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

If you meet the qualifications for participating in this study, and wish to do so, please email me at timothea.lapham@oregonstate.edu or contact me via text or phone at 406-431-6750. At this time, we shall set up a time and location to meet to sign the consent form and conduct the interview. I look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Timothea Lapham
Graduate Assistant
Center for Fraternity & Sorority Life

Informed Consent

Office of the Dean of Student Life
Oregon State University, A200 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-2133
Telephone 541-737-8748 | **Fax** 541-737-9160 | http://oregonstate.edu/deanofstudents/

Consent Form

Project Title: Experiences of male students of color who decide to join and pursue active membership in an Interfraternity Council fraternity (IFC)
Principal Investigator: Mamta Accapadi
Student Researcher: Timothea Lapham
Version Date: October 1, 2012

1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This form contains information you will need to help you decide whether to be in this study or not. Please read the form carefully and ask the study team member(s) questions about anything that is not clear.

2. WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of male students of color who decide to join and pursue active membership in an Interfraternity Council fraternity (IFC). This research will explore the experiences of male students of color currently enrolled in a predominantly White institution who were also initiated and involved in an IFC fraternity for at least one academic term.

This study is being conducted by an Oregon State University graduate student for the completion of a thesis as a partial fulfillment of a master's degree of science in College Student Services Administration at Oregon State University.

 Up to ten students may be invited to take part in this study.

3. WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you have self-identified that you are

1. at least 18 years of age,
2. a male,
3. a current student at Oregon State University,
4. identify as a student of color, and
5. have been initiated and have been actively involved for at least one term in an IFC fraternity

4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

This study involves research centered on the process and experiences of active membership of a male student of color within an IFC fraternity. The study activities include a one-on-one, in-person interview with the researcher that will be structured around eleven predetermined, open-ended questions.
You may choose to skip any questions that you would prefer not to answer. Related follow-up questions may be asked during the interview depending on your answers to each of the questions. Other follow-up questions may be asked after the interview has ended if clarification or expansion is desired by the researcher to provide a more thorough answer.

| **Oregon State University** | **IRB Study # 5425** | **Expiration Date 10/21/2013** |

Study duration: Individual face-to-face interviews will last about one hour.

Recordings: Audio recordings will be taken during the interview. Recording of the interviews is a required activity and you should not enroll in the research study if you do not wish to be recorded. The researcher will use the recordings at a later time for educational purposes regarding completion of a thesis as partial fulfillment for a master's of degree science.

_____I agree to be audio recorded.   _____I do not agree to be audio recorded.
Initials   *Initials*

Future contact: We may contact you in the future for follow-up questions that are related to your answers in this study. You may ask us to stop contacting you at any time.

Study Results: You may request a copy of the transcribed audio at any time after the completion of the interview portion of the study.

5. WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND POSSIBLE DISCOMFORTS OF THIS STUDY?

The only foreseeable possible discomfort associated with being a participant in the study includes disclosing personal history or information regarding racial identity and membership within an IFC fraternity. You can use discretion when responding to interview questions regarding the content and amount of information.

Breach of Confidentiality: There is a risk that we, the researchers, could accidentally disclose information that identifies you. We are using the Internet and email as a means for communication with participants in this study. The security and confidentiality of information sent via email cannot be guaranteed. Information sent by email can be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or incomplete, or contain viruses.

6. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

The study is not designed to benefit you directly. This study has foreseeable benefits in understanding the experience of a male student of color when involved within an IFC fraternity.

7. WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

8. WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Federal regulatory agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you.

If the results of this project are published your identity will not be made public.

Storage of audio recordings: The researcher will digitally store a recorded audio copy of each interview on a password protected computer. The only people who will have access to the password and computer are the principal investigator and student researcher. To help ensure confidentiality, individual identifiable information will be stored in a secure location and will be accessible to the principal investigator and the student investigator. The recordings will be used solely for education purposes for the compilation of a master's thesis and will be deleted once the audio files are transcribed.

9. WHAT OTHER CHOICES DO I HAVE IF I DO NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers will delete any files and audio recordings.

10. WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact:

Mamta Accapadi - Principal Investigator
Dean of Student Life
A200 Kerr Administration Bldg.
541-737-2382
mamta.accapadi@oregonstate.edu

If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

11. WHAT DOES MY SIGNATURE ON THIS CONSENT FORM MEAN?

Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Do not sign after the expiration date: 10/21/2013

Participant's Name (printed): _____

_____ _____
 (Signature of Participant)   (Date)

_____ _____
(Signature of Person Obtaining Consent)   (Date)