ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORICALLY WHITE SORORITY LIFE: A CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND CULTURAL CAPITAL ANALYSIS

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This study examined 18 Asian American women's attitudes towards sororities at a predominantly White institution in the south. I use cultural capital and critical race theory frameworks to explain how immigrant identity and social class intersect with race to perpetuate racial divisions in historically White sorority life (HWSL). Participants identified two primary reasons for the lack of racial diversity in HWSL, the role of immigrant families and social class, both of which can be viewed as race-neutral explanations for why HWSL "coincidentally" remains divided by race. However, I demonstrate how race intersects with both immigration and social class to perpetuate social divisions in HWSL, resulting in complex insights for why such groups remain predominantly White in composition.

"What I saw was a lot of rich White girls and I just knew that I was never going to fit into that crowd and wouldn't ever really want to."

-Nora, not a member of a sorority, Korean American senior

For many decades, fraternities and sororities had formal exclusionary policies that barred non-White, and in many cases non-Christian, members from joining. By 1955, only one National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sorority still formally banned students of color (Lee, 1955), but NPC groups remained racially homogeneous. Today, over 50 years later, Historically White Sorority Life (HWSL) remains racially homogeneous at many colleges (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005), even though no InterFraternity Council (IFC) or NPC organization maintains any sort of formal exclusionary policy. Why does fraternity/sorority life often remain divided by race?

As the quote from Nora demonstrates, students can perceive HWSL to be an unwelcoming environment even without formal exclusionary policies. Also, explicit and subtler instances of racial bias make HWSL unwelcoming to many students of color (Schmitz & Forbes, 1994; Park, 2008). However, it is noteworthy that Nora did not just see HWSL as being the domain of just "White girls" but "rich White girls" (emphasis added). Her quote is an example of how social class and race intersect in meaningful ways to shape students' sense of belonging, or lack thereof, in college, as well as their perceptions of peers. Relatedly, while race undoubtedly has an independent influence on why HWSL are racially divided, Critical Race Theory (CRT) contends that race intersects with other subordinate identities to foster racial stratification (Solórzano, 1998). Critical Race Theory offers an analytic lens to understand how race intersects with other facets of social identity (e.g., social class) to perpetuate racial divides in communities like HWSL.

The purpose of this study is to examine Asian American women's perceptions of HWSL in order to understand why racial homogeneity persists in HWSL. Participants included Asian American female undergraduates involved in sororities and those who were not; all attended a private institution in the Southeast, "Southern University," where 50% of undergraduate women join sororities. Participants identified two primary reasons for the lack of Asian American participation in HWSL—the roles of immigrant families and social class. At first glance,

these reasons appear to be race-neutral explanations for why HWSL remains divided by race. However, further analysis demonstrates how race intersects with both phenomena to perpetuate racial divides, resulting in complex insights for why HWSL remains predominantly White in composition.

Background

Asian Americans may seem like a somewhat surprising group to study in order to probe the racial dynamics of HWSL. They are a diverse population, consisting of at least 24 ethnic subgroups, with varying levels of educational attainment (Hune & Park, 2009). However, their tenuous and inconsistent status as a racialized minority actually makes them a prime group in which to study the complicated dynamics of race in a supposedly post-racial society (Park, 2008). Stereotyped as the monolithically successful model minority, Asian Americans are supposed to be prime evidence that race is (or at least ought to be) irrelevant in U.S. society. Thus, demonstrating some of the more subtle ways that race continues to be salient for Asian Americans unveils complex dynamics that can help us understand how race continues to affect HWSL, U.S. higher education, and society-at-large.

Race, immigration, and social class play key roles in HWSL organizations. Multiple studies have found that fraternity and sorority life is divided by race (Chang & DeAngelo, 2002; Chen, 1998; Schmitz & Forbes, 1994; Park, 2008). Not only are White students more likely to join fraternities and sororities, after three years of participation they are significantly more likely to oppose interracial marriage and increase in levels of symbolic racism (Sidanius, Levin, van Laar, & Sears, 2008). They are also significantly less likely to have close friends of other races during college (Park, 2012). The most obvious and extensively researched divide is between Black and White students. Black students formed the National Pan-Hellenic Council groups in response to formal racial exclusionary policies and pervasive racial segregation on American college campuses and within HWSL (Brown, Parks, & Phillips, 2005; Kimbrough, 2003). In one study from the 1990s, Black students perceived HWSL groups as being unwelcoming, and White members of HWSL groups expressed outright hostility at the prospect of Black students joining (Schmitz & Forbes, 1994).

The history of Asian American exclusion in HWSL is rarely discussed. However, the historical legacy of institutional discrimination is indelibly linked to the contemporary campus racial climate (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998). HWSL organizations explicitly barred Asian Americans from joining for years and fraternities held both "discriminatory clauses against Negroes and Orientals" (Lee, 1955, p. 93). The first Asian American sorority, Chi Alpha Delta, was founded in 1923 at the University of California, Los Angeles. Hernandez (2001, May 21) reported that even though "no written part of the Panhellenic Constitution restricted Asian Americans from joining the Greek society" (para. 17), "the Panhellenic Constitution did not allow Asians in Greek organizations" (para. 4). Even in these early years, racial divisions persisted in HWSL despite the lack of written exclusionary policies (Lee, 1955). Due to changes in immigration law post-1965, Asian American enrollment spiked in higher education in later decades (Teranishi, 2010). Many Asian American students are among the first in their families to be born in the U.S. or were born outside of the country (Chang, Park, Lin, Poon, & Nakanishi, 2007), and Asian American enrollment has risen at many institutions, including ones in the Southeast and Midwest where HWSL remains a strong aspect of campus culture. However, Asian American participation in HWSL remains low, possibly in part due to the decades when Asian Americans were officially barred from joining such groups.

In more recent times, HWSL has garnered attention in the media for explicitly racist acts or actions that demonstrate a severe lack of intercultural understanding. Offensive theme parties include ghetto theme parties like the "Compton Cookout" and the "Mekong Delta Party," where (mostly White) students dressed up as American GIs and Vietnamese prostitutes (Whaley, 2008). Race is also relevant to HWSL in more subtle ways. Using a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens, Park (2008) asked Asian American college women if they felt that race was relevant to HWSL. Most rejected the idea but observed that the more elite sororities at their institution were all White or almost all White in composition. [author omitted] argued that the women's paradoxical viewpoints—asserting ways that race was relevant in HWSL but being hesitant to address it frankly—were reflective of a broader American tendency to downplay the significance of race.

No studies could be found that examined Asian American women's experiences or perceptions of HWSL as immigrants or children of immigrants. Thus we have little knowledge about whether immigrant identity makes students feel like outsiders to HWSL or how such an identity might intersect with race and/or social class. Studies can be found that document the experiences of students with other racial identities. Research on Latino/a fraternities and sororities document that the groups provide a strong sense of belonging for students, many of whom are unfamiliar with navigating campus life as first-generation college students (Arellano, 2008; Olivas, 1996). Such groups can also support students' ethnic identity development (Guardia & Evans, 2008). Arellano (2008) concluded that one reason Latino/a students joined such groups was because they could not afford the steep dues associated with HWSL groups, pointing to the influence of social class on HWSL organizations.

Socioeconomic status (SES) not only influences the general demographic portrait of students who join fraternities or sororities, it also works as a delineator of status between organizations, often signifying the more prestigious organizations. Early studies observed that fraternities and sororities attracted students from wealthier backgrounds (Reiss, 1965; Schott, 1965). Because participants have to pay dues that range from several hundred dollars to over one thousand dollars depending on the institution, it is unsurprising that social class shapes participation. Granted, as a whole, access to higher education is already heavily influenced by class (Carnevale & Rose, 2003). Still, costs associated with fraternities and sororities likely discourage some students from joining. Social class also distinguishes sororities from one another. In her study of sororities on one campus, Risman (1982) found that higher status sororities were known for having wealthier members. In Chang and DeAngelo's (2002) analysis, household income was not a significant predictor of joining a fraternity or sorority, but students who rated being financially well-off as an essential priority were significantly more likely to join.

Theory

To elucidate findings, this paper draws on two theories, cultural capital theory and Critical Race Theory (CRT). In this section, I briefly explain both theories and how they help us understand stratification in fraternity/sorority life. First, the concept of cultural capital explains how HWSL perpetuates certain types of privilege, resulting in organizations that tend to be racially homogeneous. Cultural capital refers to the way that privilege and information about how to navigate worlds of privilege accumulate within certain subgroups due to the generational transference of resources, attitudes, or knowledge (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). This process contributes to the preservation of elite networks and the reproduction of social inequality. Cultural capital is manifest in sorority life through three

key means. First, membership into a sorority, particularly an elite sorority, perpetuates privilege by allowing members access to resources such as elite social networks both on campus and after college. Second, privileged membership is literally transferred through generations via legacy status, in which women whose mothers or relatives belonged to a sorority often receive some preferential treatment in the selection process. Third, legacies may have greater access to insider knowledge about how to navigate sorority recruitment. Women who come from families or communities where sorority membership is common are privy to the unsaid rules, social norms, and expectations that are key parts of sorority recruitment.

In perpetuating privilege, cultural capital reproduces elite status for some populations and perpetuates marginal status for others. As campuses have diversified, HWSL is often one venue in which the insiders—those who tend to be White, from wealthier backgrounds, and legacies—are more likely to stay "in" and outsiders—students of color, those from lower socioeconomic means, and those with little knowledge about how HWSL works—are more likely to remain outsiders. This study uses cultural capital to understand how ostensibly race-neutral phenomena like Asian Americans being less likely to be sorority legacies reproduce elite social networks that continue to exclude most students of color.

While cultural capital is a helpful framework, it does not necessarily push race to the forefront, nor does it meaningfully consider the intersection between race and other social identities. Cultural capital helps explain why Asian Americans are largely outsiders to sorority life, but so are low-income Whites, first-generation college students, and the like. Cultural capital is less adept at explaining the mechanics of exclusion that are specifically linked to race. This is where CRT is a particularly helpful tool. Key tenants of CRT include: 1) racism persists as a common and central component of U.S. society; 2) race is socially constructed; 3) race and racism intersect with other forms of oppression to perpetuate marginalization; 4) the voices and experiences of people of color play an essential role in explaining racial dynamics (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). This article focuses most explicitly on the third tenant, which aims to display how race intersects with other identity categories to subordinate people of color, both the other tenants are relevant to the conceptualization of the study.

CRT argues that even though individuals use colorblind and race-neutral language, race and racism continue to affect people's lives in contemporary times through subtle and complex ways (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This dynamic extends to collegiate life. In previous decades, blatant racial and religious discrimination characterized HWSL (Lee, 1955). Such formal exclusionary policies no longer exist, leading some to believe that race is irrelevant to contemporary HWSL: demographic differences among sororities must be attributable to coincidence, personal preference, or tradition. However, CRT argues that race and racism continue to be central organizing concepts in society, providing a lens to see how subtle messages centering on race, inclusion, and exclusion may influence sorority composition. For instance, in multiple studies, sororities perceived as more elite and exclusive tended to have fewer, if any, women of color, while sororities seen as less exclusive tended to have greater racial/ethnic diversity (Chen, 1998; Park, 2008). Hence, racial divisions in HWSL persist at many campuses despite the absence of formal exclusionary policies.

CRT is an especially pertinent tool to use to study Asian Americans, who occupy a somewhat inconsistent position on the racial spectrum, being both included and excluded in various spheres of society (Park, 2008). Due to the model minority stereotype and the sometimes status of Asian Americans as "honorary Whites,"

the illusion exists that race is irrelevant to their experiences (Tuan, 1998). This dynamic makes CRT a particularly powerful tool to challenge the presumption that Asian Americans are not affected by racialization in society. While CRT foregrounds the role of race in perpetuating social inequalities, it also emphasizes how race intersects with other subordinated identities (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). In this study, I use CRT to reveal how immigrant identity and social class intersect with race, demonstrating how lines of privilege and exclusion are perpetuated in university life even in the absence of formal exclusionary policies. It should be noted that although the sample is made up of women, in order to focus the scope of the article, this article does not explicitly focus on the intersection between gender and other identity categories. Future studies will address how these intersections address the experiences of Asian American women.

Methodology

This qualitative study seeks to understand the phenomenon of Asian American participation, or lack thereof, in sororities and participants' perspectives on this phenomenon. (Merriam, 1998). Caelli, Ray, and Mill (2003) suggest researchers using a basic qualitative design identify the following: one's theoretical positioning, congruency between methodology and methods, strategies to establish rigor, and the analytic lens through which the researcher interprets data. These areas are identified and described below.

Theoretical Positioning

Theoretical positioning refers to ". . . the researcher's motives, presuppositions, and personal history that leads him or her toward, and subsequently shapes, a particular inquiry" (Caelli et al., 2003, p. 5). I am an Asian American woman who was not a member of a sorority but attended an undergraduate institution where HWSL was prominent. Noticing that students of color are often underrepresented in sorority life at more diverse campuses, I became curious as to why Asian Americans were less likely to participate in HWSL, despite the ideas that Asian Americans are "honorary Whites" (Tuan, 1998). Thus, my past and present experiences, as well as my identity as a woman of color, shape my impressions of HWSL. While it is impossible for me to be a completely objective, impartial observer, if such a thing even exists, I do not necessarily believe that HWSL organizations should be unilaterally eradicated and see their potential for fostering leadership development, community service, and a sense of belonging for students. Like many, I am also aware of the potential for destructive behavior in such groups, especially in regards to alcohol abuse, hazing, homophobia, and sexism. Thus, I came to this study with my own perceptions of HWSL, and was curious to learn how both sorority and non-sorority Asian American women react to such organizations.

Congruency between Methodology and Methods

Because qualitative methodology is grounded in a non-positivist paradigm that suggests there are multiple social realities or at least no singular authoritative representation of reality (Rosaldo, 1993), I relied on participants' narratives as the primary source of data. CRT contends that race is socially constructed and that the complex dynamics of race are best understood through the voices of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), lending further support to my decision to use qualitative methodology and methods. In 2003, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 18 Asian American undergraduate women at "Southern University" (SU, pseudonym), a private university in the Southeastern U.S. Almost half of SU undergraduates came from the Southeast and a little under half of female students participated in one of 14 sororities. SU is a majority White

campus. Asian Americans composed 6% of the undergraduate population at the time of the study and slightly under 2% of sorority women. There were no Asian American sororities at SU.

The SU registrar provided emails for all Asian American female undergraduates in 2003. There were 23 Asian American women active in SU's sororities at the time out of 1,315 total sorority women. I sent an email to all sophomore, junior, and senior Asian American students inviting them to participate in an hour-long interview. I selected the first nine non-sorority women to respond and all sorority members who responded to the email participated in the study. In order to recruit additional Asian American sorority participants, I relied on snowball sampling.

The final sample consisted of 18 Asian American undergraduates: nine sorority members and nine who had no sorority affiliation. They ranged in age from 19 to 23 and came from various Asian ethnic subgroups (two women of Japanese descent, six of Chinese descent, five of Indian descent, one of Pakistani descent, three of Korean descent, and one of Filipino descent). One woman was multiracial (Korean/White) and five were born outside of the U.S. None were international students. With the exception of one student, all were either first or second-generation Asian Americans; that is, they either immigrated to the U.S. with their families (first-generation or 1.5), or they were the first generation to be born in the U.S. (second-generation). One student was third generation, meaning that her grandparents immigrated to the U.S. Interviews ranged in length from 45-90 minutes.

During interviews, I asked students questions on their perceptions of HWSL and Asian American identity. Examples of questions included, "Why did you join sorority life (or not join sorority life)?," "Why do you think there are not many Asian Americans involved in sororities?," and "What type of role does race play in sorority life, if any?" I assigned pseudonyms to all participants, the institution, and sororities in order to preserve confidentiality. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Analytic Lens and Approach

I used a combination of open coding and codes based on CRT principals during data analysis. Through open coding, I assigned codes to reoccurring themes that were then sorted into categories. I compared each code with the codes already in the category, as well as codes in different categories using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The key categories that emerged through open coding—the roles of the family, SES, and immigration—were unanticipated; there were no questions in the protocol that directly asked about any of these issues. However, as I compared them with the categories related to CRT, I suspected that cultural capital theory could serve as a bridge that could link family, SES, and immigration to issues of race and power.

Strategies to Establish Rigor

Adhering to the philosophic assumption that there are multiple social realities and that meaning is subjective complicates the interpretation of another's narrative (Rosaldo, 1993). To strengthen the trustworthiness of the data, I asked participants to review a near-final draft of the manuscript and add comments on my interpretation of their narratives. Other than provide positive feedback, participants did not add any corrections or edits to my interpretations of findings. Also, in order to mediate my own role and identity as an outsider to sororities, I asked several graduate students who work with fraternity/sorority life and/or who are alumni of such groups to review the manuscript, asking them to identify areas where my interpretations and conclusions were not grounded in the data or were unwarranted. I incorporated most of their critiques and suggestions into the final paper. Naturally, there were limitations to the study. Because of the nature of qualitative re-

search, the findings should not be extrapolated to all Asian American women, sorority members or otherwise. The reader should also take the institutional context of SU as a predominantly White private institution into account. The intent of the study is not to produce generalizable findings, but to provide an in-depth analysis of participants' narratives that reveal insight into how intersections of race, immigration, and social class affect campus dynamics.

Findings

Women cited Asian Americans coming from immigrant families and the dynamics of SES as key reasons why HWSL remained homogeneous. Some women discussed these factors as exerting an independent effect on HWSL, and I used a cultural capital lens to analyze their responses. Others connected the issues to race to interpret trends in HWSL and I make sense of their responses using CRT.

Family Matters: The Role of Immigrant Families

In discussing how immigrant identity came up in women's perceptions of sororities, I delineate how participants contrasted their identities as immigrants or children of immigrants with sorority legacies and outline women's comments on how legacy status (or lack thereof) influences access to insider information on sororities. Finally, I explore how immigrant family backgrounds intersected with race to shape perceptions of fraternity/sorority life as a White institution.

Legacy status. The issue of coming from an immigrant family often arose when women reflected on their status as first or second-generation Americans. They contrasted this status with their White peers, especially those who were sorority legacies (i.e., students related to members of the same sorority). Participants speculated that White women were more likely to participate in recruitment than Asian Americans, particularly those who had immigrated to the U.S. or were the children of immigrants. Yuka, a member of a sorority, contrasted the two groups:

> First hand, especially here in the South, there are a lot of legacies—White women—and you know about sororities when you grow up; I think that makes you aware of things like that. If you're second gen or you're first generation and your parents didn't go to university here, they have no clue that these things exist. I still have a hard time explaining to my parents what this thing is. It's definitely something that's not . . . in the realm of knowledge that we come from, when we go to universities.

Yuka concluded that White women were more likely to have mothers and other relatives who had been in sororities. Being a legacy generally gives women an advantage in the sorority rush process, as chapters foster loyalty through generational ties. Also, as Yuka stated, being a legacy can make you more "aware of things," like knowing that sororities exist and how one might navigate the system. In contrast, for Asian Americans, sororities were generally not in their "realm of knowledge" because most of their parents did not attend college in the U.S.

Toral, a member of a sorority, also emphasized how knowledge, or lack thereof, about fraternity/sorority life is transmitted generationally. With fraternity/sorority life being entrenched in tradition and Asian Americans being relative newcomers to U.S. higher education, Toral explained why it would make sense that the system was predominantly White, being a byproduct of the days when U.S. higher education was predominantly White:

> I think that going Greek is a large part of tradition and family heritage. Especially with Asians, historically the Asians that are here are second generation. Their parents

> came over; they're not familiar with the system. For instance, when it was established it was predominantly White . . . historically, there have been more Whites so they're going to have a higher percentage. So like your lineage and whether your parents and relatives impact it, that counts for a large portion. This is a huge generalization, but being second generation, parents of Asians are more strict because they're not as familiar with the culture and traditions they have here.

While she tied the current composition of HWSL to its establishment as a predominantly White group, she did not acknowledge the role that formal and informal exclusionary policies played in HWSL's history. She also speculated that Asian American parents would be less accommodating of sororities because they were unfamiliar with such traditions. Many participants contrasted this lack of knowledge to their White friends, as Christine, who was not in a sorority commented: "The difference in Greek life is huge compared to my friends versus me." While her friends were more knowledgeable about HWSL, Christine knew little about the system.

Insider knowledge. The lack of exposure to sorority culture that participants had due to their immigrant family backgrounds also affected their knowledge, or lack thereof, about how to navigate the recruitment process. Tammy, who joined a sorority, told me how she went into recruitment having no idea what sorority she wanted to join. I asked if she thought her rush experience differed from her peers. She responded:

> That's definitely not normal. Girls definitely go into the situation knowing what house they want to get in. Some girls sit there for hours deliberating what house they're going to put down as their first preference.

While having a lack of insider knowledge did not deter Tammy from rushing and joining a sorority, Leena, a member of a sorority, suggested it might deter some Asian American women. I asked her if she had any ideas for why Asian American women were underrepresented in sororities at the university, and she answered:

> Mmm probably they might feel rejection, or have a fear of rejection, feel like maybe they're not used to going through something like that. Doubtful that their mother or sister or cousin was in a sorority so they don't really know what the process entails. Maybe they don't see a value in it.

Unlike legacies, most Asian American women come to sorority recruitment not knowing how the game is played. This lack of knowledge might discourage Asian American women from going through sorority recruitment in the first place, or it might work to their disadvantage later on. One study examining Asian American women in sororities found that almost half of the Asian American sorority women interviewed (four out of nine) ended up joining through non-traditional methods, such as dropping out of recruitment and being offered a bid later on from a sorority scrambling to meet quota or going through recruitment as a sophomore (Park, 2008). It is possible that this pattern was attributable to Asian American women's lack of insider knowledge about navigating recruitment. As Tammy noted, most of her peers entered sorority recruitment with a plan, while most of the Asian American women in sororities that I spoke with took a more "go with the flow" approach to recruitment—jumping in at the last minute because their friends were going through recruitment and having few expectations. When they joined sororities, they tended to be sororities that were more diverse, most of which were seen as less elite. At SU, the three most elite sororities had no Asian American members. Because of their exclusive nature,

it is conceivable that insider knowledge and/or legacy status was even more essential to join these elite sororities, thus lessening the chances of an Asian American woman joining.

Even without considering racial dynamics, legacy status and insider knowledge are two ways that facilitate the transmission of cultural capital via elite sorority membership over time. Asian Americans are not the only ones being shut out—presumably lower-income women and first-generation White students—are also not privy to such networks. However, as we will see, race also directly influenced participants' views of HWSL.

Race, family, and immigrant identity. Under a cultural capital framework, Asian American women's immigrant families influenced their perceptions of and experiences with sororities in ways that could be construed as race neutral, albeit with implications for the racial composition of sororities. By race neutral, I mean that immigrant families' unfamiliarity with sororities deterred Asian American females is a phenomena with implications for the racial composition of sororities, but not one necessarily linked to race. However, race also directly intersected with women's identities as immigrants and children of immigrants, affecting perceptions of sororities. Diagnosing how race is significant in an arena like sororities is not so clear cut in the absence of explicit racial bias (Park, 2008). While a colorblind perspective can be used to explain away the role of race in participants' perceptions of sororities, CRT argues that race and racism are central to our societal structure. Thus, a CRT perspective would ask, how does race continue to affect sororities through intersections with participants' identities as first and second-generation Americans?

Women noted two ways that race intersected with their identities as first- or second-generation Asian Americans as explanations for the homogeneity of HWSL: their sense that sororities did little to reach out across race and their perceptions of fraternity/sorority life as a White institution. First, they noted that sororities did little to pursue racial diversity despite many women of color's unfamiliarity with HWSL. Even though Anita joined a sorority, she commented on how she felt that sorority life did nothing to appeal to women of color:

> The majority of people are White or whatever, but there's nothing that really caters to minority people. [Whites] grew up with wanting to be in a sorority. Whereas I knew that I never grew up wanting to be in a sorority or had that in the back of my mind in high school like, I want to be in a sorority. So I feel like it reaches out toward White people, and like it's already acculturated into them, but like for minority people who have never been Greek, their parents were never Greek, and don't necessarily want to be Greek, it's not necessarily reaching out to them. Like take it or leave it is how I see the Greek system here. If some minority kids want to rush, let them rush, but we're not necessarily doing anything like pulling them in because I feel like we need a special little push because we never had that in the back of our minds when we were growing up, that Mommy was a Theta or Mommy was a DG.

Although Anita was a member of a sorority, she was upfront in her interview that her sorority was more diverse because it was less elite, less selective, and hence more open to different types of women joining. Originally in the recruitment process, she had her heart set on joining an elite, all-White sorority. When I asked her what happened to her original plans, she laughed and expressed that her previous desire was naïve. She had actually dropped out during recruitment but then ended up joining later, and seemed to have a more critical outlook on the sorority recruitment process. As she explained in her quote on why HWSL tended to be homogenous, as the idea of being in a sorority be-

comes "acculturated" into many White women, the same process never happens for most of their Asian American peers. Differences between legacies and non-legacies are reinforced when such patterns parallel racial divides in sorority participation. Furthermore, in Anita's eyes, sororities did nothing to counteract this trend. This perceived dynamic may have led to the reproduction of HWSL's relatively homogeneous composition. While Anita still chose to join a sorority, these dynamics likely worked in tandem with one another to make sororities seem unwelcoming to many Asian American women.

Although Anita commented on why sororities at SU continued to attract mainly White students, Nora, who was not in a sorority, commented on the perception that fraternity/sorority life was a White institution:

> I think there's a social deterrence, because it's perceived as a White institution there's a hesitation to join, but also because there's a lot of hesitation from parents and families. It's not something their parents put pressure on them to do. For a lot of other college girls they're legacies when it comes to being in a sorority, their mom was in it or there's a certain status that goes with it that Asian women don't have to have.

While Asian American parents were already unfamiliar with such groups, this unfamiliarity was exacerbated by perceptions of fraternity/sorority life as a White institution.

However, one of my participants, Laura, a third generation Asian American who was not a member of a sorority, suggested that race played a distinct role even apart from immigrant status in steering some Asian American women away from sororities. She talked about going home to Southern California and being offered letters of recommendations to join sororities from her mother's friends:

> I got offered letters to be a Gamma [pseudonym for elite sorority] at home and she was a very White-washed Asian American who tries to get in that whole elitist group. I was given offers to be in Sigma or a Gamma at home . . . Like, 'you should really go Greek, dah-dah-dah. I'll write you a letter.' I was like, 'Gamma, don't do that' . . . Usually Gammas are not quite Asian American.

Though as a third generation Asian American her mother's social networks offered her access to sorority alumni, she still did not consider joining the elite Gamma, in part due to race. She summed up her reason: "Usually Gammas are not quite Asian American." Granted, there were probably many women, Whites included, at SU who did not consider joining a sorority like Gamma, but Laura described Gamma in racialized terms even though her parents attended college in the U.S. and were familiar with fraternity/sorority life. While most first-generation American families are simply unaware of fraternity/sorority involvement, Laura's story shows how perceptions of fraternity/sorority life as racially exclusive can persist even when families are acculturated into U.S. society.

Taken together, Anita, Laura, and Nora's comments illuminate how HWSL can remain unattractive to women of color without anyone being explicitly racist. Instead, women described perceptions of HWSL as unwelcoming and being the terrain of White students. When HWSL does little or nothing to encourage students of color to join and many Asian American women's parents are unfamiliar with the system, it is no wonder that many women of color continue to view HWSL as a "White institution." Furthermore, the legacy system works to the benefit of White women, perpetuating an ostensibly race-neutral mechanism that reproduces Whiteness, intentionally or not.

The Relevance of Socioeconomic Status: "If You Don't Have the Money, You Can't Do It"

Just as women frequently commented on how being from immigrant families discouraged Asian American women from joining sororities, participants also frequently named SES as a reason for why HWSL was relatively homogeneous. Here, I address the general role of SES in HWSL. I note how the prominent role of money in HWSL was unappealing to immigrant families and end by showing how social class identity and race intersected in participants' perceptions of HWSL.

Money matters. Some women felt that income was a stronger barrier to joining sororities than race. I asked Tina, who was not in a sorority, if she thought that the fraternity/sorority system was racially discriminatory. She responded:

> No, I wouldn't say that. I would just say it's extremely selective. I don't know if it's discriminatory. Actually I've heard rumors that they look at our financial aid status or they look at such and such because they have access. Some people think it's discriminatory. It's more class, definitely.

Yuka, a member of a sorority, also suggested that socioeconomic diversity was more of an issue than race in the fraternity/sorority system: "I think diversity is more of a class issue than a race issue in the Greek system; it's a high cost. A lot of people who drop out of the pledge class in my sorority; 100% were because they had a financial issue, not because they didn't like it." Tina and Yuka's comments were common among participants.

Maryanne, who was not in a sorority, noted how the cost of joining a sorority was not limited to the membership fees, which ranged from about $800 to over $1000 a year at SU:

> It's like if you don't have the money, you can't do it. It's not just dues; it's things like buying t-shirts or buying Tupperware or all of these little things that if you don't have the money, it's going to be a huge pressure on you.

Given the high costs of joining a sorority even on top of dues, SES worked as a filtering system for sorority membership. Maryanne added that as a scholarship student, she could not justify the cost of joining. Even within the sorority system there were socioeconomic distinctions. Marissa, who was not in a sorority, observed how membership in elite sororities worked as a status symbol: "It's basically a social standard, like economic. Sometimes like you show your economic situation by what sorority or fraternity you're in."

Familial perceptions of sorority costs. Besides money being a deterrent for many women of all races to join sorority life, participants commented on how the high cost of sororities deterred Asian American women due to their immigrant families' unfamiliarity with the fraternity/sorority system. Pooja and Sunny, both members of sororities, suggested that Asian American parents had a hard time justifying the high cost of sororities given their limited knowledge about them. Pooja stated:

> The money issue, it's really expensive, because a lot of our parents aren't from this country and they don't really understand Greek Life. And probably, when you explain it to people who aren't from this country it probably sounds ridiculous. So I can see why a lot of [Asian American women] wouldn't rush because their parents would see it as something ridiculous, just a way to party and get drunk.

Sunny also concluded that many Asian American parents would not understand paying so much money for a social organization:

> I think it has to do with a lot of our parents' influence just because I think in most cases it's probably unacceptable by our parents to join like a social organization and to pay that much money. I think most parents don't really see the point and then to even try to explain it just makes matters even worse. My parents, now that I'm a part of one, but they don't really understand like the whole—I mean, they're like "Oh, that's great. If you want to do it, then we'll support you." But I think a lot of parents they're like, "Oh, we're just giving you money to be with a bunch of girls." I think it's just really hard to explain and so it's a lot of trouble to deal with.

Even when Asian American women come from families that could afford to pay for a sorority, they felt that their parents might not see the value of paying so much for a social organization. In this way, the unfamiliarity of sororities for Asian American immigrant parents, the primary focus of the previous section, influenced whether they would be willing to pay for their daughters to join. The notion of habitus within cultural capital theory, a deeply ingrained way of how social class shapes dispositions, norms, expectations, and perceptions of opportunities, clarifies why even affluent Asian Americans might not join sororities (Bordieu & Passeron, 1977). While higher education researchers have used the concept of habitus to explain how social class shapes students' norms and expectations around applying to college (McDonough, 1997), this study indicates that habitus also affects student experiences during college. For instance, to many of the women in this study, the high price of sorority membership seemed unreasonable either due to their own SES or their parents' unfamiliarity with sororities. Simply put, spending upwards of $1000 to join a social club was not seen as normal; it was not within their or their parents' frame of reference for how money is spent. However, women's norms and expectations around money were shaped not only by their actual family income but by their identities as immigrants or children of immigrants. Thus, even though some participants came from wealthier families, the idea of spending $1000 to join a sorority still violated their assumptions about how money should be used, assumptions shaped by ethnicity, social class, and generational background.

In the prior two sections, cultural capital theory is helpful to understand the reproduction of elitism within HWSL. High costs deter low-income students and students whose families are unfamiliar with the system, leaving the system to be more accessible to legacies, the wealthy, and those with insider knowledge. The notion of "habitus," where HWSL membership is not seen as a normative practice by many families of color, also works to perpetuate homogeneity within HWSL. Once again, a cultural capital lens is helpful, but does not necessarily explain how racial, and not just socioeconomic, exclusion functions within HWSL. The next section explains how the distinct intersection between race and class influenced women's perceptions of HWSL.

Intersections between race and social class. Intersections between class and race worked to deter women of color from sororities, largely by sending messages that they were unwelcome in HWSL. Participants described fraternity/sorority life as a White, wealthy organization, explicitly linking race and class. Interestingly, most of the women who commented on this issue were not members of sororities, suggesting that they were more aware of this linkage between race and class or found it more troubling. Nora, who was not in a sorority, recalled her perceptions of sorority life from her first year of college:

> What I saw was a lot of rich White girls and I just knew that I was never going to fit into that crowd and wouldn't ever really want to. I think that was just what kind of really influenced me.

"Rich White girls" was a common descriptor among participants for either their impressions or stereotypes of the sorority system. While some participants, such as Maryanne, not in a sorority, commented earlier that sororities were seen as a "White thing," Nora noted the extra element of social class. It was not just rich girls or White girls who she associated with sororities, but a distinct image of "rich White girls" in which class and racial lines intersected. Jennifer, not in a sorority, also touched on issues of race and class in her observations of sororities:

> I do think a lot of sororities; people see them as elitist and the White majority so people might feel uncomfortable with that. I think they're a lot of things that go with that, like socioeconomic status, type of background they're from.

From Jennifer's viewpoint, elements of race ("the White majority") and class ("elitist") influenced her view of sororities. While most of the sorority women that I interviewed acknowledged similar stereotypes about fraternity/sorority life, they noted that their sororities offered scholarships or special financial aid to help women join. They also offered their own participation as evidence that sororities were not just "a White thing." Still, Nora and Jennifer's comments showed how non-sorority women held clear perceptions about who was welcome in HWSL.

While Nora noted earlier that she could not see herself fitting in with such a crowd of "rich White girls," Marissa, not in a sorority, talked about how she simply felt unwelcome in sorority life at SU:

> I mean, you're not welcomed at all, and even if you are, you still have to be in that same economic status. You have to have that same status, and most Asian families probably don't come to that standard. I mean, most Asians probably are first generation, second at most.

While other participants noted how the high cost of joining a sorority discouraged some women from participating, Marissa explained how the exclusion that some Asian American women already felt from fraternity/sorority life was exacerbated by the high costs of sororities or perhaps vice-versa. Regardless, she felt that most Asian Americans did not meet the socioeconomic standard for fraternity/sorority life.

Reading her quotation, I surmised that many of the Asian American women at SU likely came from relatively affluent backgrounds similar to many of the White students at SU, considering that low-income students of all races are underrepresented at selective institutions (Carnevale & Rose, 2003). While Marissa referenced SES as a deterrent to sorority membership, I sensed that the more salient issue was the first part of her statement, that she felt that Asian American women were not welcome in sororities at SU. Adding to this feeling of exclusion was the impression that joining a sorority demanded a certain amount of resources. The most obvious resource was finances, but joining HWSL also required a certain amount of cultural capital such as legacy status and insider knowledge that Asian Americans as "first generation, second at most" often did not have. Furthermore, the reputation of HWSL as being dominated by "rich White girls" deterred some Asian American women from even considering joining, showing how race and class can intersect to foster exclusion in campus communities.

Discussion and Implications

Overall, this study touches on various social forces that influenced participants' perceptions of HWSL and its lack of racial diversity. Women cited immigrant families and social class to explain the low diversity in HWSL. As illuminated by cultural capital theory, legacy status and insider knowledge can work over generations to perpetuate privilege for certain populations and exclude others. However, women also noted how such issues intersected with race to complicate and reinforce lines of inclusion or exclusion. While previous examinations of race in HWSL have focused primarily on the role that race alone plays in fostering feelings of exclusion for women of color (Chen, 1998; Schmitz & Forbes, 1994; Park, 2008) the current study adds to our understanding of how the additional factors of immigrant identity and SES interact with race on college campuses. CRT illuminates the continuing significance of race in a supposedly post-racial society, showing how race-neutral explanations for homogeneity ultimately link with issues of race, explaining in part the racial composition of HWSL. Both theories help explain how power and privilege are reproduced over generations along racial and socioeconomic lines.

CRT rejects ahistorical attempts to disconnect past historical injustices from present patterns of racial stratification (Solórzano, 1998). This aspect of CRT is critical to understanding how current phenomena such as the pattern of White women being disproportionately more likely to be HWSL legacies are the result of a system that was explicitly racially segregated for much of its existence. Decades later, there are no such discriminatory clauses on the books, but HWSL remains predominantly White on many campuses, generally reproducing the status quo of homogeneity. This paper elucidates some of the complex reasons why some current day students still feel unwelcome in such organizations even in the absence of such clauses, explaining how race intersects with the domains of immigration and social class to perpetuate social divides on campus.

This paper also contributes to the work on intersectionality between race, social class, and immigration. AsianCrit, a stream of CRT focusing on Asian Americans, asserts that Asian Americans are forever associated with foreignness (Chang, 1999). While the "forever foreigner" stereotype is one way that race and immigration intersect to continue to mark Asian Americans as racially distinct, my work points to a related concept—the "forever outsider." In this case, none of the women in my study described feeling excluded due to being stereotyped as foreign or non-American. Instead, their exclusion from HWSL and general outsider status was perpetuated by structures that reproduced the homogeneous demography of HWSL, such as the legacy system and other forms of cultural capital. While this dynamic was especially pronounced among women whose parents were immigrants and thus unfamiliar with fraternity/sorority life, it also took on a decidedly racial bent in the narrative of third-generation Laura, who expressed how feelings of racial exclusion can persist even when an Asian American student is not from an immigrant family. This paper adds to our understanding of the complex intersections between race and immigrant/outsider status that work to perpetuate racial divides. It also adds to our understanding of how intersectionality not only affects students of color and their sense of self (e.g., being a woman of color); it also affects their perceptions of White students and White student subcultures like HWSL. The phrase "rich White girls" may be based on a stereotype, but it speaks volumes about the social distance that some participants perceived between themselves and the realm of HWSL.

This study has significant implications for educators on campus in three realms. First, these women's stories add to our understanding of why fraternity/sorority life remains divided

among racial lines. As higher education institutions continue to diversify, these elite groups generally remain the domain of White students (Chang & DeAngelo, 2002). Such self-segregation worries researchers and practitioners, given that such groups can isolate White students from the documented benefits of cross-racial interaction (Sidanius et al., 2008). Also, fraternity/sorority life can hinder efforts to foster a healthy campus racial climate if certain populations feel excluded from participating (Milem et al., 2005). To limit the analysis of race in HWSL to issues of overt, explicit racism is overly simplistic; this study points to the more complex ways that race influences campus life. Participants' articulations of how their identities as mostly first and second-generation Americans intersected with issues of class and race provide a more nuanced understanding of fraternity/sorority life demography that can assist educators in understanding the racial dynamics of campus subcultures. CRT and cultural capital theory are powerful tools that educators can use to diagnose patterns of interracial dynamics and social reproduction on campuses, unveiling how race and privilege are manifest in subtle, everyday ways apart from blaring incidents of obvious prejudice or exclusion.

Second, while fraternity/sorority life has been eliminated at some campuses, it continues to play a prominent role at many institutions. Part of the draw of fraternity/sorority life is the connections that membership can offer. While fraternity/sorority life may be a symbolic bastion of privilege, there have been few studies that have examined the role of social class in student perceptions of fraternity/sorority life, let alone how these categories intersect with the social forces of immigration and race for newer generations of college students. Not only does social class stratify access to college in the first place, but fraternity/sorority life can foster divisions and privilege within campus communities once students actually come to college. It is easy for social class to go unrecognized, and our conceptions of inclusive campus communities must take class into consideration. Furthermore, educators also need to consider whether university-sanctioned "pay to play" co-curricular opportunities are consistent with higher education's espoused values for inclusion and diversity. Granted, higher education as a system is already stratified by social class and race, but this study illuminates how the playing field in higher education is not only unequal at the point of access; university-supported co-curricular activities are additionally stratified by race and class, perpetuating a certain amount of inequality and privilege.

Finally, this study adds to the body of knowledge around first, 1.5, and second-generation (or "second-plus generation") Americans' experiences in higher education and society, with a specific focus on Asian American students. Previous works have examined Asian American students' experiences with student organizations such as religious, pan-ethnic, or cultural organizations (Kim, 2006; Museus, 2008; Rhoads, Lee & Yamada, 2002). Most of these studies suggest that Asian Americans use these groups to create dynamic articulations of ethnic identity rather than assimilating into the majority culture. Other recent work highlights the importance of family in immigrant and second-generation students' college experiences (Maramba, 2008). However, few scholars have studied second-plus generation Americans' encounters with and perceptions of predominantly White student subcultures, with the exception of studies addressing the broader campus racial climate (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Sidanius et al., 2008). Thus, this study contributes to our understanding of what happens when "newer" generations of Americans encounter an "older" American institution like HWSL. It also challenges educators to think about race beyond Black and White, recognizing the vast diversity of the college-going population.

Although first, 1.5, and second-generation Americans are entering college campuses in un-

precedented numbers, this influx of diversity has yet to transform fraternity/sorority life in meaningful ways on many college campuses. While there are no longer formal exclusionary policies banning students of color from HWSL, racial divides persist in part because of how race, class, and nativity interact to send messages about who is welcome and unwelcome in fraternity/sorority life. As noted earlier, the historically unequal configuration of HWSL begs serious questions about its congruency with higher education's value for inclusion and diversity. At the minimum, there are various routes campuses could take to making fraternity/sorority life more inclusive. At some universities, consideration of race needs to move from a Black/White binary to a more multicultural community that provides space for Asian American, Latino/a, Native American, and multiracial groups. Encouraging interactions between these groups could help break down some of the racial isolation that HWSL life is known for (Sidanius et al., 2008). Given participants' comments on their lack of insider knowledge about fraternity/sorority life, fraternity/sorority life offices can work to demystify the HWSL recruitment process for students. Fraternities and sororities should also be cognizant of the powerful messages that certain images project; for instance, what do "ghetto" themed parties say about the inclusivity of fraternity/sorority life? And finally, frank conversations about money, social class, and fraternity/sorority involvement can benefit students of all races.

Overall this article adds to our knowledge of how racial divides are perpetuated in campus life through complicated intersections between immigrant identity, race, and SES. As both America and higher education continue to diversify, the question remains of whether fraternity/sorority involvement is equipped to deal with the changing demographics of university settings. While some traditions are certainly worth cherishing, fraternities and sororities must look to the future in order to ensure their relevance in the 21st century.

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