

HOW AND WHY: MOVING FORWARD TO PROMOTE HIGH QUALITY, PURPOSEFUL RESEARCH ON THE FRATERNAL EXPERIENCE

GUEST EDITORIAL

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This issue of *Oracle* includes five articles meant to spark discussion on how professionals working with fraternities and sororities can enhance their work. First, Long and Snowden explored educational gains fraternity/sorority officers make in areas such as sense of belonging, interpersonal and intrapersonal competence, diverse interactions, and self-worth. Second, Warber, Taylor, and Makstaller investigated intergroup contact between fraternity/sorority members and non-members - reminding educators of the social power of in-group versus out-of-group affiliation in shaping perceptions and behavior. Third, Brosi, Foubert, Bannon, and Yandell examined sorority member exposure to pornography and its effects on bystander intervention and rape myth acceptance. Fourth, Tindall, Hernandez, and Hughey illuminated perceptions Black sorority women hold of historically Black sororities, revealing sources of tension and divisiveness. Finally, Vetter studied fraternity/sorority thriving across a variety of student residences.

This issue of *Oracle* also has the potential to provoke dialogue about “how” we conduct research on the fraternity/sorority experience – issues of quality and focus and “why” we conduct research on the fraternity/experience – issues of purpose. First, “the how:” how we conduct research is about our approach to research design. For example, if the study is quantitative, to what extent are the findings representative of and generalizable to the population being sampled? What were the researchers’ intentions in selecting a particular sample for inclusion in the study while excluding others? If the study is qualitative, how well do the findings represent the voices of the study’s participants? To what extent are criteria for trustworthiness such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability met in the study? Next, “the why:” why we conduct research is about determining what is relevant for our field and ultimately is a reflection of our values and purpose.

For example, as educators and as researchers, we should ask ourselves what might prompt researchers to intentionally select sorority women for a study on women’s bystander intervention and rape myth acceptance? (“the how”) Where might there be a clear rationale for selecting sorority women for such research? Conversely, where might out-of-group perceptions or biases exist that lead researchers to select this particular student population? Perhaps more importantly, is this study about sorority women’s pornography use and resultant attitudes toward sexual assault or is it about all women? The Brosi, Foubert, Bannon, and Yandell article in this issue of *Oracle* indirectly challenges us to consider the role women play in being complicit toward acts of violence against women. (“the why”) Similarly, Tindall, Hernandez, and Hughey shed light on the ways in which stereotypes and perceptions of Black women in historically Black sororities create a divisive culture. I cite these two articles in particular because they prompt new conversations about issues we should be attending to in our work and research as educators. In addition to addressing the “how” and “why,” research on the fraternal experience also should promote new considerations that raise questions we may not be asking as a field or perhaps are not exploring adequately. Moving forward, it is imperative for all educa-

tors interested and invested in the fraternal movement, whether from a practice-oriented or scholarly perspective, to consider the how, the why, and the promotion of new ideas behind research on the fraternity/sorority experience. As you read through this issue of *Oracle*, I encourage you to consider the following questions:

- How are these findings relevant to my own work with fraternity/sorority members? What implications for practice might I suggest to use this research at my institution/in my organization?
- Where do limitations exist in “the how” of the research presented in this issue? In what ways is “the how” of these articles strong?
- Where do limitations exist in “the why” of the research presented in this issue? In what ways is “the why” of these articles particularly strong?
- What might these findings suggest for the future of research on and practice with fraternity/sorority members?

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