

1-1-2017

Does Being Greek Work?: An Analysis of the Effect of Greek Affiliation on Grade Point Average and Retention

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Does Being Greek Work?: An Analysis of the Effect of
Greek Affiliation on Grade Point Average and Retention

(TITLE)

BY

Jade C. W. Jones

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2017

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Running head: DOES BEING GREEK WORK?

Does Being Greek Work?:

An Analysis of the Effect of Greek Affiliation on Grade Point Average and Retention

Jade C.W. Jones

Eastern Illinois University

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate if affiliated students are more academically successful and better retained compared to their nonaffiliated counterparts. Utilizing data given to me by the Committee on Retention Efforts (CORE), I found that affiliated students were more academically successfully and better retained than their nonaffiliated counterparts. Additionally, I found that affiliated women were more academically successful and better retained than their affiliated male and nonaffiliated counterparts. The title of my thesis is “Does Being Greek Work?,” and my findings indicate that being Greek does in fact work.

Dedication

My thesis is dedicated to the individuals that pushed me, supported me, and helped me create a sense of belonging. Without their love and support, I would not have found myself in undergrad and graduate school. These individuals were and still are there for me whenever I need a hand, and I hope one day to give that same support that you all gave me. I do not know how I would have gotten through undergrad and graduate school without you all. These individuals are my family, friends, and fraternity brothers. Thank you for the support and being with me through my journey.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee for their support and encouragement through this project. I would particularly like to thank Dr. Jennifer Sipes, my thesis advisor, for her assistance throughout this process. I am thankful for the many hours you took reading through and editing my work. To my other committee members, Dr. Eric Davidson and Dr. Mona Davenport, I am extremely appreciative for your knowledge and ensuring that I provide quality work.

To my supervisors, Kimberlie Moock and Echarial Gaines, thank you for supporting me and taking time out of your schedule to assist me through every step. More specifically, thank you to Kimberlie and the Committee on Retention Efforts (CORE) for the data. Without this data, my thesis would not be possible. Echarial, thank you for reading through my thesis and ensuring that my writing flowed.

To my cohort, thank you for the support network and the people that I call my EIU family. Namely, Cayla Maurer, Colton Janes, Kelsi Grubisich, Stacy Rowan, and Titus Young for always being there for me and helping me create a sense of belonging to Eastern. I honestly believe I would not have had made it through graduate school without your support.

I also want to thank my family back home for their support and encouragement throughout graduate school. Mom, Dad, and Sam – thank you for helping me achieve my goals and always making sure I am both emotionally and physically well.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Phi Beta Kappa Society was the first fraternity in the United States, founded in 1776 at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Fraternities were structured as literacy societies where members socialized with other members while discussing and debating the literary works of the time, helping one another improve on speaking, and becoming gentlemanly (Rudolph, 1990; Syrett, 2009). These members gained more than a friend. They gained a fraternal bond called a brotherhood to educate their members outside the classroom (Kimbrough, 2003; Syrett, 2009). Fraternities were and still are a means of learning outside the classroom and have provided a means of support for their members through the years (Hevel, Martin, Weeden, & Pascarella, 2015). The organization was the first of its kind and paved the way for similar groups to exist on college campuses across the country (Kimbrough, 2003).

These similar groups consisted of the women's fraternity and historically black Greek letter organizations. Adelphean Society, later known as Alpha Delta Pi, was the first all-female society, founded at Wesleyan Female in 1851 (National Panhellenic Conference). With time, more women's societies started to alter their names to Greek letters. For example, the Philomathean Society later became Phi Mu, and I.C. Sorosis later became Pi Beta Phi (National Panhellenic Conference). The first Greek letter women's fraternity was founded in 1870, Kappa Alpha Theta, and the term sorority was coined by Gamma Phi Beta in 1874. Like their male counterparts, these organizations paved the way for other organizations to be founded.

Another similar group of Greek letter organizations is the Black Greek letter organizations (BGLOs). Sigma Pi Phi is known as the first BGLO and was founded by a group of professionals at a college for physicians and dentists in 1904 (Kimbrough, 2003). This would be the start of Black Greeks or BGLOs being formed. The first collegiate student BGLO was Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and was founded in 1906 at Cornell University (Kimbrough, 2003). Following Alpha Phi Alpha, eight other organizations were created at various institutions: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. in 1908 at Howard University, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. in 1911 at Indiana University, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. in 1911 at Howard University, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. in 1913 at Howard University, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. in 1914 at Howard University, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. in 1920 at Howard University, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. in 1922 at Butler University, and Iota Phi Theta in 1963 at Morgan State University (Kimbrough, 2003). These nine organizations make up the National Pan-Hellenic Council, which is the governing body of all these fraternities and sororities. The founding of these fraternities and sororities started a legacy of creating new friendships (Syrett, 2009), a sense of belonging to the institutions (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007), and bettering student experiences both inside and outside the classroom (Astin, 1977).

Just as their legacy would describe, social college fraternities created a path for women's fraternities (sororities) and Black Greek Letter organizations to follow in their footsteps and create ways to impact the lives of young men and women across the United States through today (Syrett, 2009). College men and women have the opportunity to gain many benefits through acquiring fraternity and sorority membership, such as finding

their sense of belonging (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007), improving their GPA (Nelson, Halperin, Wasserman, Smith, & Graham, 2006), and furthering their cognitive development (Pike, 2000). Fraternities and sororities have served as the college families for many young men and women when they leave home to work toward a degree (Syrett, 2009). Members of social Greek letter organizations and staff who work with these groups also advertise that being a member of a fraternity/sorority increases the student's chance of academic success (Molasso, 2005). Involvement in a social fraternity/sorority has been linked with students' college happiness and has benefited institutions' retention rates (Astin, 1977; Pennington, Zvonkovic, & Wilson, 1989; Tinto, 1993).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between fraternity/sorority membership and academic achievement as defined by grade point average and first-year to second-year retention rates. Data will be collected at Eastern Illinois University, a predominately white, mid-sized, regional public university in the Midwest.

Research Questions

Research questions addressed and answered through this study will help build a foundation for understanding the relationship between membership in Greek-letter organizations and student success.

The following research questions guide this study:

RQ 1. What is the nature of the relationship between membership in a fraternity/sorority and grade point averages?

- Is there a significant difference in grade point averages of

fraternity/sorority members and nonmembers?

- Is there a significant difference in grade point averages of female sorority members and female non-sorority members?
- Is there a significant difference in grade point averages of male fraternity members and male non-fraternity members?

Researchers found that there is no negative effect on a student's grade point average if they join a fraternity/sorority. (Crookston, 1960; Kaludis & Zatzkin, 1966; Pike & Askew, 1990; Porta, 1991; Prusok & Walsh, 1964; Willingham, 1962). There is also information about women achieving higher grade point averages compared to their fraternity and nonaffiliated counterparts (DeBard & Sacks, 2010).

RQ 2. What is the nature of the relationship between membership in a fraternity/sorority and first-year to second-year retention rates?

- Is there a significant difference in first-year to second-year retention rates of fraternity/sorority members and non-members?
- Is there a significant difference in first-year to second-year retention rates of female sorority members and female non-sorority members?
- Is there a significant difference in first-year to second-year retention rates of male fraternity members and male non-fraternity members?

Membership in a fraternity/sorority has been connected with student retention for a long period of time, and research has been conducted on this relationship (Astin, 1977; Pennington, Zvonkovic, & Wilson, 1989; Tinto, 1993). This link is associated with the student's sense of belonging to the fraternity/sorority and to the institution (O'Keeffe, 2013).

Significance of the Study

There has been much research conducted on fraternity/sorority membership and its impact on the student college experience, but for the most part, the research has focused on hazing (Nuwer, 2001), sexual assault (Kirby & Wintrup, 2002) and alcohol abuse (Boyd, Howard, & Zucker, 1995). There is a limited amount of research available

that analyzes fraternity/sorority member academic achievement and retention rates. This study aimed to broaden the scope of fraternity/sorority membership research by researching the relationship between students' academic achievement and retention rates. Advisors, presidents, and organization recruitment chairs may gain useful information to utilize when speaking with students and parents about joining social fraternities and sororities.

Definition of Terms

This study utilized a number of terms that require definitions. The terms were defined as follows for the purpose of this study:

Academic Success: A student maintains a grade point average that is in good standing with the university and consistently progresses towards graduation.

Fraternity: A group of male college students who share a mutual purpose building a friendship (Interfraternity Council).

Interfraternity Council (IFC): Campus level governing body for the North-American Interfraternity Conference for 73 (inter)national fraternities (Interfraternity Council).

Panhellenic Conference (PHC): Umbrella organization for 26 Greek-letter (inter)national women's sororities (National Panhellenic Conference).

National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC): Nine international Greek letter fraternities and sororities that are historically African American (National Pan-Hellenic Council).

Retention: The number of first-year students who continue on to be second-year students at the same institution.

Sense of Belonging: Part of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs explaining a psychological need of feeling one belongs to a community or organization (Amroach, 1998).

Sorority: A society for female students who attend a university (Webster's New World Dictionary, 2004).

Limitations

A limitation to this study is a lack of analysis of data for students who are members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC). Students who are members of NPHC fraternities/sororities have a different recruitment process and can only join an NPHC fraternity/sorority after their freshman year (Kimbrough, 2003). The data for this study only includes students who are members of an Interfraternity Council organization or a Panhellenic Conference organization because these students joined during the first semester of their first-year of college. Additionally, there are no numbers identifying when a student joined a fraternity or sorority (fall semester vs. spring semester).

Summary

Chapter I provided an overview of the proposed study including a brief explanation of the history and purpose of fraternities and sororities. The significance of the study was discussed and relevant terms were defined. Chapter II will include a review of the literature focused on academic performance, first-year to second-year retention rates, and sense of belonging. Chapter III will discuss the methodology for the study and outline how data was collected and analyzed. Chapter IV will discuss the results of the study, and Chapter V will offer recommendations related to the research findings.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Social fraternities/sororities benefit their members and their institution through their academic performance and retention rates, as well as the sense of belonging that they create. Academic performance involves examining students' GPAs and determining if fraternity/sorority members' GPAs are affected negatively or positively by their membership in the organization. Retention rates are examined to better understand if students are staying at the institution and if membership in a fraternity/sorority has an effect on students staying from their freshman year to their sophomore year. Lastly, researchers have examined students' sense of belonging and the impact of finding a place/organization where students feel they belong. Membership in a fraternity/sorority impacts academic performance, freshman to sophomore retention, and sense of belonging.

Astin's Student Involvement Theory

Alexander Astin's Theory of Involvement explains how student involvement is essential for the students' cognitive development. Astin explained that student involvement can be classified by how much energy students put into their academics, how much time students spend on campus, how involved students are in organizations and activities, and how students interact with faculty/staff (Astin, 1984). He explained that the factors that influence student involvement are living in a residence hall, involvement in extracurricular activities, participation in intercollegiate athletics, employment with a part-time campus job, and joining a social fraternity/sorority. These different factors are linked to students having lower dropout rates, greater academic

involvement, and a greater sense of belonging to the institution (Astin, 1977, 1984). Astin's (1977, 1984, 1993) research noted that fraternity/sorority members were more involved and that involvement was linked with a positive effect on the students' learning and cognitive development. In all, Astin's theory of involvement explains how students who are more involved in college have greater learning and personal development outcomes.

Academic Performance

Many skeptics of the fraternity and sorority life community believe that membership in a fraternity or sorority will hinder the GPA of students, but, in fact, there are studies that counter these critics. Studies have found that being a member of a fraternity/sorority has no negative effect on a student's GPA (Crookston, 1960; Kaludis & Zarkin, 1966; Pike & Askew, 1990; Porta, 1991; Prusok & Walsh, 1964; Willingham, 1962). In a study on the impact fraternity/sorority membership had on first-year students, researchers found that the GPA of fraternity/sorority first-year students was positively affected compared to students who did not join in their first-year of college (DeBard & Sacks, 2010). This study also found that women who joined a sorority in their first year earned higher grades than their male counterparts who joined a fraternity (DeBard & Sacks, 2010). Past research also found that membership in a fraternity/sorority benefited the students' GPA throughout the students' college careers. A study conducted by Nelson et al. (2006) analyzed two cohort groups from 1991 and 1993 to find how students' GPAs were affected by their membership in a fraternity/sorority. The researchers found that students who joined a fraternity/sorority in their first semester earned higher GPAs than their nonaffiliated counterparts, but the difference between affiliated students and

nonaffiliated students' GPAs become closer and closer through each semester.

Membership in a fraternity/sorority had no negative effect on the students' GPA.

Gaining membership in a fraternity/sorority has benefited students' GPAs, but which semester they join the organization may influence to what extent their GPA is affected. DeBard and Sacks (2010) found that men who joined a fraternity in the spring of their first year in college earned a 3.03 cumulative GPA compared to their fall (2.80) and non-affiliate counterparts (2.78). Women who joined a sorority in the second semester of college earned a cumulative GPA of a 3.26 compared to their fall counterparts (3.00). Nelson et al. (2006) examined academic data for a cohort from 1991 and 1993 and found that both men and women who joined in the second semester of their freshman year had higher GPAs than individuals who joined during their first semester and nonaffiliated members.

Van Etten, Pressley, McInerney, and Liem (2008) conducted a study to examine how and why fraternity/sorority members were more academically successful than their nonaffiliated counterparts. A quantitative survey was sent to senior students who were members of fraternities/sororities and nonaffiliated students to understand what motivated them to be academically successful. This study found that social factors were important. Socially, fraternity/sorority members were motivated by their brothers/sisters, had connections through their affiliation to gain knowledge on a subject, and were responsible for meeting GPA requirements within their organization. Nonaffiliated students who were not involved in an organization and did not play a collegiate sport were typically not motivated to do homework or study for exams. Van Etten et al. (2008)

indicated that motivation is a key factor for a student's academic success and a key reason why fraternity/sorority members are academically successful.

Freshman to Sophomore Retention

Retention of college students is a multifaceted issue where institutional and social factors come into play when the retention of an institution is being affected (Brunsden, Davies, Shevlin, & Bracken, 2000). The institutional impact consists of the economic status of the college/university (DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004). There is a loss of tuition income for institutions whose retention rates are low and are lowering. This also has an effect on the integrity of the college/university and how the students are adapting to the college/university (Bean, 1990). Colleges/Universities cannot afford to lose students because they then lose tuition, fees, and alumni contributions (DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004). Brunsden et al. (2000) stated, "Whether institutional revenue is derived directly from tuition income or indirectly from state governmental support, retention is a fundamental element in fiscal solvency for many campuses" (p.305). The consequences of a student not returning to an institution include financial loss, lowering of graduation rates, and an effect on key stakeholders of the school (Lau, 2003). However, there are ways for bettering retention rates, and that is through campus involvement (Astin, 1984). One type of campus involvement that has been linked with affecting retention rates significantly is membership in a fraternity/sorority (Nelson et al., 2006).

Fraternity and sorority membership has been linked with benefiting college/university retention rates for many years (Astin, 1977; Pennington, Zvonkovic, & Wilson, 1989; Tinto, 1993). Nelson et al. (2006) looked at two university cohorts and

found that fraternity/sorority membership greatly benefited institutional retention rates. The researchers compared fraternity/sorority members and nonaffiliated students from two separate cohorts from 1991 and 1993. In 1991, fraternity members had an 88 percent retention rate compared to their nonaffiliated counterparts who had a 72% retention rate. In 1993, the retention rates for fraternity members was 93% while the retention rate of their nonaffiliated counterparts was 73%. In 1991, sororities in this study had a retention rate of a 93% compared to a retention rate for their nonaffiliated women of 67%. In 1993, the retention rate for sorority members rose to 97%, compared to a 71% retention rate for nonaffiliated counterparts.

DeBard and Sacks (2010) provided information on how first-year students were impacted by gaining membership in a fraternity/sorority. They explained that if the nonaffiliated students were retained like the fraternity/sorority members who joined in the fall, then the freshman to sophomore retention would have increased by 2,745 students, or 9.2%. Astin (1984) explained that membership in a fraternity/sorority helps with retaining students because there is a sense of belonging both to the organization and the university.

Sense of Belonging

Maslow explained that belonging consists of two desires, seeing value in life and feeling accepted, that an individual needs to feel a sense of belonging in a community (Amroach, 1998). He emphasized the importance of giving and receiving love from others so that an individual can feel they are wanted and needed in a community. By looking at other theories that use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, there is an understanding that students need to feel a sense of belonging to feel connected to the university. A study

on immigrant college students found that these types of students feel a lesser sense of belonging to the university (Stebbleton, Huesman Jr, & Kuzhabekova, 2010).

Additionally, immigrant students did not achieve high academics because of the physiological issues the students suffered while they tried to adapt to a new environment. This can be related back to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs where an individual needs to feel loved and appreciated by another individual or group of people so that the student can feel a sense of belonging (Amroach, 1998). With this, immigrant students who started to feel more of a sense of belonging started to achieve higher academics because they felt that they belonged to a community and the university as a whole (Stebbleton et al., 2010).

A study conducted at the University of South Australia explained how important it is for a student to interact with other students (Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002). Fisher et al. (2002) looked at students who were studying abroad at the university to determine how students built a sense of belonging in a group and the importance of social gatherings for building a community. The researchers used mixed methods to better understand how relationships were built through each social group. By the end of the study, they found that interacting with people who were in similar situations helped students feel a sense of belonging to the university (Fisher et al., 2002).

Strayhorn (2012) found that students who were more involved in their organization built a greater sense of belonging to their organization because they contributed to the team and felt they had a purpose in that particular organization. Students were retained and were academically successful because they felt they needed to contribute more to their organization. Strayhorn (2012) found that students felt they could

ask for help from other members of their organization, thus building a connection with others. Strayhorn also found that students felt more of a connection to the university through their engagement with their organization. The connections the students made by being involved in a club or organization assisted in the students' engagement to the university, creating a positive effect on the students' academic performance and social life.

Membership Intake Process

Interfraternity Council (IFC), National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), and National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) membership intake processes are all unique. The IFC intake process can be either informal or formal, depending on the institution (IFC). The informal process consists of the fraternity men hosting an event where potential new members can have a conversation and are asked to join the fraternity. The formal process includes various rounds of recruitment. Potential new members visit each fraternity house before being invited to join the fraternity. This formal process can take up to a week, and many rules keep the formal recruitment process structured (IFC). For National Panhellenic Conference sororities, the membership intake process is very structured and has many rules for the formal recruitment process (PHC). Formal recruitment can happen either in the fall or spring, depending on the institutions. Ladies who go through the process participate in four to five rounds where they visit each sorority to learn about the sororities' missions, philanthropies, and members of the organization (PHC). After each round, potential members select the organization they wish to visit the next day, and the sororities pick which ladies they wish to see again. Both the IFC and PHC can take

members who are first-year first-semester students, and there are few requirements that they must meet before joining an IFC or PHC organization.

The membership intake process for National Pan-Hellenic fraternities and sororities is significantly different. Students who wish to join an NPHC fraternity/sorority can join after their first-year (NPHC). Each of the NPHC fraternities/sororities has a different intake process that is determined by the organization's international headquarters (NPHC). The process can be different for each of the nine organizations, but the process consists of attending informational meetings where all of the NPHC organizations on that campus are represented. Those informational meetings are followed by individual informational/interest meetings and an application process for the organization (Whipple, Baier, & Grady, 1991). Once these meetings are completed, potential new members must meet the organization's requirements, which differ from organization to organization. When members are accepted into a NPHC organization, they go through the new member process (NPHC). Unlike the IFC and PHC recruitment process, the NPHC recruitment process includes many steps before students can go through the new member education process.

Summary

Chapter II provides information on academic performance, first-year to second-year retention, and sense of belonging of fraternity/sorority members, as compared to their nonaffiliated counterparts. Chapter III will explain the methodology used in this particular study.

CHAPTER III

Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology that was used to conduct this study. This chapter will explain the design of the study, research site and participants, data collection protocol, and data analysis process.

Design of Study

The study examined the relationship between fraternity/sorority members and nonaffiliated students' academic achievement and retention rates. The research was accomplished through analyzing past data collected by the Committee on Retention Efforts at Eastern Illinois University.

Research Site and Participants

This research study was conducted at Eastern Illinois University (EIU), a public regional Midwestern university. The total population of EIU in the Fall 2015 semester was 8,365 students. Of this population, 1,319 students were members of a fraternity or sorority and divided up between three different councils. These councils included the Interfraternity Council (n = 500), National Panhellenic Conference (n = 746), and National Pan-Hellenic Council (n = 73) (Eastern Illinois University, 2015).

Data Collection

Quantitative data for this study were collected by the EIU Committee on Retention Efforts. This data was obtained from the Director of New Student and Family Programs (member of the Committee on Retention Efforts) after permission was granted from the Institutional Review Board. Data was requested for students who were first-year students in Fall 2015. The students' names and identification numbers were removed

from the data set after it was coded for fraternity/sorority membership and non-affiliation.

Data Analysis

This study had two research questions, each of which had three statistical hypotheses. A two-way *t*-test of independence was used to test the statistical hypotheses for the first research question. Assumptions of the *t*-test were tested using the dependent variable scores. Data followed a continuous scale and was collected from a random sample. A check for outliers was made through the use of SPSS; significant outliers were removed from the data sample. A Wilks-Shapiro test of normality was used to analyze the revised dependent variable score to assure data results on a normal distribution. Lastly, a Levene's test for homogeneity was performed.

A chi-square test of independence was used to test the statistical hypotheses for the second research question. The Cramer's V test was used to identify the strength of the chi square.

The first research question for this study was, "What is the nature of the relationship between membership in a fraternity/sorority and grade point averages?" This research question had three statistical hypotheses. The first statistical hypothesis was, "Is there a significant difference in grade point average of fraternity/sorority members and nonmembers?" The null hypothesis for this statistical hypothesis was that there is no difference in GPA between Greek members and non-members. The alternative hypothesis was that there is a difference in GPA between members and non-members. This statistical hypothesis was tested using a 2-way *t*-test of independence comparing two different means with $p < 0.05$. The dependent variable was grade point averages; the

independent variable was membership/affiliation with a Greek organization (Greek = 1; non-Greek = 0). Cohen's D for the effect size was found using an on-line program.

The second statistical hypothesis for RQ1 was, "Is there a significant difference in grade point averages of female sorority members and female non-members?" The null hypothesis for this statistical hypothesis was that there is no difference in GPA between female sorority members and female non-members. The alternative hypothesis was that there is a difference in GPA between female sorority members and female non-members. This statistical hypothesis was tested using a 2-way t -test of independence comparing two different means with $p = 0.05$. The dependent variable was grade point averages; the independent variable was membership/affiliation with a sorority (sorority = 1, non-Greek = 0). Cohen's D for the effect size was found using an on-line program.

The third statistical hypothesis for RQ1 was, "Is there a significant difference in grade point averages of male fraternity members and male non-members?" The null hypothesis for this statistical hypothesis was that there is no difference in GPA between male fraternity members and male non-members. The alternative hypothesis was that there is a difference in GPA between fraternity members and non-members. This statistical hypothesis was tested using a 2-way t -test of independence comparing two different means with $p = 0.05$. The dependent variable was grade point averages; the independent variable was membership/affiliation with a fraternity (fraternity = 1, non-Greek = 0). Cohen's D for the effect size was found using an on-line program.

The second research question for this study was, "What is the nature of the relationship between membership in a fraternity/sorority and retention rates?" This research question had three statistical hypotheses. The first statistical hypothesis was, "Is

there a significant difference in retention rates for fraternity/sorority members and nonmembers?" The null hypothesis for this statistical hypothesis was that there is no difference in retention rates between Greek members and non-members. The alternative hypothesis was that there is a difference in retention rates between members and non-members. This statistical hypothesis was tested using a chi square test of independence to determine if there is a significant association between the two variables with $p = 0.05$. The dependent variable was retention rates; the independent variable was membership/affiliation with a Greek organization (Greek = 1; non-Greek = 0). Cramer's V for the effect size was found using an on-line program.

The second statistical hypothesis for RQ2 was, "Is there a significant difference in retention rates of female sorority members and female non-members?" The null hypothesis for this statistical hypothesis was that there is no difference in retention rates between female sorority members and female non-members. The alternative hypothesis was that there is a difference in retention rates between sorority members and non-members. This statistical hypothesis was tested using a chi square test of independence to determine if there is a significant association between the two variables with $p = 0.05$. The dependent variable was retention rates; the independent variable was membership/affiliation with a sorority (sorority = 1, non-Greek = 0). Cramer's V for the effect size was found using an on-line program.

The third statistical hypothesis for RQ2 was, "Is there a significant difference in retention rates of male fraternity members and male non-members?" The null hypothesis for this statistical hypothesis was that there is no difference in retention rates between male fraternity members and male non-members. The alternative hypothesis was that

there is a difference in retention rates between male fraternity members and male non-members. This statistical hypothesis was tested using a chi square test of independence to determine if there is a significant association between the two variables with $p = 0.05$. The dependent variable was retention rates; the independent variable was membership/affiliation with a fraternity (fraternity = 1, non-Greek = 0). Cramer's V for the effect size was found using an on-line program.

Summary

Using a quantitative method, there was an understanding of how fraternity/sorority members are different or similar to their nonaffiliated counterparts. There were no students involved in this study, but student data was used to help determine if there are similarities or differences. The data came from a mid-sized Midwestern four-year state university, Eastern Illinois University, and the data came from the class of 2015. The fraternity/sorority academic experience can be better understood through a quantitative method and by correctly analyzing the data.

Chapter IV

Results

In this chapter, the data and results for the research questions will be provided. The data set was collected by the EIU Committee on Retention Efforts and was obtained from the Director of New Student and Family Programs (a member of the Committee on Retention Efforts). The data set consisted of first-year students from Fall 2015 with names and identification numbers removed ($n = 1,074$). Students in the data set were first coded by gender (males = 404; females = 670). After coding for gender, students were further coded by Greek affiliation and non-affiliation. Of the 404 males in the data set, 329 were not affiliated with a social fraternity, while 75 were affiliated with a fraternity. Of the 670 females in the data set, 528 were not affiliated with a social sorority, while 142 were affiliated with a sorority. The data set was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science™ (SPSS) Version 24.

RQ1: What is the nature of the relationship between membership in a fraternity/sorority and grade point averages?

The first statistical hypothesis for RQ1 examined whether there was a significant difference in grade point average between fraternity/sorority members and non-members. To determine the difference between the two groups, a two-way independent t -test was used. The t -test revealed a significant difference between grade point averages, $t(df) = 4.413$ $p < .05$. The mean grade point average of nonaffiliated students ($n = 857$) was 2.62 ($SD = .99$). The mean grade point average of affiliated students ($n=217$) was 2.93 ($SD=.63$). Members of the Greek community earned higher GPAs than nonaffiliated students.

The second statistical hypothesis for RQ1 examined whether there was a significant difference in grade point average between female sorority members and female non-members. To determine the difference between the two groups, a two-way independent *t*-test was used. The *t*-test revealed a significant difference between grade point averages, $t(df) = -3.86, p < .05$. The mean grade point average of nonaffiliated female students ($n = 528$) was 2.71 ($SD = .95$). The mean grade point average of affiliated female students ($n = 142$) was 3.04 ($SD = .60$). Members of sororities earned higher GPAs than non-sorority members.

The third statistical hypothesis for RQ1 examined whether there was a significant difference in grade point average between male fraternity members and male non-members. To determine the difference between the two groups, a two-way independent *t*-test was used. The *t*-test revealed a significant difference between grade point averages, $t(df) = -2.078, p < .05$. The mean grade point average of nonaffiliated male students ($n = 329$) was 2.46 ($SD = 1.05$). The mean grade point average of affiliated male students ($n = 75$) was 2.72 ($SD = .66$). Members of fraternities earned higher GPAs than non-fraternity members.

All three statistical hypotheses for RQ1 revealed a significant relationship between membership in a fraternity/sorority and higher grade point averages.

Table 4.1*Grade Point Average of Affiliated Compared to Nonaffiliated Students*

Aggregate	Gender		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Affiliated <i>n</i> =217	Nonaffiliated <i>n</i> =857		
Female	\bar{x} = 3.04 SD = (.000)	\bar{x} = 2.71 SD = (.000)	-3.877*	668
Male	\bar{x} = 2.72 SD = (.000)	\bar{x} = 2.46 SD = (.000)	-2.078*	402

Note *: $p < .05$ Standard Deviations appear in parenthesis below means

RQ2: What is the nature of the relationship between membership in a fraternity/sorority and retention rates?

The first statistical hypothesis for RQ2 examined whether there was a significant difference in first-year to second-year retention rates for fraternity/sorority members and nonaffiliated students. To determine the difference between the two groups, a chi-square test of independence was used. The overall retention rate of all students in the data set was 76.2% ($n = 818$). The chi-square test of independence found that 92.2% ($n = 200$) of students affiliated with a fraternity or sorority were retained from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016; only 72.1% of nonaffiliated students ($n = 618$) were retained from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016, $\chi^2(1, N = 1074) = 38.36, p < .05$. The relationship between affiliated students and nonaffiliated students was significant

The second statistical hypothesis for RQ2 examined whether there was a significant difference in first-year to second-year retention rates for female sorority members and female non-members. To determine the difference between the two groups, a chi-square test of independence was used. The overall retention rate of all females in the data set was 76.6% ($n = 513$). The chi-square test of independence found that 93.0%

($n = 132$) of females affiliated with a sorority were retained from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016; only 72.2% ($n = 381$) of nonaffiliated females were retained from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016, $\chi^2(1, N = 670) = 26.98, p < .05$. The relationship between sorority and nonaffiliated students was significant.

The third statistical hypothesis for RQ2 examined whether there was a significant difference in first-year to second-year retention rates for male fraternity members and male non-members. To determine the difference between the two groups, a chi-square test of independence was used. The overall retention rate of all males in the data set was 75.5% ($n = 305$). The chi-square test of independence found that 90.7% ($n = 68$) of males affiliated with a fraternity were retained from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016; only 72.0% ($n = 237$) of nonaffiliated males were retained from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016, $\chi^2(1, N = 404) = 11.46, p < .05$. The relationship between fraternity and nonaffiliated men was significant.

All three statistical hypotheses for RQ2 found that membership in a fraternity or sorority led to higher retention rates.

Table 4.2

Table 2. First-Year to Second-Year Retention Rates of Affiliated Students Compared to Nonaffiliated Students

Aggregate	Gender		X^2	df
	Affiliated $n = 217$	Nonaffiliated $n = 857$		
Female	132 (93%)	381 (72%)	26.981	.201
Male	68 (90%)	237 (72%)	11.459	.168

Notes: $p < .05$ Standard Deviations appear in parenthesis below means

Summary

In summary, the results of both research questions indicate that students who are affiliated with a fraternity or sorority achieve higher grade point averages and are better retained by an institution. The chi-square test of independence showed evidence of a relationship, as the p-value was less than 0.05, which allowed the researcher to reject the null hypothesis.

This chapter has shared the results that were found regarding the research questions articulated in Chapter I. The implications of these results will be discussed in Chapter V.

Chapter V

Discussion

Chapter V will compare the findings of this study with the previous research discussed in Chapter II, address recommendations for higher education professionals and Greek life professionals, and offer recommendations for future research. Analysis of the data provided by the Committee on Retention Efforts (CORE) found a difference in grade point average between affiliated students and their nonaffiliated counterparts, as well as a difference in GPA between affiliated men and affiliated women. I also found that both male and female affiliated students were retained in higher percentages than their nonaffiliated counterparts.

Grade Point Average

The findings of this study support the findings of past research on differences in GPA and retention rates between affiliated students and their nonaffiliated counterparts. Alexander Astin's Theory of Involvement explained how student involvement is essential for students' cognitive development. Astin et al. (1984) explained factors that influence student involvement; one of those factors is joining a social fraternity/sorority. Astin conducted research to find if student GPAs were hindered by involvement in a fraternity/sorority; he found there to be no negative effect on the students' GPAs (Astin, 1977, 1983, 1993). Additional researchers have supported Astin's findings regarding no negative effect on students' GPAs related to involvement in a fraternity/sorority (Crookston, 1960; Kaludis & Zatkan, 1966; Pike & Askew, 1990; Porta, 1991; Prusok & Walsh, 1964; Willingham, 1962). Like past researchers, I, too, found that there is no negative effect on students' GPAs from involvement in a social fraternity/sorority.

Students who joined a fraternity/sorority in Fall 2015 had a cumulative GPA of a 2.93, compared to their nonaffiliated counterparts whose cumulative GPA was 2.62.

Research conducted by DeBard and Sacks (2010) found a difference between male and female affiliated students in terms of GPA. DeBard and Sacks found that women who joined a sorority during their second semester had a higher cumulative GPA as a group than their fall counterparts; the same difference was found for affiliated men. DeBard and Sacks (2010) discovered that female affiliated students earned a cumulative GPA of 3.26, while their male counterparts earned a cumulative GPA of 3.00. Like DeBard and Sacks, I, too, found that female students had significantly higher GPAs than their male counterparts. Female affiliated students earned a cumulative GPA of 3.04, compared to the 2.71 cumulative GPA of their nonaffiliated counterparts. Male affiliated students in this study earned a 2.72 cumulative GPA; their nonaffiliated counterparts earned a 2.46 cumulative GPA.

First-Year to Second-Year Retention

Previous research has been conducted on retention rates and their relationship with fraternity/sorority involvement. Astin's Theory of Student Involvement explains that campus involvement has been linked positively with retention rates (1984). One example of campus involvement is fraternity/sorority membership. Studies found that fraternity/sorority membership benefits institutions' retention rates for many years (Astin, 1977; Pennington, Zvonkovic, & Wilson, 1989; Tinto, 1993). Additionally, Nelson et al. (2006) compared two university cohorts and found that affiliated students had a 93% retention rate, compared to the 73% retention rate of their nonaffiliated counterparts. DeBard and Sacks (2010) provided information about first-years being impacted by

gaining membership in a fraternity/sorority. DeBard and Sacks (2010) found that the retention rate of affiliated students was 92% from the first-year to the second-year, compared to 72% for nonaffiliated students. Additionally, DeBard and Sacks (2010) found that females had better retention rates than their male counterparts. In my study, affiliated female students had a retention rate of 93%, compared to a retention rate of 72% for their nonaffiliated counterparts. Affiliated male students' retention rate was 90%, compared to a 72% completion rate for their nonaffiliated counterparts.

Recommendations

As a result of my research, I recommend that staff in higher education and fraternity and sorority life communities provide programs and scholarships for affiliated students, as well as programs for affiliated students to learn more about their community and what benefits they bring to their institutions. These programs can be divided up between chairmanships (i.e. recruitment chairs, safety management, new member educators, etc.), presidents' meetings, and new member programs. These programs can help address issues that hinder academic performance and bring more comradery within the fraternity/sorority community. Programs can promote academic achievement by incorporating recognition functions where the fraternity and sorority life offices acknowledge individuals in the community who excel in academics. Additionally, fraternity and sorority communities can benefit from supporting Greek honorary societies such as Gamma Sigma Alpha, Order of Omega, and Rho Lambda, societies that only accept members in the fraternity/sorority community who have high academic standards. Other recommendations consist of working with an institution's library to log study hours, which are then forwarded to fraternity and sorority life offices. Collaboration with

faculty and staff who are members of a fraternity or sorority can be an additional resource to students; these faculty and staff are able to relate to students' values and the organizations' values.

Along with academic programs, higher education and fraternity and sorority life offices should promote programs in which students can build a sense of belonging within the community. Programs can consist of helping chapter leadership put on successful retreats so their organizations can maximize their time effectively, and members of the organization can feel they belong to the fraternity/sorority. Along with retreats, institutions can sponsor programs such as Phired Up, a company that helps fraternity/sorority members become the best version of themselves. These programs allow affiliated students to come together to discuss issues within their community, network with each other, and build their community. These events and programs can help with retention because students can get involved within their fraternity/sorority, the Greek community, and the institution.

Along with programs, institutions and fraternity and sorority life offices can offer scholarships for members of fraternities and sororities. Many organizations have their own scholarships through their chapter or headquarters, but there should be additional support through the institution's foundation office. Fraternity and sorority life offices could work in close collaboration with the foundation office to find affiliated alumni who are able to endow scholarships for members who achieve high academics and who are involved with council leadership. Students who are part of the North-American Interfraternity Conference, National Panhellenic Conference, or National Pan-Hellenic

Council executive boards could be awarded a scholarship to help with their organizational dues or tuition.

I also recommend that higher education and student affairs professionals make sure nonaffiliated students get involved and that their successes are celebrated. I recommend that the student life office and orientation office provide more opportunities for students to get involved on campus. This should include connecting with students before they come to campus. Specifically at Eastern Illinois University, the Student Life Office and New Student and Family Programs Office should connect with students during Debut (orientation) and Prowl (Welcome Weekend) about the importance of getting involved on campus. These connections may include small group discussions during which students take a survey to express what organizations interest them. The data from the survey can be given to the student life office, which could then adapt their organization fair to best fit the interests of the incoming students. Orientation programming could also include an informational meeting about creating new organizations so new students can learn the steps to creating an organization. Another opportunity that the student life office could provide is educational sessions for leadership development. This could be done by partnering with LeaderShape, a company that educates individuals to lead with integrity and helps people learn leadership skills. Along with providing resources for incoming students and current students, the student life office can celebrate organizations and student leaders who achieve high academics. These celebrations can be programs where the student life office partners with Academic Affairs and the university's foundation to celebrate those students who achieve academic excellence and provide scholarships for these students.

Fraternity Recommendation

My recommendation for higher education and fraternity and sorority life offices for fraternity men is to give additional support to these organizations. The academic performance of fraternity men lagged behind the academic performance of their female counterparts. My recommendation is to mandate study hours for organizations whose cumulative GPA is lower than the all-male average. Additional resources need to be provided to the academics chairs of organizations, and there must be communication with headquarters, advisors, and presidents of organizations regarding the consequences of continued poor academic performance. If a fraternity continues to fall below the all-male average, then that fraternity should not be recognized at the campus any longer. My recommendation for retention rates is for higher education and fraternity and sorority life to provide additional support for programs so that fraternity men can better understand/discuss their fraternity's values.

Sorority Recommendation

I recommend that higher education and fraternity and sorority life offices recognize high achieving sororities and the women who are part of those sororities. Sorority women achieved a higher cumulative GPA and higher retention rate than both affiliated men and nonaffiliated women. My recommendation is to recognize those organizations who continuously achieve academic excellence and to award scholarships to the women who perform especially well academically. I recommend the presence of Rho Lambda on campuses, an honorary organization for sorority women who are involved in the Panhellenic and university community while achieving high academics.

Nonaffiliated Recommendation

I recommend that higher education and student affairs professionals promote student involvement for nonaffiliated students. Higher education and student affairs professionals should provide nonaffiliated students with resources and guidance so they receive the same amount of support that affiliated students receive. These forms of support include leadership programs, retreats, recognition programs, and scholarships. Student Affairs professionals can provide leadership programs that help students learn more about how to lead a group of their peers and develop leadership skills that can be used for their future profession. Students can attend retreats where they can learn more about themselves, leadership skills, and professional development skills. Recognition programs can be held so that students will be acknowledged for their hard work, either within their organizations or inside the classroom. Along with these recognition programs, students can be awarded scholarships based on their work or involvement within an organization.

Future Research

For future research, I recommend the comparison of more cohorts, use of a different methodology to understand why affiliated students achieve a higher GPA and are better retained, and an analysis of how sense of belonging plays a role in GPA and retention. In my research, I only studied one cohort. To gain a better understanding of the difference between affiliated students and nonaffiliated students, more cohorts need to be studied. I recommend looking at five cohorts to see if there are minor or significant differences. This could help the fraternity and sorority life offices gain a better

understanding of programs needed to help students and where the community either excelled or worsened.

My second recommendation is to use a qualitative approach to identify why affiliated students achieve higher GPAs and are better retained. Studying sense of belonging is important to understand if sense of belonging affects students' academic performance and retention. My third recommendation is to study the graduation rates of affiliated and nonaffiliated students. My fourth recommendation is to use the same methodology, but look at third year to fourth year grade point average and retention so the research can show students who are affiliated in Multicultural Greek Letter organizations. My last recommendation is to run the exact same research, but to examine expected family contribution (financial aid information) instead of gender. These recommendations can help higher education professionals, along with fraternity and sorority life directors, understand the importance of Greek Life to institutions.

Conclusion

Through this research, I have examined the relationship between membership in a fraternity/sorority and grade point average along with the first-year to second-year retention rates. I found that fraternity/sorority members achieve higher grade point averages than their nonaffiliated counterparts. Additionally, I found that affiliated students are better retained than their nonaffiliated counterparts. My findings were consistent with past research conducted by Astin (1984), DeBard and Sacks (2010), Nelson, Halperin, Wasserman, Smith, and Graham (2006). Through this research, I made recommendations for higher education, along with fraternity and sorority life professionals, that will assist with the continued improvement of the academic

performance and retention of members of the fraternity and sorority community.

Additionally, I made specific recommendations for fraternities and sororities that can benefit the community and the institution. Along with recommendations, I provided information for further research consisting of analyzing more cohorts and a different methodology. In the beginning, I asked, "Does Greek Work?" This research indicates that Greek does work.

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