

THE MORE YOU PUT INTO IT, THE MORE YOU GET OUT OF IT: THE EDUCATIONAL GAINS OF FRATERNITY/SORORITY OFFICERS

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The purpose of this study was to determine if undergraduate fraternity and sorority members who serve as chapter officers report different experiences and gains compared to non-officers. The researchers sampled 3,008 fraternity members and 3,745 sorority members from the aggregate results of the institutions that used the AFA/EBI Fraternity/Sorority Assessment during the 2009-2010 academic year. Differences by leadership experience were tested using Cliff's delta. The researchers found significant differences in the development of chapter officers and non-officers for eight of nine educational gains measures with chapter officers reporting greater gains in these areas. Chapter officers were also more likely to be satisfied with their fraternity/sorority experience than non-officers. There was no statistically significant difference in the alcohol use of officers and non-officers.

Most fraternal organizations promote the development of leadership skills as a benefit of joining a fraternity or sorority (Sermersheim, 1996). Through personal development programs, such as Alpha Gamma Delta's (n.d.) *The Alpha Gamma Delta Experience*, Beta Theta Pi's (n.d.) *Men of Principle*, and Sigma Phi Epsilon's (n.d.) *Balanced Man Program*, fraternal organizations try to develop stronger leaders and better citizens. Fraternities and sororities also offer a variety of other development opportunities, such as attending conferences and serving in positions of responsibility. These experiences may be useful in preparing undergraduate members for their future careers (Kelley, 2008). Despite the efforts by fraternal organizations, it is unclear if only members who serve in positions of responsibility experience gains in leadership skills or if all members benefit from the fraternal experience.

The researchers of the current study sought to compare the experiences and gains of chapter officers and non-officers concerning educational gains, satisfaction, and alcohol use. Educational gains were defined as members' growth in abilities, such as personal development skills, interpersonal skills, and leadership skills, as a

result of the fraternal experience. The researchers found significant differences between officers and non-officers in educational gains and satisfaction. There was no statistically significant difference in the alcohol use of officers and non-officers. The results of the study have implications for professionals and advisors who work with undergraduate fraternal organizations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on the leadership experiences of fraternity and sorority members has primarily focused on alcohol use (Cashin, Presley, & Meilman, 1998; Fairlie, DeJong, Stevenson, Lavigne, & Wood, 2010; Gurie, 2002) and the differences in leadership practices of chapter officers (Adams & Keim, 2000; DiChiara, 2009; Snyder, 1992; Williams, 2002). Research on the alcohol use of leaders in fraternal organizations has shown mixed results. One study reported that fraternity leaders consumed more alcohol per week than general members (Cashin et al.) and another study reported the opposite (Gurie, 2002). In a follow-up study to the work of Cashin et al., Fairlie and her colleagues found no difference in the alcohol use of fraternity and

sorority members by leadership experience. The authors attributed the finding to the single-institution sample and suggested alcohol use may be variable across institutions. The authors recommended that additional research explore the differences in alcohol-related behaviors of officers and general members.

Much of the research on the leadership practices of fraternity and sorority officers has used the concepts described in *The Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) as a conceptual framework. Kouzes and Posner (2008) proposed that leaders exhibit universal practices that include modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. Theoretically, the authors suggested that assisting students in improving their behaviors in these five dimensions improves their overall effectiveness as leaders and followers. The practices of student leaders can be assessed using the Student Leadership Practices Inventory (SLPI; Kouzes & Posner, 2006).

Adams and Keim (2000) used the SLPI to study the effectiveness and leadership practices of chapter presidents by gender at three institutions in the Midwest. The researchers found few differences in the leadership practices of fraternity and sorority leaders. Sorority presidents in the study were more comfortable in challenging the process and enabling others to act compared to fraternity leaders. In terms of effectiveness, fraternity leaders tended to overrate their capabilities and sorority leaders underrated their abilities. In a follow-up study at a single institution, DiChiara (2009) studied the difference in leadership practices of fraternity and sorority members by organization and governing council. DiChiara found no difference in the leadership practices of respondents by organization, meaning leaders of organizations within the same council tend to behave in similar manners. In respect to governing councils, the researcher found that respondents who were members of all-men's organizations were more competitive

and showed less respect for others compared to respondents who were members of all-women's organizations. The researcher suggested the differences might be due to gender rather than council differences. The study did not differentiate between the leadership experiences of respondents. The researcher suggested that future researchers explore the differences in the leadership experience of chapter officers and members who never served in an established leadership position.

Much of the research on the leadership experiences of fraternity and sorority members was conducted at single institutions (DiChiara, 2009; Fairlie et al., 2010; Sermersheim, 1996). Furthermore, few studies explored the outcomes of serving in a leadership role. The present study sought to fill the void in the extant literature by comparing the outcomes of chapter officers and general members using a national dataset. Specifically, the researchers asked: Do members of fraternal organizations who serve as chapter officers report different gains in learning outcomes, different levels of alcohol use, and overall satisfaction with fraternal life compared to their peers who never served as an officer in their organization?

The conceptual framework for this study was the concept of communities of practice. Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) described communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). The concept is based on the premise that people can learn from one another by sharing ideas and modeling behavior (social learning theory). The structure of communities of practice can range from informal (unrecognized) to formal (institutionalized). Wenger et al. described soccer moms and dads sharing ideas about parenting as an example of an unrecognized community of practice.

Concerning the fraternity/sorority advising

profession, advisors discussing programming ideas using the Association of Fraternal Leadership & Values' Twitter feed, #GreekChat, would be considered an unrecognized community of practice. The concept of communities of practice has also been applied to group learning within the student affairs profession (Blimling, 2001; Saunder & Cooper, 2009; Smith & Rogers, 2005). In fraternities and sororities, communities of practice exist in the context of organization and council executive board meetings, officer transition retreats, and officer roundtables. While unrecognized by fraternity and sorority members as communities of practice, these engagements enable officers to learn from one another by sharing ideas and suggesting best practices. Desired behavior may also be reinforced in these contexts through praise and peer support. Since non-officers are often excluded from these engagements, one may suspect that officers experience greater educational gains as a result of their fraternity or sorority membership than non-officers.

METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Instrument

Data for this study were drawn from the aggregate results of the institutions that utilized the AFA/EBI Fraternity/Sorority Assessment survey during the 2009-2010 academic year. Educational Benchmarking, Inc. developed the survey in partnership with the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors. The instrument measured demographic characteristics and educational gains in terms of sense of belonging, diverse interactions, interpersonal relationship skills, interpersonal competence, leadership skills, personal development skills, healthy behaviors, self-worth, intrapersonal competence, collaboration, principled dissent, and effective chapter leadership. The survey also measured student satisfaction in terms of housing, safety and security, and fraternity/sorority programming (AFA/EBI Assessment

Committee, 2010).

Overview of the Dataset

The dataset consisted of responses from 9,462 participants attending 16 predominantly White, four-year institutions across the United States. The dataset was not nationally representative and primarily included students attending large, public, research institutions. Since most fraternal organizations only allow initiated members to hold a position of leadership, respondents who indicated they had been members of their organization for less than two semesters were removed from the analysis. After controlling for missing values using list-wise deletion, the final sample consisted of 3,008 (44.5%) fraternity members and 3,745 (55.5%) sorority members. Approximately 30% of the respondents were sophomores, 34% were juniors, and 30% were seniors or older. About 84% of the sample identified as White/Caucasian.

Selection of Data and Variables

The variables of interest included two grouping variables and 13 outcome variables. The grouping variables were *Officer* and *Organization*. *Officer* was a dichotomous variable based on the chapter leadership experience of the respondents (Non-officer, Officer) and *Organization* was a dichotomous variable for the type of fraternal organization (Fraternity, Sorority). The outcome variables included measures of educational gains, alcohol use, and satisfaction.

Educational gains

Nine measures of educational gains were studied: Sense of Belonging, Diverse Interactions, Interpersonal Relationship Skills, Interpersonal Competence, Leadership Skills, Personal Development Skills, Healthy Behaviors, Self-Worth, and Intrapersonal Competence. The factors were based on questions that asked respondents to report to what extent their fraternity/sorority experience enabled them to develop a particular skill. The response options

ranged from: 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Extremely*).

Alcohol use

Two measures assessed the alcohol use of respondents. The first measure was the reported frequency of alcohol consumption per week. The response options were: "I do not consume alcohol," "Once per week or less," "Two to three times per week," "Almost every day," and "Every day." The second measure, *Binge Drinking*, was a dichotomous variable that represented the prevalence of excessive alcohol use. Binge drinking is commonly defined as consuming five or more alcoholic drinks per sitting for males and four or more drinks per sitting for females (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, & Lee, 2000); however, because of design limitations, the researchers of the current study defined binge drinking as consuming five or more drinks per sitting for all participants. The measure was derived from a question that prompted respondents to report how many drinks they typically consumed per sitting. The response options were "Do not consume alcohol," "1-2 drinks," "3-4 drinks," "5-6 drinks," "7-8 drinks," and "More than 8 drinks." Respondents who indicated they did not consume alcohol were removed from the analysis. The other response options were collapsed into two categories: (1) Consumed between 1 and 4 drinks per sitting and (2) Consumed 5 or more drinks per sitting.

Satisfaction

Differences in satisfaction were assessed by two measures. The first measure was the factor *Overall Satisfaction with Fraternity/Sorority Experience*. The factor had the same response categories as the educational gains measures. The second measure of satisfaction was *Anticipated Alumni Involvement*. It can be posited that students who are more satisfied with their experience are more likely to be involved post-graduation (Gaier, 2005). Anticipated alumni involvement was measured using a question that asked respondents: "Do you plan to be involved in your fraternity/sorority (locally, re-

gionally, and/or nationally) after graduation?" The response categories were "Will definitely be involved," "Will likely be involved," "Will likely not be involved," and "Will definitely not be involved." For analytical purposes, the variable was dichotomized (Does not anticipate involvement, Anticipates involvement).

Statistical Approach

Student affairs researchers have criticized the practice of analyzing ordinal-based outcomes assessments using statistical procedures designed for continuous variables (Romano, Kromrey, Coraggio, & Skowronek, 2006). Many national outcome assessments, such as the National Study of Student Engagement, are based on Likert-type scales that are ordinal in nature. While procedures designed for continuous variables, such as the student's *t*-test and the analysis of variance, are robust, they are not as efficient as ordinal methods when procedural assumptions do not hold (Hess & Kromrey, 2004; Kromrey & Hogarty, 1998). The data produced by the AFA/EBI Fraternity/Sorority Assessment are ordinal in scale. An appropriate ordinal method for analyzing the data is the use of the dominance statistic *d* (Cliff, 1993, 1996a).

The dominance statistic *d*, also known as Cliff's delta, is defined as the probability that scores from one group are higher than the scores of another group, minus the reverse probability. The authors of the current study perceived the advantage of Cliff's delta to be the statistic's dual role as a test statistic for inferential analyses and a measure of effect size. As an effect size measure, the statistic represents the degree of non-overlap between two distributions. The magnitude of *d* ranges from 0 (distributions are identical) to 1 (distributions are different). The sign of the value indicates the direction of dominance (Cliff, 1996b).

The researchers assessed the difference in the experiences of officers and general members by conducting dominance analyses for the outcome measures. An overall analysis and separate

TABLE 1*Differences in Educational Gains, Alcohol Use, and Satisfaction by Leadership Experience*

	Non-officer (<i>n</i> = 1,446)		Officer (<i>n</i> = 5,307)				
Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Educational Gains</i>							
Sense of Belonging	5.98	1.17	6.23	1.00	.118	6.20	<.001
Diverse Interactions	5.47	1.39	5.72	1.24	.106	6.25	<.001
Interpersonal Relationship Skills	5.96	1.11	6.22	0.92	.138	8.14	<.001
Interpersonal Competence	5.41	1.27	5.82	1.06	.190	11.00	<.001
Leadership Skills	5.05	1.49	5.88	1.10	.340	20.23	<.001
Personal Development Skills	5.09	1.45	5.62	1.19	.222	12.90	<.001
Healthy Behaviors	5.54	1.47	5.59	1.36	.001	0.03	.973
Self-Worth	5.71	1.22	6.08	0.99	.184	10.74	<.001
Intrapersonal Competence	5.57	1.36	5.96	1.14	.171	10.09	<.001
<i>Alcohol Use</i>							
Frequency of Alcohol Use	1.51	0.57	1.52	0.55	.010	0.60	.551
Binge Drinking	1.33	0.47	1.35	0.48	.016	1.05	.295
<i>Satisfaction</i>							
Overall Satisfaction with Fraternity/Sorority Experience	5.81	1.28	6.16	1.07	.173	10.34	<.001
Anticipated Alumni Involvement	1.66	0.47	1.81	0.39	.148	10.84	<.001

Note: Positive values of *d* correspond to higher ratings for officers and negative values correspond to higher ratings for non-officers. Statistical significance and practical significance were set at the .05 and .10 levels, respectively. Differences that are both statistically and practically significant are in bold.

analyses for fraternities and sororities were conducted using SAS 9.0 and a macro developed by Hogarty and Kromrey (1999). Effect sizes greater than .10 were deemed practically significant.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 presents the results of the overall analysis of the differences in educational gains, alcohol use, and satisfaction by leadership experience. Compared to respondents who never held a leadership position within their organization, officers reported greater gains for all of the educational gains measures except for the Healthy Behaviors factor. The greatest differences existed for Leadership Skills ($d = .340$), Personal Development Skills ($d = .222$), and Interpersonal Competence ($d = .190$). There was no statistically significant difference by leadership experience for the Healthy Behaviors factor ($d = .001, p > .05$).

A difference by leadership experience was also found for the satisfaction measures. Officers rated the Overall Satisfaction with Fraternity/Sorority Experience factor higher than general members ($d = .173, p < .001$) and were more likely to anticipate being involved post-graduation ($d = .148, p < .001$).

The researchers found no difference in the alcohol use of respondents by leadership experience. On average, both officers and non-officers tended to consume alcohol one to three times per week. Of the respondents who reported they consumed alcohol, 33% of non-officers and 35% of officers reported binge drinking. The results of the analysis by fraternity and sorority membership revealed further differences in the experiences of officers and general members (see Table 2 and Table 3).

Compared to fraternity members who never served in a leadership role within their organization, officers were more likely to report greater gains in Diverse Interactions, Interpersonal Relationship Skills, Interpersonal Competence, Leadership Skills, Personal Development Skills,

Self-Worth, and Intrapersonal Competence as a result of their fraternity experience. There was no statistically significant difference for Healthy Behaviors. The difference for Sense of Belonging was statistically significant, but trivial ($d < .10$).

For women's fraternal organizations, officers reported greater gains compared to general members for Sense of Belonging, Interpersonal Relationship Skills, Interpersonal Competence, Leadership Skills, Personal Development Skills, Self-Worth, and Intrapersonal Competence. The difference for Healthy Behaviors was non-significant. The difference for Diverse Interactions was statistically significant but trivial ($d < .10$).

In terms of satisfaction, the results of the analysis by fraternity or sorority membership reveal similar findings as the results of the overall analysis. Respondents who served in a leadership role were more satisfied with their experience and were more likely to anticipate being involved post-graduation compared to respondents who never served in a leadership role within their organization. Sorority general members had a tendency to engage in more drinking sessions per week compared to officers, but the difference was trivial ($d < .10$).

SUMMARY DISCUSSION

The study differed from previous research on leadership development in fraternal organizations by focusing on the educational gains and satisfaction of chapter officers. Significant differences between officers and non-officers were found for eight of the nine educational gains measures. Fraternity and sorority members who served as chapter officers reported greater gains in Sense of Belonging, Diverse Interactions, Interpersonal Relationship Skills, Leadership Skills, Personal Development Skills, Self-Worth, and Intrapersonal Competence as a result of their fraternity or sorority experience compared to respondents who never served in a leadership position.

Gains in leadership abilities had the most

TABLE 2*Differences in Educational Gains, Alcohol Use, and Satisfaction within Fraternity by Leadership Experience*

	Non-officer (<i>n</i> = 529)		Officer (<i>n</i> = 2,479)				
Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Educational Gains</i>							
Sense of Belonging	6.11	1.06	6.27	0.95	.080	2.89	.004
Diverse Interactions	5.53	1.37	5.78	1.22	.108	3.95	<.001
Interpersonal Relationship Skills	6.01	1.03	6.21	0.88	.113	4.11	<.001
Interpersonal Competence	5.57	1.15	5.88	0.99	.156	5.61	<.001
Leadership Skills	5.28	1.39	5.92	1.06	.282	10.19	<.001
Personal Development Skills	5.29	1.33	5.69	1.11	.172	6.12	<.001
Healthy Behaviors	5.51	1.50	5.48	1.38	-.039	-1.39	.166
Self-Worth	5.78	1.17	6.08	0.96	.151	5.44	<.001
Intrapersonal Competence	5.71	1.23	6.01	1.06	.149	5.49	<.001
<i>Alcohol Use</i>							
Frequency of Alcohol Use	1.60	0.61	1.63	0.57	.046	1.73	.083
Binge Drinking	1.52	0.50	1.51	0.50	-.012	-0.49	.626
<i>Satisfaction</i>							
Overall Satisfaction with Fraternity/Sorority Experience	5.98	1.22	6.25	1.01	.137	5.09	<.001
Anticipated Alumni Involvement	1.72	0.45	1.82	0.38	.108	5.06	<.001

Note: Positive values of *d* correspond to higher ratings for officers and negative values correspond to higher ratings for non-officers. Statistical significance and practical significance were set at the .05 and .10 levels, respectively. Differences that are both statistically and practically significant are in bold.

TABLE 3

Differences in Educational Gains, Alcohol Use, and Satisfaction within Sorority by Leadership Experience

	Non-officer (<i>n</i> = 917)		Officer (<i>n</i> = 2,828)				
Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Educational Gains</i>							
Sense of Belonging	6.00	1.18	6.20	1.04	.134	6.21	<.001
Diverse Interactions	5.57	1.32	5.70	1.23	.096	4.42	<.001
Interpersonal Relationship Skills	6.00	1.13	6.23	0.94	.156	7.21	<.001
Interpersonal Competence	5.46	1.29	5.78	1.11	.201	9.12	<.001
Leadership Skills	5.08	1.49	5.83	1.12	.368	17.38	<.001
Personal Development Skills	5.14	1.46	5.57	1.24	.243	11.17	<.001
Healthy Behaviors	5.67	1.41	5.71	1.32	.038	1.69	.091
Self-Worth	5.84	1.16	6.10	1.00	.204	9.30	<.001
Intrapersonal Competence	5.65	1.35	5.94	1.18	.179	8.24	<.001
<i>Alcohol Use</i>							
Frequency of Alcohol Use	1.46	0.53	1.41	0.51	-.048	-2.34	.019
Binge Drinking	1.22	0.42	1.20	0.40	-.022	-1.28	.199
<i>Satisfaction</i>							
Overall Satisfaction with Fraternity/Sorority Experience	5.85	1.24	6.09	1.10	.178	8.31	<.001
Anticipated Alumni Involvement	1.63	0.48	1.79	0.40	.167	9.41	<.001

Note: Positive values of *d* correspond to higher ratings for officers and negative values correspond to higher ratings for non-officers. Statistical significance and practical significance were set at the .05 and .10 levels, respectively. Differences that are both statistically and practically significant are in bold.

pronounced difference for both fraternity and sorority members. Research outside of the fraternity/sorority context has found that simply partaking in leadership activities may produce gains in leadership skills (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001). This suggests that either non-officers are not engaged in the activities of their chapter or fraternal organizations do not provide enough opportunities for non-officers to gain leadership skills. Another finding was that there was no difference in the gains in Healthy Behaviors of respondents. Given that the Healthy Behaviors factor had the lowest mean score for fraternity officers and the second lowest mean score for sorority officers, it seems officers feel less influenced to make healthy choices regarding alcohol and drug use than what one would expect. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Cashin and his colleagues (1998).

The researchers found that fraternity and sorority leaders had similar views toward alcohol use as general members, despite having more responsibility for their organizations' operations. Within the context of communities of practice, officers model and reinforce the behaviors that are deemed acceptable within an organization. Thus, changing the officers' attitudes regarding alcohol use may change the attitudes of all the organization's members.

The researchers found no relationship between the leadership experience of fraternity members and alcohol use. Fraternity respondents who served as chapter officers consumed alcohol at comparable rates as general members. This supports recent research (Fairlie et al., 2010) that found no difference in the alcohol use of officers and non-officers and counters older studies that found chapter officers tended to consume greater (Cashin et al., 1998) or smaller (Gurie, 2002) quantities of alcohol compared to members who never served as a chapter officer.

Longitudinal research on the alcohol use of fraternity and sorority members has revealed

that alcohol consumption rates of affiliated students are decreasing (Wechsler et al., 2000). The non-significant difference may be because fraternity members are beginning to consume alcohol more responsibly. This is supported by the finding that the prevalence of binge drinking in the sample was lower than the national average of 60% for fraternity members (Wechsler et al., 2000). While there was a statistically significant difference in the number of drinking occasions for sorority women by leadership experience, the difference does not warrant an intervention. Previous research on sorority women's alcohol use reported no difference by leadership experience (Cashin et al., 1998; Fairlie et al., 2010).

A positive relationship between leadership experience and satisfaction was found. Fraternity and sorority members who served as chapter officers reported higher levels of satisfaction with their overall experience compared to members who never served in a leadership position. Chapter officers were also more likely to anticipate being involved in their organization post-graduation. The difference was more pronounced for sorority respondents. Seventy-nine percent of sorority officers anticipated being involved as alumnae, whereas only 63% of non-officers anticipated being involved after graduation. The difference in anticipated involvement may be because non-officers were less satisfied with their sorority experience, but it may also be because non-officers were less informed of ways to be involved in the organization as alumnae.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The researchers uncovered several differences in the fraternity/sorority experience of the respondents by leadership experience. Foremost, the research findings showed that members who serve as chapter officers experience an increase in abilities that make them better individuals, both socially and profession-

ally. This demonstrates that the leadership development efforts of advisors, campus-based professionals, and organization staff can have positive effects on fraternity and sorority officers' personal development. This, however, leads us to question the fraternity/sorority advising profession's effectiveness in developing non-officers.

In a speech at the annual meeting of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, Barry Posner (2010) described five principles of leadership development. These principles assert that leadership is a skill that can be learned through feedback and practice, leadership is everyone's business, leadership is about serving others, leadership is future-focused, and leadership is personal. Posner emphasized the development of leadership skills is for everyone and it should not be limited to just those persons who have the good fortune of being elected or appointed to leadership roles.

The issue that arises from the findings of the current study is the apparent disservice to members who do not become officers as illustrated by the lower gains and satisfaction reported by non-officers. Fraternities and sororities promote leadership development, personal growth, and a satisfactory college experience as results of fraternal membership. As supporters of the fraternal movement, we have to address the issue of whether or not membership development initiatives are truly effective in developing all members of an organization.

As supporters of the fraternal movement, we have to address the issue of whether or not membership development initiatives are truly effective in developing all members of an organization. Our findings suggest that we are succeeding at developing the abilities of officers, however we may be under developing the abilities of non-officers by not allocating sufficient resources to these members. This indicates a lack of equal opportunity for general members who do not hold a leadership role. Shertzer and Schuh (2004) noted: "If all students are to be

encouraged and empowered in leadership, then those charged with developing college students' leadership need to shift to a new paradigm as well" (p. 128). The research findings illustrated that more emphasis should be placed on offering educational opportunities for non-officers. Chapter advisors, organization staff, and campus-based professionals (advisors) can be integral in developing these opportunities for non-officers. Specifically, advisors should:

- Ensure they are creating environments in which all members are treated as leaders and non-officers are not "just members."
- Create or maintain a philosophy of developing every member as a leader and implement a model or framework for leadership development (Posner, 2010).
- Foster communities of practice in fraternities and sororities in which members can teach and learn from one another. Conceptually, this could be a learning community where members engage in discussions about leadership development and share ideas about best practices.
- Educate new staff members and advisors on contemporary leadership practices to ensure they are capable of educating undergraduate fraternity and sorority members. Once trained, these fraternity and sorority advocates can work to ensure every student who joins a fraternal organization has the opportunity to grow as a leader.
- Develop a membership education task force consisting of advisors, officers, and members not in leadership roles. This committee should explore where development is lacking and discuss how to reach members not in leadership roles. This in turn will give credibility and a stronger buy-in from the student population because the core needs are being

met by all parties involved.

- Assess the educational experiences of members periodically to ensure goals and objectives are being met and use the findings to make programmatic adjustments when needed.

The researchers do not assume all who join organizations would fully utilize opportunities should they arise and be open equally to all. We simply believe that by allowing open training to all members at both the campus and organizational level, fraternal organizations can develop stronger and more competent leaders. As professionals in the business of developing students, we must make sure we are developing all of our students and not systematically neglecting a subpopulation of members. It is our responsibility to make the necessary tools for success available to all of our members and to support our members in developing strong competencies.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research might explore other outcomes of serving in a leadership position in a fraternal organization, such as academic performance and persistence until graduation. This would provide additional insights into the experiences of fraternity and sorority members. Future research might also explore why differ-

ences in anticipated post-graduation involvement exist. There is little research on this topic within the fraternal context. Finally, researchers should consider conducting additional research on fraternal organizations as communities of practice.

While the researchers of the current study used the communities of practice concept to hypothesize the direction of the relationship between leadership experience and educational gains, the researchers did not assess the extent to which groups of officers behaved as a community of practice. Future research might explore this. Qualitative methods including direct observation and personal interviews or focus groups would be informative.

LIMITATIONS

The findings should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations. First, as an exploratory study the research design did not include statistical controls. The examined differences may become amplified or diminished once background characteristics are taken into account. Second, while the research was a multi-institutional study, the sample mostly represented large, research institutions. The findings may have limited generalizability to other campus contexts. Despite these limitations, the results provide an improved understanding of the outcomes of membership in a fraternity or sorority.

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