# DIFFERENCES IN SELF-AWARENESS RELATED MEASURES AMONG CULTURALLY BASED FRATERNITY, SOCIAL FRATERNITY, AND NON-AFFILIATED COLLEGE MEN[1]

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*This study examined differences among men affiliated with culturally based fraternities, men affiliated with social fraternities, and non-affiliated men on measures of consciousness of self and congruence. Data were collected in the spring of 2006 from 1,698 undergraduates, representing 46 different higher education institutions, as part of the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership* (MSL). *Analysis of data was conducted using MANCOVA to compare independent variable group differences across the two dependent variables, while taking quasi pre-test measures for both items into account as covariates. Significant differences among culturally based fraternity men, social fraternity men, and non-affiliated men were found on the combination of dependent variables. Further analyses revealed culturally based fraternity men scored lower than social fraternity men and non-affiliated men on both consciousness of self and congruence.*

In the absence of conclusive research about the value-added aspects of fraternal organizations, negative stereotypes associated with fraternity men abound. The unfavorable outcomes associated with fraternity membership, from heavy and binge drinking patterns (Danielson, Taylor, & Hartford, 2001; Eberhardt, Rice, & Smith, 2003; Hennessy & Huson, 1998; Riordan & Dana, 1998) to negative impacts on academic outcomes (DeBard, Lake, & Binder, 2006; Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt, 2001) to the dangers of hazing, which continue to be prevalent within these fraternal organizations (Allen & Madden, 2008; Hennessy & Huson, 1998; Nuwer, 1999; Sweet, 1999) are well documented in numerous studies.

Sparse research-based evidence supports claims of positive outcomes made by professionals who support fraternities (Strayhorn & Colvin, 2006). A faculty member in Strayhorn and Colvin's qualitative study remarked,

> While I intuitively 'know' that Greek affairs [sic] makes a difference in student outcomes, I am not aware of specific research that details that difference by focusing on just the contribution of Greek [sic] involvement separately from other influences on student outcomes. (p. 101)

This study examined differences between culturally based fraternity men, social fraternity men, and non-affiliated college men on measures of consciousness of self and congruence – desirable student development outcomes indicative of a positive and supportive learning environment.

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[1] The terms "culturally based" and "social fraternity" are used by the authors in this article as a way of distinguishing between fraternities for the purposes of the study. These terms have not been officially adopted or sanctioned by AFA, NIC, NPHC or any other organization. In this case, they reflect the wording used for a demographic question on the survey instrument. For a discussion on the use of distinguishing terms in research, please see the editorial in this issue of *Oracle*.

## Conceptual Framework

Researchers have noted the historical canon of research in human development was already about men (Davis, 2002; Edwards & Jones, 2009). As a result, research to examine men through a gendered lens has been slow to start (Davis). As Davis explained, "Although researchers have begun to investigate how gender affects women's identity development, there has been relatively little written about such impact on the psychosocial development of college men" (p. 508). Male gender development represents an area of identity development that must be further explored (Edwards & Jones).

The need for increased understanding of male student involvement experience is evident, and this is of particular importance for men in fraternities. Fraternity culture harbors many aspects that have the potential to negatively impact fraternity men, including fear of rejection by peers, secrecy, a deep sense of loyalty that can impede proper judgment, and a history of perpetuation of traditions that can take away from a man's ability to think independently (Davis, 2006). The root of addressing such problems, in Davis' estimation, rests in understanding and challenging masculinity, as opposed to "simplistic anti-hazing, alcohol abuse, sexual assault prevention programs" (p. 1).

To operationalize these concepts, the current study explored aspects of male self-awareness. Primarily, data were collected to evaluate consciousness of self (i.e., an understanding of one's motivations, beliefs, values), congruence (i.e., the ability to act consistently with one's beliefs and values), and the role fraternity membership may play in the development of one or both.

## Method

This study explored differences among men affiliated with a culturally based fraternity (fraternal organizations with a historically racial minority foundation), men affiliated with a social fraternity (historically White fraternal organizations), and men not affiliated with a fraternity. Data were drawn from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) in an *ex post facto* design to investigate two primary research questions.
1) Do differences exist between male culturally based fraternity members, male social fraternity members, and non-affiliated males on consciousness of self?
2) Do differences exist between male culturally based fraternity members, male social fraternity members, and non-affiliated males on congruence?

### *Instrument*
The theoretical grounding of the MSL was the social change model of leadership development (SCM), developed through the Higher Education Research Institute (Wagner, 2006). The social change model of leadership development is a values-based model, including consciousness of self and congruence among the values, the two dependent variables in the current study.

The primary scales that were used to study the research questions were the Consciousness of Self and Congruence Scales that appeared in the MSL survey instrument. These scales are part of a revised version of the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale, originally developed by Tyree (1998). Both dimensions were measured in the MSL using a 5-point Likert-type scale. In the

current study, reliability of the Consciousness of Self Scale was calculated as .79, while the Cronbach alpha result for the Congruence Scale was .82.

*Sample and Procedure*
Of the 52 campuses participating in the MSL, 46 had male students and maintained an institutionally recognized fraternity community. Data drawn from these institutions resulted in an overall student sample size of 45,175, which criterion sampling reduced to 1,698 cases ($n = 566$ in each of the three independent variable groups). This number resulted from the small number of men in the culturally based fraternity affiliation group ($n = 566$). A random number generation technique was employed to randomly select cases for each of the other two groups, men who were affiliated with a social fraternity and men who were unaffiliated.

For the purpose of this study, the culturally based fraternity men could be identified in two different ways. First, they may have selected that they were part of a culturally based fraternity, but not a social fraternity, on the MSL instrument. Second, they may have selected that they were part of a culturally based fraternity and also selected being affiliated with a social fraternity on the MSL instrument. Meanwhile, social fraternity men were identified in only one way. They were only considered social fraternity men for the purpose of this study if they had selected membership in a social fraternity on the MSL instrument and not selected membership in a culturally based fraternity on the MSL instrument.

*Analysis*
Due to the correlation potential of the Consciousness of Self and Congruence Scales, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was used for data analysis. Covariates were used to account for differences that may inherently exist between the three independent variable groups due to their self-selecting nature. The MANCOVA was used to explore possible differences across the combination of dependent variables between the three independent variable groups. Significance of the MANCOVA test was further investigated using univariate level ANCOVA tests to ascertain specific between group differences on each dependent variable. Post-hoc analyses using a Bonferroni test were used to understand significance of pairwise comparisons.

**Results**

MANCOVA revealed statistically significant differences among the three independent variable groups (men affiliated with a culturally based fraternity, men affiliated with a social fraternity, and men not affiliated with a fraternity) across the combination of two dependent variables (consciousness of self and congruence), $F (4, 3,384) = 5.654$, $p = .000$; Wilks' Lambda = .987; $\eta^2 = .007$ (Table 1). Covariates used in this design included quasi pre-test items for the two dependent variables.

Table 1
*Multivariate Analysis of Covariance Tests*

| Effect | Wilks' Lambda | F | df | p | Partial Eta Squared |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | .411 | 1,213.540 | 2 | .000 | .589 |
| PRE-Test Consciousness of Self | .891 | 103.468 | 2 | .000 | .109 |
| PRE-Test Congruence | .808 | 201.669 | 2 | .000 | .192 |
| Affiliation | .987 | 5.654 | 4 | .000 | .007 |

Further investigation of the results of the MANCOVA showed a statistically significant difference between independent variable groups on both dependent variables when considered as univariates. Consciousness of self showed significance $F(2, 1,695) = 11.100$, $p = .000$; $\eta^2 = .013$, as did congruence $F(2, 1,695) = 7.030$, $p = .001$; $\eta^2 = .008$ (Table 2).

Table 2
*Univariate ANOVA Summary Table*

| Source | DV | F | df | p | Partial Eta Squared |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 1,798.68 | 1,798.68 | 1 | .000 | .515 |
| | Congruence | 2,306.86 | 1 | .000 | .577 |
| PRE-Test Consciousness of Self | Self | 146.49 | 1 | .000 | .080 |
| | Congruence | 11.63 | 1 | .001 | .007 |
| PRE-Test Congruence | Self | 259.38 | 1 | .000 | .133 |
| | Congruence | 397.85 | 1 | .000 | .190 |
| Affiliation | Self | 11.10 | 2 | .000 | .013 |
| | Congruence | 7.03 | 2 | .001 | .008 |

A comparison of adjusted and unadjusted means for both dependent variables by independent variable group revealed the nature of these differences (Table 3). Investigation of adjusted and unadjusted means revealed a similar pattern on both dependent variables after adjusting for both covariates. Means for all independent variable groups were higher than the mean scores for those groups on the quasi pre-tests. The Consciousness of Self quasi pre-test mean scores for the culturally based fraternity group, social fraternity group, and non-affiliated group were 3.71, 3.74, and 3.66. The Congruence quasi pre-test mean scores for the culturally based fraternity group, social fraternity group, and non-affiliated group were 3.79, 3.89, and 4.01.

Table 3
*Adjusted and Unadjusted Means for Consciousness of Self and Congruence by Affiliation Group*

| Affiliation Group | Consciousness of Self | | Congruence | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Adjusted M | Unadjusted M | Adjusted M | Unadjusted M |
| Culturally Based | 3.82 | 3.80 | 4.00 | 3.97 |
| Social | 3.96 | 3.96 | 4.10 | 4.10 |
| Non-affiliated | 3.90 | 3.92 | 4.07 | 4.10 |

Pairwise comparisons using a Bonferroni test were used to further establish specific, significant differences between groups. On the consciousness of self dependent variable, the culturally based fraternity group showed a significant difference in the negative direction from both the social fraternity group (mean difference = -.132, SE = .028) and from the non-affiliated group (mean difference = -.079, SE = .028) (Table 4). On the congruence dependent variable, the culturally based fraternity group also showed a significant difference in the negative direction from both the social fraternity group (mean difference = -.103, SE = .028) and from the non-affiliated group (mean difference = -.071, SE = .028).

Table 4
*Pairwise Comparisons for Consciousness of Self*

| Affiliation Group | | Mean Difference | Standard Error | Significance [a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Culturally Based | Social | -.132* | .028 | .000 |
| | Non-affiliated | -.079* | .028 | .016 |
| Social | Culturally Based | .132* | .028 | .000 |
| | Non- affiliated | .053 | .028 | .184 |
| Non-affiliated | Culturally Based | .079* | .028 | .016 |
| | Social | -.053 | .028 | .184 |

* Mean difference is significant at the .05 level
[a] Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

**Discussion**

The results of this study are partially consistent with previous research noting differences between fraternity men and their non-affiliated peers on a number of outcome variables (DeBard, Lake, & Binder, 2006; Eberhardt, Rice, & Smith, 2003; Hayek et al., 2002; Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998; Pascarella et al., 2001; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996), though in the current study only culturally based fraternity men were significantly different from the non-affiliated population. Of particular note was the disparity on consciousness of self and congruence existing not only between men who were affiliated with a culturally-based fraternity and those who were not, but also between men affiliated with a social fraternity and men affiliated with a culturally based fraternity. Previous research has often failed to view the social fraternity and culturally based fraternity experiences as discrete (McClure, 2006).

### *Factors Influencing Culturally Based Group Scores*

It is concerning that men affiliated with a culturally based fraternity scored significantly lower than non-affiliated men and social fraternity men on both dependent variables. In part, this phenomenon may be connected to the nature of the fraternal experience in culturally based organizations. In the case of historically Black fraternities (one example of a culturally based fraternity), in particular, membership functions in a way that helps to lower members' feelings of isolation on predominantly White campuses by linking members to the college community and the larger Black community (McClure, 2006). This linkage to a wider community is something that may be less necessary for White students in historically White fraternities. The latter group may have less need for an organization to diminish feelings of isolation, as they are already the majority group on the campuses of which they are a part (McClure). In essence, those students who feel racially isolated may need identification with a group as opposed to focusing on the self in order to feel grounded on the campus.

On predominantly White campuses, in particular, it may be the case that men of color gravitate toward culturally based fraternity affiliation as an anchor to same-race connections. According to McClure (2006), male members of historically Black fraternities expressed feelings of disorientation and alienation on predominantly White campuses that resulted in what one respondent characterized as causing a general sense of "weariness" (p. 1,047). These feelings, however, were transformed through the historically Black fraternity experience, which often left members feeling more connected to the campus and less isolated (McClure).

This is, perhaps, where a parallel can be drawn to the current study and the lower scores of culturally based fraternity men on consciousness of self and congruence measures. Though numerically the current study suggests social fraternity men are more developed on these measures than their culturally based fraternity peers, this may be more due to the complexities of privilege (Tatum, 2003) given the variation of backgrounds in men of color composition in these three independent variable groups. In other words, the culturally based fraternity group represents a much more racially diverse sample than does the social fraternity group. Given the greater proportion of men of color in the culturally based fraternity group in the current study, it is reasonable to expect that many more of these men than in the other two groups would experience the challenges of adapting to campus environments organized around the White mainstream, as described by respondents in the McClure (2006) study. Thus, there would be an increased need for these men for the anchoring offered by a culturally based group experience.

Students frequently do not experience their campus cultural climate in the same way. Ancis, Sedlacek, and Mohr (2000) confirmed findings of previous research by demonstrating that students of color were much more likely than their White peers to feel pressure to conform to racial stereotypes of their academic performance and behavior, and attempted to minimize racial group characteristics in order to be accepted. This underscores students of color feeling pressures of conformity, which could certainly influence aspects of the ability to act congruently with their internal sense of self in the face of these external demands.

For college men of color, these external demands are ever-present. As hooks (2004) explained of Black men, "To build the self-esteem that is the foundation of self-love black males necessarily engage in a process of resistance, during which they challenge existing negative stereotypes and

reclaim their right to self-definition" (p. 142). A constant struggle exists for Black men in the tension of an internal definition of self that is not consistent with what the macro society has imposed (Marable, 2001). This could also contribute to an explanation of the results of the current study.

A construct related to self-awareness, particularly to congruence, is that of self-authorship. In Baxter Magolda's (2002) study of college students, self-authorship was often not something that students were able to achieve during their college years, the process of which requires the ability to develop an internal sense of self. Baxter Magolda connected this to the fact that college students do not frequently receive messages in their collegiate experience emphasizing the need to develop an internal definition of self. This may be even more the case for men of color, as they face the constant challenge of externally defined conceptions of their role in society (hooks, 2004; Marable, 2001). The results of the current study may be tied to the fact that men of color have this increased hurdle to overcome in confronting the external before they can come to terms with their internal definitions of self.

### *Considerations Related to Survey Items*
Considering adjusted mean scores for both Consciousness of Self and Congruence by affiliation showed that all groups maintained aggregate scores that were in the high 3-point to low 4-point range on a 5-point Likert-type scale rating. A neutral response was indicated as 3. Thus, the average response for all three independent variable groups suggests all of these men thought of themselves as possessing a reasonably good sense of self and ability to act congruently with their values and beliefs.

Nonetheless, caution should be exercised with the interpretation of these results as being not so much caused by shortcomings on the part of the culturally based fraternity group, but at least also in part due to the nature of the frame through which Consciousness of Self and Congruence were conceptualized. It is important to keep in mind that the scale used in this study was derived from the MSL, which was a leadership study. This, in particular, could have influenced the frame through which respondents were considering either of these dimensions.

The results of this study may be less reflective of discrete differences among groups and more a product of proxy measures used to evaluate differences. For example, one of the questions on the Consciousness of Self Scale asked participants to respond with their agreement to the statement "I can describe how I am similar to other people." Another question on this same scale asked respondents to indicate their agreement with the statement "I am comfortable expressing myself." The argument can be made that these questions are biased towards those in a majority identity group. For those men who are in an underrepresented racial group, the possibility exists that their experience of difference from others is more salient than that of how they draw similarity. In a related way, men of color who experience their campus environment as one requiring conformity (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000) may not feel as comfortable expressing themselves, not because of a lack of Consciousness of Self, but rather because of a climate that sends messages to restrict such authenticity for these men.

Similar concerns can be drawn for the Congruence Scale items. One of the questions on this scale asked respondents to indicate their agreement with the statement "It is easy for me to be

truthful." This question for men of color may not be as easy as whether or not their values are congruent with their actions. With the increased pressures resulting from external definitions of identity expression for men of color (hooks, 2004; Marable, 2001) and campus environments inherently demanding conformity to dominant paradigms (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000), men of color may act congruently, but may not be as at ease as the above question would suggest.

**Implications**

Anson and Marchesani (1991) noted that, "fraternities and sororities offer today's students opportunities for personal development unmatched in most campus organizations" (p. ix). The results of this study suggest fraternity affiliation, uniformly, does not account for positive outcomes on personal development. This was evidenced by the discrepancy in which culturally based fraternity men fell below their social fraternity and non-affiliated peers on Consciousness of Self and Congruence. Campus-based professionals need to understand that previous research on fraternity experiences has not considered culturally based groups as a separate entity, although in practice, culturally based and traditional social fraternities are often treated the same (Kimbrough, 1995; McClure, 2006).

Participants in Davis' (2002) qualitative study responded to the question of what it was like for them to be a man on campus with some difficulty in conceptualizing their experience. A common theme was that while many services existed to support and affirm women's identities, there was a lack of corresponding services for men (Davis). If this crisis in affirming men's identities exists, it seems from the findings of the current study that there exists a corresponding concern within subgroups of college men. Davis' findings suggested an inequity in terms of services for men on college campuses, and the current study gives reason to consider further whether the services presently provided to men, as in the case of fraternity advising, are reaching all men in the ways that would be most beneficial to their development. Student affairs practitioners must continue to help men probe their sense of self and ask questions that encourage men to become more self-aware. In particular, practitioners must be sensitive to the societal pressures at play that may make an internal definition of self even more difficult for men of color to explore (hooks, 2004; Marable, 2001).

**Conclusion**

The discrepancy between two types of fraternity experiences, culturally based and social, suggests a need for crafting the fraternity experience for all groups into one that can be connected to personal growth. Several questions remained unanswered. Are those who work with fraternities missing an opportunity for enhancing personal development and growth within the fraternal experience in ways most beneficial to particular kinds of fraternal experiences? Or are practitioners already interfacing differently with these two distinct fraternal groups in ways that contribute to the differences noted in this study?

Critical research examining the nature of culturally based fraternal experiences has been sparsely accomplished in the past. The different experiences of fraternity members needs to be captured in greater depth and accuracy in research, and campus professionals need to be more culturally aware as they work within and among the members of such groups.

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