CHANGING TRENDS IN THE UNDERGRADUATE FRATERNITY/SORORITY EXPERIENCE: AN EVALUATIVE AND ANALYTICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

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Fraternal organizations in American institutions of higher education have a significant influence on student life and campus culture. Historically, research has shown that fraternities and sororities provide environments that support negative and often illegal activities that can be detrimental to individuals and communities at large. However, recent research has identified new trends that suggest this may be changing. This article identifies these trends and implications.

Due to the large number of fraternal organizations, the historical presence of fraternities and sororities on college campuses, and the high visibility of members; students who are members of fraternities and sororities exert a major influence on the culture of American higher education. Regretfully, the influence of these organizations is not always positive. As will be demonstrated in the text of this article, many empirical studies have shown fraternity/sorority membership is a contributing factor leading to or further aggravating substance abuse, poor academic performance, intolerance for human differences, and involvement in illegal activities such as hazing, physical abuse, and sexual assault. It appears to many that fraternal organizations have slipped from their original purposes of loyalty, respect, democracy, service, scholarship, and morality (AASCU, 2005; Shonrock, 1998).

Contemporary research suggests membership in fraternal organizations can expose students to negative aspects of group culture (Gregory, 2003). Highly visible instances of substance abuse and participation in illegal activities associated with fraternity/sorority membership have been highlighted through many studies (Bohner et al., 1998; Caron, Moskey, & Hovey, 2004; Claudill et al., 2006; Cokley et al., 2001; DeSimone, 2009; Foubert, Garner, & Thaxter, 2006; Nuwer, 1999; Park, Sher, Wood, & Krull, 2009; Riordan & Dana, 1998). Despite some of the negative outcomes associated with fraternity/sorority affiliation, new data suggest a change in recent trends.

The purpose of this study was to identify these recent developments and encourage additional research into the undergraduate fraternity/sorority experience. After exploring the literature surrounding the topics of alcohol abuse, hazing, sexual assault, diversity, cognitive development, and social capital and civic engagement, we conclude by identifying the implications of this research and offering recommendations for research and practice in student affairs. The topics or themes selected emerged as the most important issues facing fraternities and sororities after reviewing the most popular and relevant Web sites, journals, and books in student affairs and related disciplines. The vast majority of this research and commentary comes from peer-reviewed journals of the last 15 years. The order in which these topics appear was based on the researchers' view of their importance to the sustainability of fraternity/sorority life.

Review of Literature

Alcohol Abuse

The college years have become synonymous with experimentation and growth among traditional age students. For many, experimentation includes pushing the boundaries of safe and legal alcohol consumption (Caron et al., 2004). Caudill et al. (2006) reported that drinking was a normative element of fraternity/sorority culture. The stereotype of "drunken frat parties" has persisted as students who already have a higher propensity to drink heavily continue to join fraternities with heavy drinking reputations on campus, thus continuing the cycle (Juth, Smyth, Thompson, & Nodes, 2010). Fraternity/sorority membership has been consistently correlated with binge drinking, which is defined as consumption of five or more alcoholic beverages in a row (Larimer, Turner, Mallert, & Geisner, 2004; Riordan & Dana, 1998). Because the fraternity/sorority system has been associated with alcohol abuse, members of fraternal organizations typically have been used as participants in research on college drinking behaviors (McCabe et al., 2005; Workman, 2001).

DeSimone (2009) found fraternities were responsible for a considerable portion of campus activities or events at which alcohol is present and readily available to students. In his meta-analysis of Harvard College Alcohol Study results from 1993 to 2001, DeSimone found that substantially more fraternity/sorority-affiliated students reported alcohol intoxication than non-affiliated students. Fraternity/sorority members also reported higher incidents of risky and unsafe behaviors such as unprotected sex, vandalism, and driving while intoxicated because of excessive consumption of alcohol. Data were analyzed from 54,740 students representing 140 universities to determine whether fraternity membership was causally related to risky alcohol consumption (DeSimone, 2009).

Consistent with the results of the Harvard College Alcohol Study, DeSimone (2009) also found a strong correlation between fraternity/sorority membership and binge drinking. The self-selection of members into fraternities accounted for a significant portion of this correlation. In other words, students with pre-existing preferences towards drinking tended to join fraternities that facilitated this preference. DeSimone determined "fraternities affect drinking intensity, frequency, recency, as well as additional outcomes of drinking that are potentially harmful to the drinker and other individuals" (p. 349). DeSimone recommended college administrators intervene in fraternal affairs to combat the negative effects of fraternity/sorority membership on drinking behaviors. Alcohol-awareness campaigns, mandatory alcohol education training for new members, and harsher penalties and sanctions for alcohol-related violations on campus were just a few examples of these recommendations, already in place on many campuses.

In response to research demonstrating that heavy drinkers prior to college tend to increase drinking during college due to self-selection into fraternal organizations, Park, Sher, Wood, and Krull (2009) sought to characterize the mechanisms underlying the fraternal selection process. Park et al. (2009) studied the fraternal selection process with respect to personality and pre-college drinking, as well as the alcohol-conducive environmental factors fostered by fraternity/sorority influence. A total of 3,099 participants from the University of Missouri at Columbia were administered surveys based on personality traits and self-reported perceptions of

and experiences with alcohol during the summer before their freshmen year. The researchers followed participants through their first six semesters to determine the changes in drinking behavior and involvement in fraternal life. Park et al. determined that personality traits of impulsivity, extraversion, and neuroticism were commonly seen in heavy drinking fraternity/sorority students. They also established these traits were consistent with heightened alcohol misuse. Additionally, the researchers examined perceptions surrounding normative drinking habits among fraternity/sorority students, as well as the availability of alcohol to students. Park et al. noted the prevalence of bars placed near college campuses and the strategic marketing used to target college students. Younger fraternity/sorority students often became friends with upperclassmen members of these organizations who could purchase alcohol for them, and fraternities commonly sponsored social functions involving alcohol where age verification was not strictly enforced. These factors combined with predisposing personality traits and preconceived positive perceptions of alcohol use contributed significantly to the heightened tendency of alcohol misuse by members of fraternal organizations (Park et al., 2009).

Strano, Cuomo, and Venable (2004) also studied student perceptions of alcohol consumption. The researchers found students who perceived no disapproval from their close friends and those who were fraternity/sorority members were almost three times more likely to have engaged in binge drinking. These same students were two times as likely to binge drink more frequently than those who perceived friends' disapproval or were not members of fraternities or sororities. Despite the organizations students were a part of or whether binge drinking was the norm, the students' idea of positive results and the degree to which students viewed drinking as a risk predicted their drinking behavior (Strano et al., 2004). These observations indicated drinking behaviors might be related to membership in fraternal organizations.

In a similar study, reviewing the effect of fraternity/sorority membership on alcohol consumption, Barry (2007) found "members [of these organizations] drank in greater quantities and more frequently than did their non-fraternity/sorority counterparts…[and] fraternity members had the highest alcohol consumption rates, followed by sorority members, non-fraternity men, and non-sorority women" (p. 309). Furthermore, one-third of fraternity/sorority members admitted to being intoxicated at least once a week. The attitudes and beliefs about alcohol among fraternity/sorority members, however, were the most interesting reported findings. Members of fraternities and sororities were far more likely to assume their peers drank excessively; they perceived far less risk in consuming alcohol; they consistently acknowledged excessive drinking behaviors of others as opposed to their own and "40% of [the] members of these groups did not perceive their drinking behavior as problematic" (pp. 55-56). The evidence of alcohol abuse in the fraternal community was clearly correlated to membership. There is a larger context for this issue, however.

Pace and McGrath (2002) conducted a study to determine the prevalence of alcohol abuse in fraternal organizations compared to other student groups. Although membership in fraternities and sororities was hypothesized to predict a higher frequency of binge drinking, and though this hypothesis was partially supported, researchers found no significant differences between members of fraternities/sororities and students in volunteer organizations in a number of problematic behaviors associated with binge drinking. These binge drinkers included having trouble with authorities, damaging property, thinking they have an alcohol problem, being

arrested for driving under the influence (DUI) or driving while intoxicated (DWI), being taken advantage of sexually, taking advantage of another sexually, trying unsuccessfully to stop using, seriously trying to commit suicide, and being hurt or injured (p. 228). This study supported the hypothesis that differences between fraternity/sorority members and members of other student organizations may not be as distinctive as previously assumed (Pace & McGrath, 2002). Bruce and Keller (2007) examined fraternal organizations based on social norms theory and attempted to develop an approach to reduce alcohol abuse. By using marketing tools and presentations to educate fraternity/sorority members on the actual levels of drinking on campus, many fraternity/sorority affiliates in this study realized that they consumed alcohol far more frequently and in larger quantities than the "typical" student. In this case, the social norms theory approach was effective in altering both fraternity/sorority and other affiliation groups' perceptions of drinking behaviors.

The most significant shift in literature pertaining to alcohol abuse was that the attention to this issue has broadened. The target of this scrutiny has shifted from the fraternity/sorority system and individual chapters (Riordan & Dana, 1998), to general student involvement (Pace & McGrath, 2002), to specific groups, such as athletes, men in fraternities, and unaffiliated men (Strano et al., 2004), and to perceptions of social drinking norms in general, where fraternal organizations have an influence on how norms are perceived by other students (Barry, 2007; Bruce & Keller, 2007). It is important to note that all the literature reviewed suggested widespread normative changes to address alcohol abuse. Lastly, most of the recent literature reported that college-aged men in general, not just men in fraternities, not only abused alcohol more frequently, but encouraged other populations on campus to abuse alcohol as well (Barry, 2007; Pace & McGrath, 2002; Strano et al., 2004).

Hazing
College student hazing is a serious issue that has been widely addressed by policy makers. As of 2005, 44 states have enacted statutes making hazing illegal (Nuwer, 2005). In addition to prosecuting the perpetrators of hazing, some states charge students criminally for knowledge of such situations, especially if the incident causes harm to another student. As a result of student deaths linked to hazing, some states such as California are reclassifying their penalties from misdemeanors to felonies (Matt's Law, 2006).

Hazing is linked to creating dependencies on the group that further exacerbates and encourages a continuation of hazing practices in fraternal organizations (Keating et al., 2005). Overall, hazing practices preserve groupthink and its success requires the establishment of an exclusive social network, a goal well served by emphasizing the uniqueness of group membership and its social distinctiveness from those outside the group. Many group advisors have struggled to find ways to combat hazing activities. In general, hazing is extremely hard to prevent, and the consensus among college administrators on handling incidents of hazing is to "incorporate applicable state statutes into institutional policy" (Hennessy & Huson, 1998, p. 73). Unfortunately, hazing continues to be an issue facing fraternal organizations and current policies merely attempt to deter hazing activities.

Although hazing is mostly associated with collegiate social fraternities in the present day, it has actually played a role in other organizations within American society for generations (Lipkins,

2006; Nuwer, 1999). Countless instances of hazing have been reported in military organizations, high schools, sports teams, clubs, bands, camps, and even professional organizations (Allan & Madden, 2008). However, due to several high profile cases involving wrongful death of fraternity men, national attention and focus has been drawn to the hazing rituals of fraternal organizations on college campuses, bringing with it considerable criticism and attempted reforms (The Franklin Square Group, 2005; Cokley et al., 2001; Gregory, 2003). With the rising number of deaths occurring as a result of fraternity hazing rituals, researchers have studied the process of hazing in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the nationwide college phenomenon.

Spurred by the hazing-related death of a 17-year-old pledge of Theta Chi fraternity, Stephen Sweet (2004), a professor at New York State, applied symbolic interactionist theory to hazing rituals as a way to investigate this tradition. This theory is a sociological perspective that states people in groups gain shared meanings of culturally derived social matters created primarily through face-to-face social interactions. Sweet (2004) argued that hazing was not illogical, beyond reason, or the product of immaturity. He posited that hazing was the result of group-interaction processes that are linked with students' need for belonging, their isolation from other social relations on campus, and sub-cultural definitions that legitimize hazing events as a necessary component of fraternity initiation rites.

Sweet (2004) evaluated his theory by performing a study involving approximately 20 fraternity men in informal, unstructured interviews regarding the feelings and beliefs surrounding hazing activities. He found the source of hazing problems was not due to flawed, sadistic personalities or to intellectual inadequacies, as many had prematurely concluded, but rather it could be explained by the social phenomenon of symbolic interactionism and groupthink, or "Greekthink" as Nuwer (1999) dubbed it. Although Sweet's ground-breaking work offered an explanation of a social evil through a new perspective, his methods of data collection left room for criticism. Fraternal organizations are inherently secretive in nature and members are often reluctant to speak truthfully and openly about fraternity activities, which can create serious roadblocks for researchers. These criticisms notwithstanding, Sweet's (2004) work in the area of fraternal hazing casts a shadow of doubt on former assumptions and offers an explanation for which there was previously none.

The attitudes of fraternity/sorority members and non-member students should also be considered. According to Kimbrough (2002), although hazing is officially banned by all fraternal organizations, it is nonetheless a prevalent issue in these organizations' activities. One study of hazing analyzed how fraternity/sorority and non-member students would respond to a given hazing incident in which one student was force-fed alcohol, and another voluntarily consumed alcohol (Drout & Corsoro, 2003). Drout and Corsoro observed "the differential response to victimization that was voluntary and that which was forced is not at all surprising…both sets of students attributed similar levels of responsibility to the president and brother as perpetrators of the hazing incident" (2003, p. 541). Furthermore, sorority members and non-member students viewed the commitment to the initiation process and organizational obligation as more significant causal factors in bringing about the hazing event. In another study using a quantitative analysis, researchers determined that fraternity/sorority member beliefs were similar in regards to pledging and hazing (Cokley et al., 2001). Thus, hazing and pledging activities seem to be viewed similarly by fraternity/sorority members, except when asked to determine responsibility.

Although hazing has been reported among many organizations and peer groups for generations (Lipkins, 2006), recent hazing tragedies resulting in national media coverage have placed fraternities in the spotlight and spurred the creation of hazing laws (Drout & Corsoro, 2003; Hennessy & Huson, 1998; Sweet, 2004). Groupthink plays a significant role in these incidents (Sweet, 2004) and not surprisingly, fraternity and sorority members react similarly when faced with hazing scenarios (Cokley et al., 2001; Drout & Corsoro, 2003).

Sexual Assault

Recent studies have also linked fraternity culture to sexual assault. Foubert et al. (2006) conducted a study to examine more closely the link between fraternity culture and alcohol-related sexual encounters at a mid-sized public university in the Southeast. Specifically, the researchers examined the terms of consent in sexually intimate encounters involving the use of alcohol. Foubert and his colleagues divided 37 traditional-aged undergraduate fraternity men into three separate focus groups and performed a series of group interviews. Members from all 14 fraternities at the same university were represented in the focus groups. Overall, almost all participants described ambiguity in defining consent in alcohol-related sexual encounters. The study revealed most men relied on self-interpreted nonverbal signals and cues to determine a woman's willingness to engage in sexual activity, especially with women less familiar to them. A few of these nonverbal signals included a woman flirting with a man, remaining in close proximity or contact with a man, undressing in front of a man, and dancing with a man. Most men in this study admitted never specifically asking for consent because they either viewed it as too awkward to approach or a potential "moment killer" (Foubert et al., 2006). These men also described consent as being contextual. Some believed that if the man and woman were in a dating relationship, consent was assumed. Some also expressed the belief that if both parties had consumed alcohol, consent was unnecessary and no fault was placed on either individual for initiating sexual activity. It should be noted that these assumptions are false under most state laws and illustrate the need for additional education.

Foubert et al. (2006) also discussed potential rape preventative programming for fraternity men within the focus groups. Most men agreed that helpful rape prevention programs would involve actual rape stories rather than fictitious scenarios or role-play programming. They believed that hearing from rape victims themselves would be beneficial in gaining different perspectives on the issue. Anderson and Whiston's (2005) meta-analysis of the effectiveness of these and other similar programs concluded that such programs could increase rape knowledge and decrease myth acceptance. Based on this suggestion, Foubert et al. (2006) recommended this style of rape prevention programming be implemented among male fraternal organizations and tested for desired outcome effects.

According to Bohner et al. (1998), rape myths are prejudiced beliefs that serve to excuse the rapist and blame the victim. Examples of such beliefs are that flirty women are promiscuous, women like men to be sexually aggressive, and that women secretly desire to be dominated. Foubert (2000) implemented an all-male peer education rape prevention program at a Mid-Atlantic public university with 23 on-campus fraternities in an attempt to determine whether all-male peer programs would have a significant effect on fraternity men's beliefs regarding rape myths and sexual assault. He found that this style of rape prevention programming lowered

men's likelihood of committing rape for a full academic year as well as decreased men's beliefs in rape myths.

Locke and Mahalik (2005) examined masculinity norms among college males relating to sexual assault. They found men who used alcohol problematically and conformed to masculine norms were more likely to be perpetrators of sexual assault. The masculine norms identified were the belief in being a "playboy," scorning homosexual male activity, being dominant, aggressive, violent risk-takers, and believing that women should be subservient to men. They reported that men's beliefs and behaviors about masculinity norms were the most powerful predictor of sexual violence (Locke & Mahalik). This is consistent with Foubert et al. (2006), who found fraternity men exhibited more traditional beliefs toward women and embrace rape-supportive attitudes. Fraternity men were also more likely than their unaffiliated peers to have access to large quantities of alcohol and display one or more of the above-mentioned masculine norms. These individual characteristics influencing rape-supportive mentalities coupled with the fact that fraternity males are exposed to groupthink and social situations involving alcohol show fraternity men have a higher likelihood of becoming involved in sexual assault or rape incidents on campuses.

Some argue "fraternities have been identified as organizations that often serve to reinforce rape-supportive attitudes and behaviors because of their traditional views of masculinity and their endorsement of rape myths" (Choate, 2003, p. 167). Fraternity members may be able to combat this problem by participating in rape prevention programming. Research showed some of these interventions may be effective (Anderson & Whiston, 2005). Choate (2003) suggested the use of a model to recruit men who oppose violence, which "incorporates a socio-cultural approach to prevention by emphasizing the gendered nature of violence…to redefine male and female relationships in an equitable manner" (p. 168).

The psychology of sexual assault is a complex issue. Issues of consent, alcohol abuse, violence and stereotypes about women play important roles. If fraternity men were to incorporate elements of this model and others into their educational processes, it may help curtail some of the traditional views of masculinity, promote positive relationships with women, and in turn help reduce sexual assaults.

Diversity
Prior to the 1960s, the prevalent college student demographic was White male. Racial exclusion and racism was a dominant practice among White fraternal organizations (Hughey, 2007). Today, colleges and universities are far more diverse than when fraternal organizations were first established. Unfortunately, many groups still lack significant racial/ethnic diversity.

As the campus demographics change, Bocshini and Thompson (1998) project the traditional-aged White student will become the minority on many campuses in the next 15 years. Incorporating students from various backgrounds and cultures can broaden fraternal organizations' educational and learning potential, as well as viability. Inducting individuals from different ethnic and racial backgrounds into fraternities and sororities will allow these organizations to continue to flourish. Without such diversity, fraternal organizations may struggle to exist in the future.

Historically Black organizations have had a significant positive effect on Black students. McClure (2006) suggested fraternities not only connect their memberships to the campus and to Black history, but also function in the creation and maintenance of social networks that connect members to each other and to society. Furthermore, members report improved levels of morale, self-esteem, political efficacy, and community orientation as well as lower levels of alienation, apathy, and social withdrawal. In addition, Black organizations have improved the persistence of African American students, increased academic performance, and have been essential in promoting cross-racial membership in fraternal organizations (Harper, 2007).

There has been a proliferation of literature pertaining to White and Black fraternal organizations in the past 15 years. On the other hand, Asian Americans have been overlooked. During the same time period, Asian American student populations have grown slowly on college campuses (Park, 2008). As the population of these students has grown, so too have their fraternal organizations. Their presence has increased on historically White campuses.

Park identified inherent elements of the Panhellenic system that subtly discouraged Asian American women from joining. In her study, some of the same women who were critical in their assessment of the uneven distribution of women of color in fraternal organizations defended recruitment as an open system. The participants in the study suggested the reason why sororities were not more diverse was because the decision to join was an individual choice. The "notions of rush [sic] as a structured and institutionalized transaction of insider knowledge and privilege" (p. 116) were never acknowledged. Instead, the women in this study claimed the women of color were at fault for not choosing to go participate in formal recruitment. This dynamic suggested how the recruitment process for fraternal organizations may deter people of color from joining.

Diversity in fraternal organizations was not addressed in depth until recently. Early studies on diversity in fraternal organizations were rare and served as a quiet reminder that the demographic make-up of college campuses was changing (Boschini & Thompson, 1998). Before 2000, the majority of literature focused on White members of fraternities and sororities. During the last 10 years, a proliferation of studies have been conducted on Black fraternal organizations (Hughey, 2007; McClure, 2006). In the last five to seven years, other underrepresented groups have been the subject of inquiry (Park, 2008). All of the literature pertaining to diversity in fraternal organizations stressed the importance of integrating diversity into the mission of fraternities and sororities as a means to continue their existence on college campuses (Boschini & Thompson, 1998; Hughey, 2007; Park, 2008; McClure, 2006).

Cognitive Development
Research on the influence of fraternal organization membership on student development was another major theme found in the literature. Pike (2000), for example, examined the relationships among the backgrounds, membership, involvement, and cognitive development of college students using a causal model of college effects. He found fraternity/sorority students reported higher levels of social involvement and gains than non-affiliated students. He also concluded fraternity/sorority students have higher levels of "academic involvement, integration of college experiences … [and] gains in math and science reasoning than expected" (p. 134). Pike also discovered the unique effects of fraternal affiliation were more pronounced for college

experiences than for cognitive development. Membership was directly related to students' social involvement and integration of college experiences, and indirectly related to gains in those general abilities associated with cognitive development. Lastly, Pike concluded the relationships between students' college experiences and cognitive development differed depending on the element of cognitive development being examined. For example, general cognitive abilities were directly related to academic and social involvement, but academic and social involvement was indirectly related to gains in mathematical and scientific reasoning. This research indicated cognitive outcomes did not necessarily have to be negative. Fraternity/sorority membership was related to higher levels of social involvement, and involvement in turn, led to higher levels of cognitive ability.

Pascarella, Flowers, and Whitt (2001) examined the effects of fraternity/sorority affiliation on yearly measures of cognitive outcomes for men and women. They found "broad-based negative effects of fraternity/sorority affiliation on standardized measures of cognitive development during the first year of college…[but] the negative effects of fraternity or sorority membership were much less pronounced during the second or third years of college" (p. 297). Furthermore, the researchers found differences in cognitive outcomes by race; specifically fraternity/sorority membership had a large negative effect on the cognitive development in White men during their first year of membership, whereas as men of different ethnicities experienced positive gains in cognitive outcomes. These negative results were surprising especially since involvement is typically equated with academic success.

Although there are many indicators of cognitive performance, grade point average serves as an excellent indicator of cognitive ability. DeBard, Lake, and Binder (2006) explored the impact fraternity/sorority membership had on first-year students' grades. A number of outcomes were observed as a result of this study. Non-sorority women achieved GPAs that were significantly higher than predicted. Sorority women's actual first-year GPA matched their predicted GPA of 2.70 but first-year fraternity men did not achieve their predicted results.

Further, these researchers found men who joined fraternal organizations in their first semester did not meet the predicted standard but men who joined in their second semester achieved higher levels of academic performance than expected (DeBard et al., 2006). In addition, although non-affiliated women outperformed sorority members, retention rates for sorority women were much higher than non-sorority women. With respect to their male counterparts, non-fraternity men significantly outperformed fraternity men academically. However, the retention rates for fraternity men were significantly higher than for non-affiliated men. These trends indicated students who defer membership to at least their second semester, have a significantly higher opportunity for academic success.

Little cognitive development research has been conducted on Black fraternities and sororities. The research that has been conducted on socially driven outcomes of Black fraternities and sororities has led some college administrators to consider eliminating them from campus. However, Harper's (2007) work on the cognitive development of Black students on predominantly White campuses sheds important new light on this issue. Harper found Black students were more likely to experience higher degrees of leadership development and perceived the value of leadership skills more positively than uninvolved and unaffiliated students.

In addition, Harper (2007) noted Black students who were members of fraternities felt self-motivated to provide the missing minority perspective, and felt some responsibility for educating their White peers and instructors on issues related to their race and other people of color when they were underrepresented in the classroom. Black students also felt the need to actively participate in class because they were representing their organizations (Harper). The Black students in the study also noted feeling a sense of collective responsibility. Specifically, the impact of individual grades on the overall success of the chapter, as well as the importance of being a responsible role model for other Black students, was repeatedly mentioned throughout the interviews. This sentiment was largely expressed because of the negative stigmas associated with their membership in Black fraternal organizations (Harper).

The literature on the cognitive development of members of fraternal organizations during the past 20 years has faced significant challenges. Initially the literature focused on the skills that have been directly or indirectly affected by fraternity/sorority membership (Pascarella et al., 2001; Pike, 2000). Increasingly, the literature has focused on formal evaluations of cognitive development, such as grade point average. Researchers have also incorporated increasingly diverse participants in their studies and have discussed issues facing specific and underrepresented populations (DeBard et al., 2006; Harper, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2001).

Social Capital and Civic Engagement
Whipple and Sullivan (1998) identified the most important positive effect of fraternity/sorority membership as social capital. The term social capital refers to social connections and social cohesion, the "glue" that holds societies together. In other words, social capital includes the networks, norms, and trust that allow individuals to work together for collective goals (Green & Brock, 2005). Fraternal organizations share the collective values of service, civic engagement, and volunteerism. Consequently, members regularly volunteer their time in service-related activities. Green and Brock (2005) found individual interactions were as beneficial as group interactions through organizational membership in terms of increasing "generalized trust, feelings of connectedness, [and] expectations of mutual aid" (p. 2). Both forms of interaction resulted in different beneficial outcomes. Membership in formal organizations led to increased exposure to diverse perspectives, which in turn created a broader worldview and a greater tolerance of differences (Green & Brock, 2005).

Wang and Graddy (2008) determined that charitable behavior is directly related to civic engagement. The researchers found students who volunteered, participated in organizations, and had a more developed social networking system were more likely than their peers to donate time and money to secular and/or religious causes. Field (2003) also determined that there was a positive correlation between civic engagement and a commitment to lifelong learning.

From his reading of the research, Gregory (2003) concludes that students who joined fraternities and sororities have greater tendencies to engage in civic activities which positively affected their persistence in their education. He also suggested that involvement in community activities carry over after graduation as affiliated alumni reported higher levels of participation in service-oriented activities and greater financial contributions to their alma maters. Gregory also

concludes that fraternity and sorority members were generally more satisfied with their college social experience.

Undergraduate fraternity/sorority members are more likely than their unaffiliated peers to be involved in multiple campus organizations, feel more connected to campus, exhibit leadership skills, and to be more satisfied with their social development throughout their college years and beyond (Green & Brock, 2005; Gregory, 2003). Alumni of fraternal organizations are more likely to volunteer and to financially contribute to charitable organizations (Gregory, 2003; Wang & Graddy, 2008). These factors taken as a whole suggest that alumni who have participated in fraternities and sororities are more likely to remain involved in positives ways with their alma maters and their communities.

Considerations and Recommendations

This review uncovered some persistent problems, stigma, and opportunities for further development that fraternities and sororities will continue to need to address. The following considerations and recommendations were grounded in the contemporary research reviewed for this study.

1. Some of the most current research suggests members of fraternal organizations do not abuse alcohol differently than members of on-campus organizations. Incorporate these positive research results into media campaigns to modify the fraternal culture.

Alcohol abuse is a persistent issue student affairs professionals and inter/national fraternal leaders have been attempting to address for years. Research reviewed in this study showed fraternity and sorority members still abuse alcohol beverages. However, the overwhelming media and socialization process in becoming a fraternity or sorority member inundates students with false notions of social drinking norms. This exacerbates the drinking problem in fraternities and sororities.

Fraternal leaders and student affairs professionals should address the cultural context of these groups so that the behavior of fraternity members more closely emulates the goals espoused by the fraternity. As Arnold and Kuh (1992) stated, this is "the greatest disappointment…[,] and those who choose to support them, have not taken action" (p. 14). If fraternal organizations intend to remain on college campuses, it is absolutely necessary for fraternity/sorority students, alumni, advisors, and student affairs professionals to form a partnership in eliminating these exaggerated social norms.

2. Create grass-roots educational programs to combat hazing and sexual assault for members of fraternal organizations.

Besides alcohol abuse, hazing and sexual assault seem to be the most prevalent theme found in the literature during the past 15 years. Hazing continues to be an issue despite the formal statements all fraternal organizations have against it – not to mention the laws that exist in a wide variety of states to deter this detrimental behavior. New research suggests certain types of

violence prevention programs do work and they should be incorporated into the risk management programs for all fraternal organizations.

3. **Fraternity and sorority members need to not only consider the diversity of their own membership, but the structures of the fraternity/sorority system, including the membership intake or recruitment processes, for indications of racial or ethnic exclusion and alienation.**

The world is changing quickly, and the college campus – an increasingly racial and ethnic blender – is an environment that needs to react to keep up. The majority of fraternity/sorority members do not intend to be racist, or even elitist. In many cases, the system or process of becoming a member of a fraternal organization has deterred those who might benefit from or contribute to these organizations from joining. American society is increasingly multicultural. Colleges and universities face increasing demands to prepare graduates who can live and work effectively in a global society. The issue of incorporating diversity into fraternal organizations' missions is a controversial and a difficult issue to tackle. However, considering the increasingly diverse environment in which fraternal organizations operate, it is essential that fraternity/sorority members take the initiative to reform practices that make underrepresented groups feel unwelcome or alienated.

4. Fraternal membership recruitment could be restricted to either the second semester of the first-year or the second year to reduce the negative effects on cognitive development and academic success.

College campuses are changing, and as increasing demands for accountability have surfaced, administrators have responded to these pressures by renewing an emphasis on the core functions of higher education: teaching and learning (Gregory, 2003, Pascarella et al., 2001). There is no question student organizations can provide appropriate learning environments. Fraternal organizations should focus on improving the academic success and persistence of their members. It is also important to understand the implications of this research, namely, that fraternal membership does not have to effect cognitive development negatively. As the literature has shown, student involvement is typically equated with higher academic performance. Gains are made after the first year and initiation. If this is the case, then positive chapter cultures must be having an effect on students' cognitive abilities.

5. Civic engagement activities should focus on those issues that have the greatest negative impact on fraternity/sorority members.

Faculty advisors, student affairs professionals, and the fraternal leadership at the inter/national level should help members of campus-based chapters refine or expand their volunteer, service-learning, civic engagement, and philanthropic activities to focus on the issues of substance abuse, homelessness, and violence against women. The logical extension of the most recent research on social norming theory, service learning, college student drinking, and sexual assault would suggest that greater empathy, sensitivity, and behavioral change on these issues might be created if members of fraternal organizations were given an opportunity to confront them in some concrete, time extended, and meaningful way. Working with real victims of substance abuse,

homelessness, and violence may provide a much more powerful learning opportunity than traditional lecture series or educational programs.

Conclusion

Fraternal organizations provide an important contribution to the lives of their student members, create lifelong friendships, add value to the lives of their alumni, and make many positive contributions to their host institutions. Some of the founding principles of fraternal organizations include: "an appreciation of learning, a commitment to lead, an ethic of service, a love for one's brothers and sisters, and the belief in democratic ideals" (Jackson & Harless, 1997, p. 23). These ideal characteristics align with the national movement in higher education to provide better learning communities for students. However, there is an ever-increasing gap between the founding principles of fraternities and sororities and the reality of their current state. A return to the founding principles should be an important focus for all fraternal organizations in the future, not only to bolster a declining public reputation, but also to gain perspective on the originating purpose of fraternity/sorority life.

Literature from the past 15 years on fraternal membership has clearly presented some disturbing issues. Although a significant amount of research has been conducted, more studies would be beneficial in helping to identify causational trends rather than correlational relationships. More research needs to be conducted in the areas of diversity, normative thinking, and personality-related explanations for continued substance abuse in fraternity/sorority self-selection. Formal recruitment, as a selection process, needs to be studied as well. Most importantly, however, an emphasis needs to be placed on research regarding the effectiveness of educational programming such as rape prevention, hazing intervention, and substance abuse prevention. In addition, it would be useful to discover whether the presence of peer prevention programs reduces not only the alcohol consumption for members of fraternal organizations, but by extension, all students on campus (Bruce & Keller, 2007).

Some campus administrators have "solved" these problems by banishing fraternal organizations from college campuses altogether. This is not a proactive, effective, or reasonable solution. It is apparent through a review of the research conducted in the field that many of the problems lie with the underlying issues of individuals themselves, not the fraternal organization. Fraternities and sororities simply provide an outlet for already formed negative habits and perceptions. Fraternity/sorority members, their alumni, and inter/national advisors cannot solve these problems single-handedly. Student affairs professionals, other campus administrators, and community leaders can help provide the guidance and necessary support to facilitate the transition away from negative trends and toward original founding principles. Fraternal organizations have a long and distinguished history in society and have become a hallmark in the American higher education system. Although it is challenging for a system so steeped in history and tradition to change, it is necessary, now more than ever, for these organizations to adapt to meet the needs of a changing world.

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