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**A GROUNDED THEORY OF THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN  
AMERICAN MALES IN BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS**

by  
David Julius Ford, Jr.

B.A., May 1998, Wake Forest University  
M.A., May 2011, Wake Forest University

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

May 2014

Approved by:

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Danica G. Hays  
(Chair and Methodologist)

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Kaprea F. Johnson (Member)

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Darryll H. Lewis (Member)

## ABSTRACT

### A GROUNDED THEORY OF THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATIONS

David Julius Ford, Jr.  
Old Dominion University, 2014  
Director: Dr. Danica G. Hays

Studies have shown that involvement in a student organization can improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students (Harper, 2006b; Robertson & Mason, 2008; Williams & Justice, 2010). Further, Harper, Byars, and Jelke (2005) stated that African American fraternities and sororities (i.e., Black Greek-letter organizations [BGLOs]) are the primary venues by which African American students become involved on campus. This grounded theory study examined the relationship between membership in a BGLO and the overall college experiences of African American male college students at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Eleven themes were identified in the study indicating that membership had a positive impact on the college experiences of African American male college students at a PWI. The study also examined the perceptions of counselors and other college student personnel regarding their role in improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students. Participants indicated that their role is to provide academic and psychosocial support for these students; they offered strategies for PWIs to improve the persistence and success of these students. Implications for counseling, higher education, and Black Greek life are provided.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a rationale for this study. First, statistics profiling academic outcomes by gender (i.e., male and female) and ethnicity (i.e., White, African American, and Hispanic) will be provided. An overview of research regarding college students of color regarding academic and psychosocial outcomes will be presented. Next, this chapter will present relevant research regarding African American college students, followed by research regarding African American male college students. This chapter will explore the impact and potential impact of Greek Life on a college campus, including outcomes of participation in Greek Life and relevant research regarding Black Greek-Letter Organizations (BGLOs). The chapter will present the purpose of the proposed study and the research questions guiding the study. The research methodology and key definitions will also be provided.

Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) indicate there were 18,078,700 undergraduate students enrolled in degree-granting institutions in fall 2010 (NCES, 2011). Of these students, 14.8% self-identified as Black, and 14.1% self-identified as Hispanic. Between 2000 and 2010, the percentage of students who were Black increased from 11.8% to 14.8%. During that same time period, the number of students who were Hispanic increased from 10.3% to 14.1%. When examined by gender, the number of Black males increased from 10.0% to 12.5%, Black females from 13.2% to 16.5%, Hispanic males from 10.1% to 13.8%, and Hispanic females from 10.4% to 14.3% (NCES, 2011). These disaggregated statistics indicate that African American males are entering college at a lower rate than other students of color. With regard to

completion of college, two-thirds of African American male undergraduate students who attend public institutions of higher learning do not graduate within six years, which is the lowest college completion rate of any other segment of the U.S. population in higher education (Harper & Harris, 2012).

Education has the potential to prevent individuals from engaging in criminal behavior (Groot & van den Brink, 2010; Lochner & Moretti, 2004). Neighborhoods with lower-performing schools have a tendency to send more persons to prison than to college (Hawkins, 2011). According to Peckham (2008), the risk of incarceration, higher violent crime rates, and low educational attainment all have higher concentrations among communities of color, increasing their likelihood to experience barriers to educational opportunities. States in the United States with higher levels of educational attainment reported crime rates lower than the national average. States with higher college enrollment reported lower violent crime rates than states with lower college enrollment (Peckham, 2008).

Peckham (2008) posited that high school graduation rates have been associated with positive public safety outcomes (i.e., lower violent crime and incarceration rates and spending due to crime-related expenses). Using data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Report, Lochner and Moretti (2004) found that education is associated with lower probability of arrest and incarceration. Education's biggest impact was associated with murder, assault, and motor vehicle theft. Incarceration rates for White men with less than 12 years of education was approximately .8% whereas those for Black men averaged 3.6%, thus indicating the probability of imprisonment is substantially larger for Black men than for White men. The reduction in the probability of incarceration associated with

higher education was substantially larger for Blacks than for Whites (Lochner & Moretti, 2004).

Groot and van den Brink (2010) found results similar to those of Lochner and Moretti (2004). Using an empirical analysis of data collected from The Netherlands Survey on Criminality and Law Enforcement, Groot and van den Brink found that more serious crimes (i.e., threatening and assaulting others, inflicting injury, shoplifting, theft, and vandalism) were committed more frequently by persons with lower education than those with higher education (Groot & van den Brink, 2010).

Another alarming statistic is the number of African American males in prison compared to other ethnicities. African American males are more likely to be incarcerated than any other segment of the American population (Spycher, Shkodriani, & Lee, 2012). In the United States in 2010, the male prison population was 39% African American, 33% White, and 21% Hispanic (West, Sabol, & Greenman, 2010). According to West (2010), the incarceration rate for African American males was six times higher than that for White males and approximately three times higher than that for Hispanic males. These numbers paint an alarming and dismal picture regarding African American males and the likelihood of their incarceration. When compared to the rates at which they are taking advantage of higher learning, African American males are more likely to be incarcerated than to attend an institution of higher learning. The numbers also reveal how more education is associated with lower incarceration rates. Strategies must be implemented to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students, thereby increasing the likelihood they will attend college and graduate.

These strategies also can increase the diversity of the student body at institutions of higher learning.

Literature exists that indicates the benefits of having a diverse student body. Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) posited that diversity helped facilitate the identity development of young people, allowed for cognitive growth, and gave students the opportunity to learn from peers of various cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. Further, they stated that diversity will enhance the classroom experiences of students and will cultivate active thinking and personal development (Gurin et al., 2002).

A diverse student body challenges students to explore ideas and arguments at a deeper level, see issues from various points of view, rethinking their own premises, and to achieve an understanding that only results from students testing their own hypotheses against those persons espousing opposing views (Rudenstine, 2001). Diversity creates greater opportunities for social support, role models, and mentoring (Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). Smith and Schonfeld further posited that diversity creates more opportunities for individuals to be seen as individuals, thereby breaking down stereotypes. Students in diverse settings were more likely to be satisfied with their college setting and feel better about themselves, which could lead to student retention. All students exposed to diversity on campus and in the classroom showed increases in critical thinking skills, problem-solving capacities, and cognitive complexity (Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). Living and studying with classmates from diverse backgrounds is essential to train students for the new emerging global society and nurtures an instinct to reach out instead of clinging to what is natural or familiar (Bollinger, 2007).

The literature presented reveals the potential benefits of having a diverse student body. The presence of students of color on a college campus creates an optimal learning environment for college students. The next section focuses on literature regarding college students of color, African American college students, and African American male college students.

### **College Students of Color**

A wealth of literature exists focusing on college students of color and their academic and psychosocial outcomes. Using a phenomenological approach and a sample comprised of 31 female and 19 male low socioeconomic college students of color, Morales (2008) found that females faced more familial resistance than males to their academic pursuits, their career goals were more strongly motivated by their post-graduate professional goals than males, and they noted that having a mentor of the same gender was less important for them. With a national sample of 3,332 students of color, Lundberg (2010) used survey data collected from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (Pace and Kuh, 1998) and found that students of color benefited from institutions that value diversity and benefited when they were involved in the college experience. The findings also indicated that students of color learned more when administrative personnel and faculty were viewed as approachable, helpful, and encouraging. Melguizo (2010) investigated students of color participating in the Gates Millennium Scholars program using a survey design and found that the probability of earning a bachelor's degree was significantly associated with the selectivity of the institution.

Palmer, Maramba, and Dancy (2011) explored the factors affecting the retention and persistence of students of color in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

(STEM) education at a predominantly White institution (PWI) using a constructivist grounded theory approach and a sample of six participants. They identified three themes: peer group support, involvement in STEM-related activities, and strong high school preparation. Blume, Lovato, Thyken, and Denny (2012) investigated the relationship between microaggressions and alcohol use and anxiety among students of color at a PWI using data collected from self-report measures of the number of microaggressions students experienced in a month, data collected from the Beck Anxiety Inventory (Beck, Epstein, Brown & Steer, 1988), the Daily Drinking Questionnaire (Collins, Parks, & Marlatt, 1985), the Rutgers Alcohol Problem Index (White & Labouvie, 1989), the General Self-efficacy Scale (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1992), and a sample of 684 college students. Their findings suggested that students of color experience microaggressions at significantly higher levels than White students, which was associated with higher anxiety, underage binge drinking, and the aversive consequences of drinking alcohol. Using data collected from a university-wide undergraduate survey of 7,417 students, Baker and Robnett (2012) examined what characteristics affected the retention of Hispanic students and other students of color and found that first-year cumulative GPA and participating in a student organization were positive predictors of staying enrolled for Hispanic students, but studying with others was negatively related to staying enrolled. For Asian American students, speaking English as their first language and first-year cumulative GPA were predictors of retention. Social support from within the college (i.e., studying with others and participating in a student organization) was an important predictor of retention and could explain the difference in retention between African American and Hispanic students. The African American students were more likely to be connected to others on

campus than the Hispanic students and the Hispanic students were more likely to have off-campus employment (Baker & Robnett, 2012).

The literature presented here reveals the factors that affect the retention of college students of color. The role of college counseling and the strategies college counselors have implemented have also been discussed. The literature discussed can provide a framework for improving the retention of college students of color. The next section focuses on African American college students.

### **African American College Students**

In addition to research regarding the retention of college students of color in general, literature exists that explores African American college students and their academic and psychosocial outcomes. Baber (2012) used a phenomenological approach to examine the psychosocial outcomes of African American college students and investigated the influence of racial identity development on the education experiences of first-year African American students at a PWI. Using the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) as a theoretical framework and a sample of 15 self-identified African American students, he identified five themes: established racial identity, reconsidering identity through heterogeneous community experience, conflict between ideologies, resiliency against hostility, and uncovering complexity of identity. These themes represented the influence of internal reconceptualization of racial identity and external sources of support and convey the essence of described transitional experiences of first-year African American students (Baber, 2012).

DeFreitas (2012) and Grier-Reed, Madyun, and Buckley (2008) explored the academic outcomes of African American college students. DeFreitas used a survey

design to examine differences between African American and White first-year college students for self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and academic achievement. With a sample of 187 students, he found that higher levels of self-efficacy had a positive relationship with better academic achievement for both groups. The findings also suggested that African American students with negative outcome expectations exhibited better academic achievement than those with more positive outcome expectations; the opposite pattern was found for the White students (DeFreitas, 2012).

Grier-Reed et al. (2008) wrote a conceptual article detailing how two university faculty responded to low retention of African American students at a PWI by creating the African American Student Network (AFAM). AFAM promotes the social support systems and psychological well-being of African American students at the PWI. The program provides students with access to upperclassmen and faculty and staff in a supportive atmosphere, all over the lunch hour. AFAM is open to all African American persons on campus and food is provided for the participants. The psychological well-being of the students is emphasized through the group's content by helping students understand and improve their relationship to self, to others, the African American community, and to the university at large (Grier-Reed et al., 2008).

Tovar-Murray, Jenifer, Andrusyk, D'Angelo, and King (2012) and Lindsey et al. (2011) explored psychological outcomes focusing on the effects of stress on African American college students. Tovar-Murray et al. (2012) employed a survey design and a sample of 163 students to examine how racism-related stress and ethnic identity affected the career aspirations of African American college students at a PWI. Using data received from the Index of Race-Related Stress-Brief Version (Utsey, 1999), the Multigroup

Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992), and the Career Aspiration Scale (Quaglia & Cobb, 1996), Tovar et al. found an indirect correlation between race-related stress and career aspirations. Using data collected from the Inventory of College Students' Recent Life Experiences Survey (Kohn, Laffreniere, & Gurevich, 1990), Lindsey et al. (2011) investigated African American students attending a historically Black college and university (HBCU) and explored how sources of stress correlated with gender and classification. With a sample of 95 students, Lindsey et al. found the top stressors were making important decisions about your education, having peers respect what you say, having too many things to do at once, having a lot of responsibilities, and financial burdens. Having too many things to do at once, separation from people you care about, financial burdens, and making important decisions about your education were greater sources of stress for females than males. Having difficulty with transportation was more a stressor for freshman and juniors than for sophomores (Lindsey et al., 2011).

The literature presented here focuses on African American college students and their academic and psychosocial outcomes. It reveals what forces affect the retention of African American college students and can give counselors and college student personnel a framework for tailoring interventions to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of these students. These interventions include college counseling and providing opportunities for student engagement in co-curricular activities.

### **Proposed Interventions and Strategies**

Counselors have several roles on a college campus. Counselors should focus on students and prospective students by working more actively with undergraduates and undergraduate programs (Kaplan & Gladding, 2010). Counselors can engage in

interdisciplinary and intercultural mentorship on college campuses as well as reach out to students within diverse undergraduate majors as potential students in counseling (Ostvik-de Wilde, Hammes, Sharma, Kang & Park, 2012). Counselors work in various capacities in higher education other than college counseling centers: admissions and financial aid, academic and career advising, academic support services, orientation, disability services, student activities, housing and residence life, student conduct, and student affairs administration (Dean & Meadows, 1995). Counselors on college campuses provide therapy as well as serve as an extension of the Campus Safety Office by assessing risk (i.e., homicide and suicide) and protecting the college community from harm (Davenport, 2009). College counselors working in retention programs are well suited to provide support and systemic changes that support the academic success of African American students at PWIs. They promote social justice in education, disseminate research on effective multicultural counseling processes, and identify links between racial/ethnic identity development and mental well-being (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010).

College counseling has a role in affecting the academic and psychosocial outcomes of students of color. Bradley and Sanders (2003) posited that low numbers of African Americans seek mental health services from college counseling centers because they anticipated that White counselors would provide counseling that is less relevant, less impactful, or would be less gratifying than if the counselor was African American. They proposed an intervention tailored specifically for African American female clients. They stated that at the center of the academic success of African American female college students is the understanding of the unique counseling needs of African American women. To address these unique counseling needs, they propose a “sista” intervention

that draws upon the strengths and resilience in the bonds of sisterhood that result when African American women participate in groups of their peers. This intervention poses a useful way to adapt individual counseling that draws upon the social and cultural resources of African American women by involving the client's "sistas" in a counseling session (Bradley & Sanders, 2003).

Hayes et al. (2011) compared the institutional enrollment data and counseling center utilization rates at 66 universities and examined the predictors and rates of counseling center usage among college students of color. They found that the ethnicity of the counseling center staff significantly impacted counseling center utilization of students of color. Previous mental health history and perceived lack of familial support were predictors of counseling center utilization. Students of color neither underutilized or overutilized college counseling services, a finding that is contrary to what has been found in previous literature (Hayes et al., 2011).

Some barriers college students of color face are a lack of familial support (Morales, 2008), microaggressions (Blume et al., 2012), isolation and alienation (Mills-Novoa, 1999), and incidents of intolerance and suspicion by White students (Mills-Novoa, 1999). Other unique challenges faced by students of color, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are: meeting the academic demands of coursework, establishing a sense of belonging, creating a suitable niche in the social and academic life of college, and being cultural emissaries (Landry, 2003). Mills-Novoa (1999) suggested using retreat and focus groups to address these barriers and college counselors can help facilitate the social integration and academic success of college students of color. Myers and Mobley (2004) analyzed data gathered from the Five Factor Wel (Myers & Sweeney,

1999) and utilized a sample of 1,567 undergraduate students. They found that nontraditional students of color scored lower in Total Wellness than traditional students of color. Students of color also experience greater wellness with regard to their Cultural Identity. Some recommendations Myers and Mobley suggested are as follows: (a) counselors and college student personnel could assess students for overall wellness and tailor interventions to match the needs of targeted students, (b) college student success courses and campus wellness programs should be used to promote greater wellness among college students, and (c) individual and group counseling targeted at areas of concern could improve the well-being of college students (Myers & Mobley, 2004).

Student engagement is another aspect of college life that affects the academic and psychosocial outcomes of college students of color. Involvement in co-curricular activities has educational value and can improve college student retention. Underrepresented students participate in these activities at a lower rate than their peers, so faculty must structure curricular requirements to allow students of color to take advantage of these activities (Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, & Kuh, 2008). Students who attend universities where students were more engaged with diversity (i.e., through coursework/curriculum, or engagement in activities like diversity awareness workshops and student organizations) reported higher levels of self-change in their knowledge of and the ability to get along with persons of differing races and cultures (Denson & Chang, 2009). Umbach and Kuh (2006) posited that engagement in diversity-related activities is associated with higher levels of academic challenge, more frequent participation in active and collaborative learning, greater gains in personal and educational growth, and greater satisfaction with overall college experiences. Harper and Quaye (2007) used a

phenomenological approach with a sample of 32 students. They found that leadership and student engagement enabled African American male students to develop an inner comfort with their own Blackness, to form alliances with members of other races/ethnic groups, and to enact change resulting in social justice for African Americans and other oppressed groups. The relationship between student engagement (inside and outside the classroom) and collegiate success is extensive and addresses outcomes including cognitive development, moral and ethical development, and persistence. Students from all racial/ethnic backgrounds benefit from student engagement (Nelson Laird, Bridges, Morelon-Quainoo, Williams, & Salinas Holmes, 2007).

African American students involve themselves in a wide range of campus organizations. These organizations include the Black student union, undergraduate NAACP chapters, the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), the university Gospel choir, BGLOs, and other minority student organizations (Harper, 2006a; Young, 2005). According to Harper et al. (2005), BGLOs are the primary organizations with which African American students affiliate. Involvement in a BGLO has been shown to provide campus involvement and peer/social support (Harper, 2007; McClure, 2006b; Patton, Flowers, & Bridges, 2011). Membership in these organizations also assists African American college students to adjust to college (Kimbrough & Hutchinson, 1998); assists them in adjusting to college life at a PWI (Harper et al., 2005); and assists in successful academic adjustment (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2004). The next section presents information regarding Greek-letter organizations in general, BGLOs, specifically, and how membership in these organizations impacts academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students.

### **Greek-Letter Organizations**

Greek life and membership in fraternities and sororities have become a major part of college student life, with its members often engaging in tutoring, mentoring, contributing financially to the university and charitable organizations, providing community service, promoting a sense of belonging among their members, and contributing to the social atmosphere of the university (Harper, 2007; Ross, 2000). Statistics reveal there are over 123 sororities and fraternities with over 9 million Greek members nationally. On more than 800 college campuses in the United States and Canada, there are 750,000 undergraduate members in 12,000 chapters (Daley, n.d.). Greek-lettered organizations are academic in nature. To become and remain a member, a student must have a minimum grade point average (GPA). The chapter members must also ensure that their cumulative GPA remains above the minimum GPA in order to retain the chapter's charter and be able to operate on campus.

With their multiple functions and benefits, Greek-lettered organizations could be a recruitment and retention tool for institutions of higher learning. McClure (2006b) found that membership in BGLOs helped African American students build connections that helped create a supportive environment on campus, increased their success in college, and created a sense of satisfaction in their campus experience. Pike (2000) noted how membership in Greek-letter organizations has positive effects in the social and cognitive development of college students. Whiteside (2007) revealed that some students go to college with plans to join a fraternity or sorority and have a specific organization in mind. Other research has been performed regarding Greek life and will be discussed in the next section.

Involvement in Greek life has positive effects on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of college students. Abowitz and Knox (2003) studied the life goals of Greek students and found the highest goals given priority were being happy, being in love, having close friends, having a life partner/spouse, and having relatives. The study was limited by the lack of diversity of the sample. Only 6% of the fraternity and sorority member self-identified as non-White. Mathiasen (2005) investigated the moral development of men in fraternities and found that membership in the fraternity had a positive impact on the members' moral development. Limitations include no mention of cultural breakdown of the sample and like Abowitz and Knox (2003), the sample was derived from one university. While Abowitz and Knox and Mathiasen investigated psychosocial outcomes, Pike (2000) and DeBard and Sacks (2012) explored academic outcomes of Greek membership. Pike studied the cognitive development of members of fraternities and sororities and found that membership in Greek-letter organizations positively affected the cognitive development of students. Like Abowitz and Knox, Pike's study was limited in diversity and the scope of the sample. The sample was majority female and White and came from one university. DeBard and Sacks also found positive influences on the academic outcomes of members of Greek-letter organizations. Students joining in their first year earned higher GPAs, earned more credits and were retained at a higher rate than non-Greek students. The studies mentioned here all focus on positive outcomes of membership in Greek-letter organizations. Even though students of color were included in the samples, the studies failed to mention specific outcomes for students of color.

McClure (2006b) pointed out that previous research investigated Greek life in general and did not focus on BGLOs. He used qualitative methods and explored the effects of membership in a BGLO on the college experiences of African American males at a PWI. The findings indicated that fraternity membership had a positive impact on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students at a PWI. This study was limited in that it studied members of one fraternity at one university and the confidentiality of the participants was not maintained.

Kimbrough (1995) used quantitative methods and examined the attitudes towards leadership among members of BGLOs and found that members of BGLOs were more likely to hold leadership positions than nonmembers. Harper (2007) noted how previous literature about BGLOs at PWIs focused on hazing, out-of-class engagement, social and non-academic outcomes. Studies regarding academic outcomes of members of BGLOs were non-existent (Harper, 2007). To fill this gap, he used qualitative methods to investigate the effects of membership in BGLOs on academic performance. His findings indicated that membership in BGLOs positively affected the academic performance of African American students. This study was limited by the focus of BGLOs at one university and pre-college biases were not taken into account.

While the previous research focused on BGLOs at PWIs, Patton, Bridges, and Flowers (2011) compared the attitudes of Greek-affiliated students at PWIs and HBCUs. The findings indicated that Greek-affiliated students at HBCUs were more engaged in effective educational practices than their counterparts at PWIs. At HBCUs, the results indicated that Greek affiliation contributed considerably more to the students' collaborative academic activities with peers and interactions with faculty. African

American Greek-affiliated students at PWIs were less engaged than all African American Greek-affiliated students in the sample. The limitations include the participants did not indicate whether or not the Greek-affiliated students were members of a BGLO or other Greek-lettered organization and the findings stem from data from the 2003 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

The literature focuses on the various outcomes of Greek life but has limitations. Statistics show the positive outcomes of Greek life, but do not capture the story behind the college experiences of students in Greek-lettered organizations. Pike (2000) and DeBard and Sacks (2012) investigated the positive outcomes of Greek membership, but utilized quantitative methods and only studied Greek life in general. McClure (2006b) posited that previous research does not focus on BGLOs and utilized qualitative methods to investigate the psychosocial outcomes of membership in BGLOs, but only studied one organization at one university. Harper (2007) also used qualitative methods to study academic outcomes of African American members of BGLOs. Both McClure and Harper studied BGLOs at PWIs. Unlike McClure, Harper studied members of various organizations, but only studied African American Greeks at one university. More research needs to be done regarding the experiences of African American males who attend PWIs and are members of BGLOs. This research should be executed by qualitative methodology and should involve participants from different organizations at different universities.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The primary purpose of this grounded theory was to examine the influence membership in a BGLO has on the college experiences of African American males

attending PWIs. A secondary purpose for this study was to inform counselors and other college student personnel of best practices to implement to improve the persistence and success rates of African American male college students.

Membership in BGLOs has been shown to be influential in the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. These organizations are the primary avenue by which African American college students become involved on a college campus and are the most popular avenue for African American male leadership development and involvement at a PWI (Harper et al., 2005). Membership in Black Greek fraternities has been shown to help African American students develop practical competence, which refers to the set of transferable skills acquired through curricular and co-curricular experiences to be used in educational and career experiences after the college years (Harper & Harris, 2006); help African American students reconnect with their African cultural and social identity (Branch, 2001); help African American students develop a stronger, more positive sense of self-esteem and racial identity (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995); positively affect African American students' cognitive development, especially mathematical reasoning, critical thinking skills, composite test scores, and reading comprehension (Pascarella et al., 1996); and leads to African American students exhibiting positive gains in cognitive complexity, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge application (Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994). As such, I sought to examine membership in Black Greek fraternities to delve deeper into the relationship between membership and the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students. In order to capture the meaning the participants make of their fraternity experiences, I utilized qualitative methods.

Qualitative methods are most appropriate for this study because they are aligned with the oral traditions of the African culture (Stanfield, 1994). Qualitative methods probe deeply into the research setting to understand the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in their context perceive these things. Qualitative researchers seek to provide insight into people's beliefs and feelings about the way things are and how they got to be that way (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011). I sought to provide insight into how African American males perceive their fraternity experiences at PWIs and their beliefs and feelings about how their fraternity experiences affected their overall college experiences. Qualitative research also allows researchers to uncover information regarding complex ideas about which little is known (Gay et al., 2011). In this study, I added to the dearth of research focusing on the experiences of African American males in BGLOs at PWIs. Qualitative methodology captures the human meanings of social life as the participants live them, experience them, and understand them (Gay et al., 2011). I sought to discover how the participants make meaning of their fraternity experiences and the effects on their overall college experiences.

A grounded theory tradition is most suitable for this study because it will give the primary investigator an opportunity to create new a new theory that specifically integrates a diversity focus while addressing process issues that may yield theoretical perspectives germane to African American male students (Green, Creswell, Shope, & Plano-Clark, 2007). This approach was used to generate a theory explaining the factors (i.e., membership in a BGLO) that influence the college experiences of African American male college students and their related outcomes as well as highlighted potential recommendations to foster positive college experiences. The findings generated by this

study uncovered in-depth information regarding these experiences and provided counselors and college student personnel a theoretical framework to develop best practices for improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students.

Four research questions guided this study:

1. How do participants perceive BGLO-associated activities (e.g., mentorship, student engagement, volunteer service) influencing other college experiences, if at all?
2. What are the college experiences within BGLOs and across the university?
3. What support systems in college do counselors and other college student personnel see as useful in facilitating persistence and success of African American male college students?
4. What recommendations do participants, counselors, and college student personnel have for improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students?

### **Definition of Terms**

*Students of color* refers to students who self-identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Black or African American (Office of Strategy, Planning, & Accountability, n.d.).

For the purposes of this study, *Greek* refers to members affiliated with social fraternal organizations, most of which have Greek-letter names (Gregory, 2003).

*Greek life* refers to the campus culture of fraternities and sororities denoted by the presence of historically Greek letters in the name of the organization (Gregory, 2003).

*Greek membership* denotes partaking in the intake process or pledging and becoming a member of a Greek-letter organization (Gregory, 2003; Kimbrough, 2003b).

The phrase *fraternity* refers to a Greek-lettered organization that is all male and a *sorority* is a Greek-lettered organization that is all female. The North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) recognizes 65 fraternities and the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) recognizes 26 sororities (Smithhisler, 2003; Gregory, 2003).

A *Black Greek-lettered Organization*, or *BGLO*, is a socially-based, predominantly African American organization that is comprised of undergraduate students or alumni, depending on the chapter and is represented by a series of Greek letters. These organizations include Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. The term *Divine Nine* means the same as *BGLO* (Gregory, 2003; Kimbrough, 2003a; Ross, 2000).

The *National Pan-Hellenic Council* or *NPHC* refers to the governing organization of the major, historically African American BGLOs that was established in 1930 (Gregory, 2003; Kimbrough, 2003a).

A *chapter* is a chartered undergraduate or alumni unit of an inter/national fraternity or sorority (Gregory, 2003).

*Pledging* is the process by which someone gains entry to the Greek-lettered organization (Gregory, 2003; Kimbrough, 2003a).

*Line brother/sister*, or *LB/LS*, refers to persons who were initiated in the same chapter at the same time (Kimbrough, 2003a).

*Predominantly White Institution*, or *PWI*, refers to institutions of higher learning that have a student body that is a majority White. The United States Department of Education recognizes 6,794 accredited postsecondary PWIs (U. S. Department of Education, 2013).

*Historically Black College or University*, or *HBCU*, refers to institutions of higher learning established immediately after the emancipation of the slaves and prior to 1964 with the purpose of educating African Americans (Gasman et al., 2007). The United States Department of Education recognizes 106 postsecondary HBCUs (U. S. Department of Education, 2013).

The term *academic outcomes* refers to GPA, credit hours earned, classroom engagement, time-to-degree rates, and graduation rates of college students.

The term *psychosocial outcomes* refers to identity development, peer support, resilience, social engagement, and level of connectedness to the campus culture.

The term *college experiences* refers to the combination of academic and psychosocial outcomes of college students.

The term *student engagement* refers to the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities and the extent to which the university urges students to take advantage of activities that lead to their success (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006). These meaningful activities and experiences include in-class discussions, faculty-student collaborations, peer interactions, deep active learning, and student organizations (Brown, 2006; Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010)

### **Potential Contributions**

The data collected from this study will add to the current literature regarding the experiences of African American male students in BGLOs at a PWI. I seek to fill in the gaps where previous studies, though few in number, have fallen short. There is no existing theory explaining the relationship between membership in a BGLO and the overall college experiences of African American male students who attended a PWI and I seek to develop a theory driven by the data. None of the previous studies have considered the voice of those members who have graduated from college and may have affiliated with graduate chapters. That voice deserves more exploration and this study could springboard more research in that area. There are implications for the counseling field as well as implications for student affairs.

Data obtained from this study can equip counselors in various settings to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. School counselors could partner with members of NPHC fraternities (undergraduate and graduate chapters) and develop mentoring programs, which could increase the likelihood that those students attend college. Because college counselors are well-equipped to provide support services to African American males attending PWIs (Guiffreda & Douthit, 2010), the data collected from this study may provide strategies college counselors can use to help improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. College counselors could also partner with NPHC fraternities on campus to develop mentoring programs for African American males to help them adjust to college life and assist with their academic outcomes. African American male students can become more familiar with counseling services and be more prone to utilize these services if they see counselors reaching out to assist them in being successful

academically and socially. Another potential benefit is that some of the African American males who benefited from counseling services could eventually foray into the counseling profession, thereby diversifying the counseling field.

The data obtained in this study can assist PWIs in creating a more welcoming campus climate for African American male students and NPHC organizations. Because of the potential benefits of the presence of NPHC organizations and benefits of membership, universities may be more prone to allow them to colonize or charter a chapter on campus. Universities can also commit to pour resources into their current NPHC organizations to help them develop and have a strong presence on campus. No other study has focused on the voice of college student personnel and the data obtained from this study can provide a framework for other college student personnel to create programs that cater to African American male students. Various offices on a college campus can partner with NPHC fraternities to sponsor programming and/or develop mentoring programs for first-year African American males to improve their persistence and success rates.

The findings in this study also have implications for historically Black fraternities. The findings can improve the image of these organizations and highlight their fundamental purposes and some of the good that they do for the campus community and the African American community. The presence of NPHC fraternities on a college campus can increase the numbers of African American males on campus, which will allow these fraternities to have an excellent pool of potential candidates for membership.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations include only recruiting participants who are members of BGLOs, instead of historically White fraternities or other student organizations. Only that subset of students of color was used because BGLOs are the primary source of student engagement for students of color at a PWI (Harper et al., 2005). The study did not consider the contributions of historically African American sororities or any effects membership in those organizations may have on the college experiences of African American females. Only males were investigated because of their underrepresentation and low success rates in higher education (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper & Harris, 2012). I only examined African American male students who attend a PWI. HBCUs were not a part of this study because PWIs are not as effective as HBCUs at retaining and graduating African American male students (Cuyjet, 2006). I did not examine the perspectives of African American male college students who are not affiliated with BGLOs. I did not examine the perspectives of African American male college students who did not complete college.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of the literature focusing on the college experiences of students of color, namely African American males at PWIs. Next, the history of Greek-lettered organizations will be presented followed by a history of BGLOs. The function of these organizations will be presented as well as any research that has been done on the experiences of the members. Finally, the limitations of the research and recommendations for future research will be presented.

#### **African American Male College Students**

African American males remain an underrepresented group on college campuses, in spite of the push for diversity in higher education (Cuyjet, 2006; Gallien & Peterson, 2005). Several solutions have been presented to address the low success rates of African American male college students. Robertson and Mason (2008) posited that the factors correlated with academic success of African American male students at a PWI emphasize the importance of faculty/student relationships, understanding and withstanding racism as a result of being an African American student in a white college environment, and the role of co-curricular activities and programs. Harper and Harris (2012) looked further at systemic interventions and proposed an increase in investments in college preparation programs, addressing funding inequities that disadvantage public HBCUs, an increase in federal and state financial aid for lower-income African American males students, match incarceration and educational investments, promote policies and practices that advance equity, and reclaim near-completers. While Robertson and Mason (2008) and Harper and

Harris (2012) focus on general strategies, Harper (2006) and Zell (2011) focus on the outcomes resulting from peer support programs.

Harper (2006) interviewed African American male students attending PWIs and found that the students attributed their academic success to support from same-race peers. Like Harper (2006), Zell (2011) used qualitative methods to examine the impact of membership in Brother2Brother (B2B) peer groups on African American male college students in the Chicago area. Six core themes were identified: academic motivation (i.e., becoming more disciplined in school work, not missing classes, and developing a consistent study routine), personal presentation (i.e., wearing professional attire), validation of emerging skills (i.e., generalizing their learning to other areas of involvement in the institution), personal growth (i.e., fostering new abilities and cultivating responsibility for others' achievement and well-being), ethic of collaboration (i.e., supporting the welfare of their fellowship, developing collective goals, and being responsible for each other's success), and being rewarded through accountability (i.e., students being responsible for their education and academic performance, their commitment to personal development through self-exploration, and cultivating skills needed to pursue their goals). Membership in the B2B program positively impacted the participants with regard to these six themes. Literature exists examining the psychological well-being of African American male college students.

Williams and Justice (2010), Jackson (2010), and Goode-Cross and Tager (2011) explored the psychological well-being of African American male college students. Williams and Justice (2010) investigated the attitudes of African American male college students regarding counseling at four Texas universities. Using quantitative methods,

they explored the attitudes towards counseling, why African American males chose not to seek counseling services, and the difference in attitudes towards counseling between the students attending the PWIs and HBCUs in the sample. The findings indicated African American male students have negative attitudes towards counseling, there was no significant difference between the students attending the PWIs and the HBCUs, and there was no significant difference between lower-level and upper-level students. The concerns the students had concerning counseling were the perceived negative stigma attached to seeking counseling, seeking counseling as a sign of weakness, and the perceived embarrassment of seeking counseling (Williams & Justice, 2010). In a conceptual article, Jackson (2010) talked about the difficulty in reconciling the warring ideals of being an African American in academia: being true to one's cultural roots while holding true to one's intellectual pursuits. To cope with these two ideals, Jackson (2010) suggested maintaining fidelity to authenticity of the self and finding common ground between academic knowledge and cultural benefit. Goode-Cross and Tager (2011) used qualitative methods to investigate how African American gay and bisexual males persist at a PWI. The findings indicated that the students viewed their racial identity as more important than their sexual orientation in creating social support. The students valued the support of their same-race peers and faculty/staff relations. The students also felt uncomfortable utilizing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, intersexed, and ally (LGBTQQIA) resources on campus (Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011).

African American male college students have become a population of interest recently due to their low representation on college campuses (Cuyjet, 2003). Cuyjet (2003) and Harper and Harris (2006) alluded to how African American males are the

most underrepresented group and have the lowest college completion rates among all genders and ethnic groups. This section focuses on the literature regarding the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students and recommendations for future research.

### **Academic Outcomes**

The literature regarding academic outcomes of African American male college students focuses specifically on college readiness, postsecondary attendance, graduation rates, and recommendations to improve these outcomes. In a conceptual article, Harper and Harris (2012) posited that educators and administrators on all levels have implemented strategies to improve academic outcomes of African American males and several philanthropic organizations like the Congressional Black Caucus, the United Negro College Fund, and the College Board have funded these efforts. They proposed initiatives to improve African American males' postsecondary academic outcomes and degree attainment rates at public universities: (a) increasing investments in college preparation programs; (b) addressing funding inequities that disadvantage public HBCUs; (c) increasing federal and state financial aid for lower-income African American male students; (d) matching incarceration and educational investments; (e) requiring assessment in state-funded initiatives; (f) establishing consortia in public postsecondary systems; (g) developing a national study that monitors college access and success of male students of color; requiring transparency in college athletics; (h) considering a ban on post-season play for sports teams that sustain racial inequities in graduation rates; (i) promoting policies and practices that advance equity; and (j) reclaiming near-completers.

While Harper and Harris (2012) focused on systemic initiatives, Robertson and Mason (2008) and Zell (2011) employed qualitative methods to investigate institution-specific academic outcomes of African American male students. Robertson and Mason investigated five factors related to the retention/academic success of African American male students attending a mid-sized, regional, PWI in the southern United States. They interviewed them regarding their interactions with faculty, finances and availability of financial aid, course content, participation in co-curricular activities, and the presence of BGLOs on campus. Results indicated that retention of African American male students was associated with three factors: the importance of collegial faculty/student relations, understanding and dealing with racism, and co-curricular activities and programs (Robertson & Mason, 2008).

Zell (2011) also employed qualitative methods to examine how non-cognitive factors affect the academic outcomes of African American males at a Midwestern university. Specifically, Zell examined the effects that B2B peer support groups had on African American male college students in the Chicago area. The program helps African American males earn a college education by providing academic, career, and social support, helping them develop and perfect their leadership skills, nurturing brotherhood, and asking participants to make a personal commitment to graduate. B2B seeks to positively impact persistence from first-year to second-year by attending to students' social, emotional, and cultural needs.

The study highlighted how the students perceived their educational and personal experiences, how committed they were to scholastic achievement, and the level of social integration into the campus environment. The students were asked questions regarding

the academic value of the program, the social value of the program, and what they learned that could be applied to their lives as students and growing men. Zell (2011) conducted two focus groups at the end of the first year of the program and five at the end of the second year of the program. The sample was selected from two types of institutions: five junior colleges and two four-year institutions, each focus group had 3-9 individuals from 18-30 years of age. Most of the participants were in their second-year. Six core themes were identified: academic motivation, personal presentation, validation of emerging skills, personal growth, ethic of collaboration, and accountability (Zell, 2011).

### **Psychosocial Outcomes**

Psychosocial outcomes include identity development, mental health concerns, and the effects of racism on African American male college students. Harper (2006b) examined the effects of internalized racism and the idea that scholastic achievement among African Americans is viewed as “acting White.” The phenomenological study employed a sample of 32 African American undergraduate male students from six PWIs in the Midwest: the University of Illinois, Indian University, the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, The Ohio State University, and Purdue University. At all universities, African American male students had the lowest representation and the lowest graduation rates. The sample included four sophomores, 12 juniors, and 16 seniors, with all students identified as high-achieving male student leaders, and 13 of the participants were members of a BGLO. Findings indicated that peer support played a significant role in the academic success of the high-achieving African American male students. Participants discussed how they received peer support through involvement in

various student organizations. Harper posited that because of the role of the five male BGLOs in providing social support and academic encouragement to African American male students, universities should provide resources to sustain these organizations and increase African American male interest in membership (Harper, 2006b).

While Harper (2006b) focused on peer support, Jackson (2010) and Goode-Cross and Tager (2011) examined the identity development of African American male college students. Jackson wrote a conceptual article examining how African American males in academia reconcile intellectual pursuit with their cultural background, which can be in direct conflict with each other. Jackson posited that rewards such as promotions, tenure, salary increases, publications, professional association recognition, and receiving external funding could be consequences associated with not reconciling. Thus, graduate school preparation may lead a student to be a lone scholar, but his cultural background always favored the notion of community. Jackson gave two recommendations for coping strategies: maintain fidelity to authenticity of self, which is achieved by employing the academy's traditional values to research; and find synergy between academic knowledge and cultural benefit, which is achieved by informing both academic and scholarship cultural implications in research. While the concept of two warring identities has implications for African American males in academia, African American male undergraduates would benefit from strategies to assist them in reconciling these ideals as undergraduates, which could prepare them for the rigors of graduate school and academia (Jackson, 2010).

Goode-Cross and Tager (2011) also examined an internal struggle for African American male college students, examining how those who identify as gay (6) or

bisexual (2) persist at a PWI in the Midwest. The sample consisted of juniors (1) and seniors (7) who self-identified as African American, Black, or biracial. Using consensual qualitative research, they found that the students chose to minimize their sexual orientation in order to gain affiliation and acceptance from their same-race peers, which helped them to cope with experiences of racism. Another finding indicated that having supportive relationships with faculty/staff, peers, and family members had positive effects on persistence at a PWI. Involvement in campus and community organizations, namely African American communities and organizations, were key to their persistence. None of the participants indicated participation in LGBT organizations because they viewed that involvement as threatening for two reasons: they could experience racial prejudice in an unsupported environment and they could lose the valuable support received from their same-race peers who may not accept their sexual orientation. Another finding indicated that the participants selectively disclosed their sexual orientation which helped them to manage the strain of having multiple minority identities (Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011).

In another study that focused on the psychosocial outcomes of African American male students, Williams and Justice (2010) examined the attitudes of African American male students with regard to seeking counseling. They employed quantitative methodology and investigated the attitudes African American male college students had towards counseling. The sample consisted of 212 African American male students from four public Texas universities; two were PWIs and two were HBCUs. The primary investigators concluded that African American male college students have a negative attitude towards counseling services. They also found no significant difference between

the attitudes of African American male students attending a PWI and those that attend a HBCU. Thirdly, they found that institutional characteristics and classification did not impact the decision of African American male students to seek counseling. Further research should include a larger sample of universities, demographic information regarding involvement in student organizations (especially Greek organizations), both public and private institutions, and universities in various geographic regions (Williams & Justice, 2010).

The literature reviewed reveals the effects of involvement in organizations and peer support on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students. Three of the sources specifically allude to the effects of BGLOs on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students. These organizations set the social atmosphere at a PWI for African American students (Robertson & Mason, 2008), provide social support and academic encouragement (Harper, 2006b), and are involved with campus relations and may provide access to student services that may not be available to non-affiliated students (Williams & Justice, 2010). Membership in BGLOs supports positive social and academic integration, which is correlated with positive academic outcomes (i.e., higher GPA and retention) (McClure, 2006b; Robertson, Mitra, & Delinder, 2005; Tinto, 1993). It may increase political involvement, community involvement, and helps African American male college students develop positive social networks (Jones, 1999; McClure, 2006b). Having solid relationships with fraternity members counteracts the alienation African American males often experience at PWIs (McClure, 2006b).

### **Greek-Lettered Organizations**

Beginning with the 1776 founding of Phi Beta Kappa at The College of William and Mary and the 1813 founding of the Kappa Alpha Society at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (see Appendix A-7), the history of Greek-letter organizations is rich (Kimbrough, 2003b) and will be presented in this section. Phi Beta Kappa was the first organization to call itself a fraternity and have characteristics we now associate with fraternal organizations (Binder, 2003). This organization established the pattern that was replicated by many other subsequent organizations across the country. The group chose a set of Greek letters as its name, established a set of values and principles and a ritual encapsulating these rituals, held secret proceedings, and created a motto and shield/coat of arms, and developed a secret grip or handshake. The organization was tied to a specific institution and the members would only be drawn from the population of undergraduate students at that institution. General membership was restricted to the undergraduate years (Binder, 2003).

Many of the early members of Phi Beta Kappa were practicing Masons and the organization took much of its character from the Masonic Order (Binder, 2003). Being tied to the Masons caused Phi Beta Kappa some difficulty and eventually exposed its ritual. The fraternal organizations founded subsequent to Phi Beta Kappa, many of which considered themselves social organizations, have also tied their membership to the Masonic Order, and many of the similarities in terms of brotherhood and rituals can be seen presently. The organization expanded first to the Ivy League institutions and then to other universities. The founders wanted to name each chapter in successive Greek letters, but chose names like “Virginia Alpha” and “New Jersey Alpha.” Subsequent

organizations used these two patterns in later years to designate their chapters as they expanded (Binder, 2003).

Phi Beta Kappa remained intact until the anti-Masonic scare of the 1830s (Binder, 2003). Phi Beta Kappa and other secret organizations experienced a backlash against them, and were forced to reveal their ritual and secrets. As a result, Phi Beta Kappa became an honor society, membership in which is recognized today as the top honor to which students in the Arts and Sciences can aspire. Presently, Phi Beta Kappa has chapters on 252 campuses (Binder, 2003).

Social fraternal organizations as they are known presently began in 1825 with the founding of the Kappa Alpha Order at Union College (Binder, 2003). Sigma Phi and Delta Phi joined Kappa Alpha in 1827 to form the Union Triad. These Greek-letter organizations patterned after Phi Beta Kappa and established a motto, values and principles, Greek letters as symbols, and rituals. They took on the role of social fraternity in that the organizations supported the social advancement of their members. Currently, the term *social fraternity* refers to an organization that merely participates in social events, a narrow definition the founders would view as stifling and not fully describe the organization's wide interests and goals (Binder, 2003).

The fraternal movement spread west to Miami, Ohio, with the founding of Beta Theta Pi in 1839, Phi Delta Theta in 1848, and Sigma Chi in 1855, which constituted the Miami Triad (Binder, 2003). Expansion in The South began in 1841 when the "Mystical Seven" was founded at Emory University, a group that had many characteristics of a Greek-letter organization. The organization later expanded to the University of Georgia and currently, the Beta Theta Pi chapter there claims ties to the Mystical Seven. After the

Civil War, the fraternal movement expanded rapidly and the period up to the turn of the century brought about the founding of most of the organizations currently recognized at fraternities (Binder, 2003).

According to Binder (2003), 71% of men listed in “Who’s Who in America” are Greek-affiliated. The heads of 43 out of the nation’s 50 largest corporations are Greek-affiliated. He also posited that 85% the Fortune 500 executives are Greek-affiliated. Of the 47 male U.S. Supreme Court Justices since 1910, 40 have been Greek-affiliated. Seventy-six percent of all members of Congress and the U. S. Senate have belonged to a Greek-letter organization. Since the first social fraternity was founded in 1825, every U.S. President (with the exception of eight) has been Greek-affiliated. Since 1990, 63% of the U.S. President’s Cabinet members have been Greek-affiliated. The NIC reported that a high percentage of its 4,000 chapters are above the All-Men’s scholastic average on their respective campuses. Over 70% of Greek-affiliated men and women graduate, while less than 50% of non-members graduate. More than 85% of the student leaders on approximately 730 campuses are Greek-affiliated (Binder, 2003).

The pledge process is a period of education for persons who want to affiliate with Greek-lettered organizations and helps to foster a sense of brotherhood or sisterhood among those pledging together. This brotherhood or sisterhood may last well beyond the undergraduate years. Some organizations have alumni chapters where those that pledged while in college can continue to affiliate after they have graduated (Stout, 2009).

Historically, race played a major role in membership in Greek-letter organizations (Binder, 2003). Although the presence of African American college students was not significant during the nineteenth century, the number of African American college

students in the United States slowly increased in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Generally, traditional fraternities did not allow for the membership of African American males, with many enacting exclusionary clauses. Even though these clauses were eliminated in the 1960s, traditional fraternities still did not initiate significant numbers of African American males (Binder, 2003). Because of these exclusionary practices, African American male students in a literary society at Cornell University decided to form Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., in December 1906, which sparked the beginning of the Black Fraternity Movement (Kimbrough, 2003a; Ross, 2000). Even though the founding of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., is considered the beginning of the Black Fraternity Movement, there is a record of historically Black fraternities before Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. (Kimbrough, 2003a, 2003b). The next section will discuss the history of historically African American fraternities.

### **Historically African American Fraternities**

**The inception era of Black fraternalism.** This era consists of four Greek-letter organizations, one of which is still in existence (Kimbrough 2003a, 2003b). The first of such organizations was the Alpha Kappa Nu Greek Society, founded in 1903 at Indiana University-Bloomington (Kimbrough, 2003b). The founders of the organization were James Knight, Howard Thompson, E. B. Keemer, Fred Williamson, John Hodge, Thomas Reynolds, Mr. Hill, R. A. Roberts, and Gordon Merrill (Bryson, 2003). The organization lasted for approximately 14 months and is said to be the precursor to Black fraternalism at Indiana University and subsequently, Kappa Alpha Nu, which was founded at Indiana University-Bloomington on January 5, 1911. Kappa Alpha Nu later changed its name to Kappa Alpha Psi, Fraternity, Inc. (Bryson, 2003; Kimbrough, 2003b). Even though the

Alpha Kappa Nu Greek Society was the first attempt, the Sigma Pi Phi Boulé was a more substantive effort and is considered the first BGLO (Kimbrough, 2003b).

Dr. Henry M. Minton, a physician, envisioned creating a Greek-letter organization that would provide Black men the benefits he saw his White counterparts enjoying (Kimbrough, 2003b). He, along with Drs. E. C. Howard, A. B. Jackson, R. J. Warrick, E. T. Hinson, and Robert J. Abele, founded the Sigma Pi Phi Boulé on May 15, 1904. Sigma Pi Phi was established as a graduate organization and was the first elite club for Black men. There were two instances where membership was offered to undergraduates, but the program was short-lived after the two undergraduates died shortly after being initiated (Kimbrough, 2003b).

Expansion was made with caution for fear of developing a membership that was mediocre and average (Kimbrough, 2003b). The second chapter, the Beta Boulé, would not be established in Chicago until three years after the organization was founded. After the Beta Boulé, chapters would be established in Baltimore (1908), Memphis (1910), Washington, D.C. (1911), New York (1912), St. Louis (1912), Kansas City (1915), Detroit (1917), and Atlanta (1920). By 1950, the organization had only established 28 Boulés nationally, which is in contrast to the rapidly expanding undergraduate Greek-letter organizations during the same time period (Kimbrough, 2003b).

The Boulé has remained secretive in its existence, with the public becoming aware of its existence within the last 10 years. Currently, Sigma Pi Phi remains an organization for the Black elite and persons must be invited by a current member to join (Kimbrough, 2003b). Sigma Pi Phi has grown to more than 5,000 members and 126 chapters throughout the United States and the West Indies (The News Reporter, 2012).

With Alpha Kappa Nu and Sigma Pi Phi were two other short-lived attempts at Black fraternalism in Ohio (Kimbrough, 2003a).

Records indicate that Pi Gamma Omicron and Gamma Phi Fraternities existed in the state of Ohio before the founding of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. (Kimbrough, 2003a). Both organizations were short-lived but are significant in considering the history of Black Greek-letter organizations. The students in the literary society that evolved into Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., were doing research to determine if they were in fact the first Black fraternal organization. In fall 1905, the students found an article in the *Chicago Defender* alluding to the existence of Pi Gamma Omicron at The Ohio State University. The students inquired with the university registrar to determine the claim's validity, but were notified the university had no records that organization existed. Hearing of the existence of BGLOs that pre-dated Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., disheartened the men, but the fraternity still takes great pride in being the first Black collegiate fraternal organization.

Evidence of the existence of Pi Gamma Phi appeared in the January 10, 1906, issue of *The Lantern*, the newspaper of The Ohio State University. The founding members were: Richard Pettiford, William Berry, W. E. Davis, LeRoy Barnett, Elmer Shackelford, Norman Thorne, C. C. Underwood, H. A. Turner, John Shavers, and William Woodward (University Libraries, 2012). Like Pi Gamma Omicron, Gamma Phi was short-lived.

Gamma Phi Fraternity was founded at Wilberforce University on March 1, 1905, which was seven years before the Xi Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, nine years before the Beta Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, and 10 years before the Delta Chapter of Kappa

Alpha Psi were established there (Kimbrough, 2003b). The organization listed three founders with one presumably a faculty member (Kimbrough, 2003a). The colors of the organization were blue and white and expanded to at least four other campuses. By the year 1923, the chapter at Wilberforce reported 30 members, 8 honorary student members, and 5 honorary faculty members. The group appeared in yearbooks until approximately 1947, when it disappeared without an explanation for its disappearance (Kimbrough 2003a, 2003b). The founding of these organizations constitutes the Inception Era of Black Fraternalism. While the awareness of these organizations is important, the collegiate Black fraternal movement did not earnestly begin until the founding of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., at Cornell University on December 4, 1906 (Kimbrough, 2003a).

**The foundation era of Black fraternalism.** This era occurred between 1906 and 1922 with the founding of eight organizations on college campuses (Kimbrough, 2003a). Those organizations are as follows: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., founded at Cornell University in 1906; Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., founded at Howard University in 1908; Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., founded at Indiana University-Bloomington in 1911; Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., founded at Howard University in 1911; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., founded at Howard University in 1913; Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., founded at Howard University in 1914; Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., founded at Howard University in 1920; and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., founded at Butler University in 1922. These organizations were considered the Elite Eight until the founding of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., at Morgan State University in 1963, when they became the Divine Nine (Ross, 2000). For the purpose of this proposal, only the five

fraternities (i.e., Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi, Phi Beta Sigma, and Iota Phi Theta) will be discussed in detail.

The campus climate at Cornell University mirrored the climate of the general society (Ross, 2000). African American students at Cornell were segregated and isolated from the general student body causing an extremely low retention rate for African American students. Because the six African American students from the 1904-05 class of Cornell did not return the next year, the African American students on campus, including the founders of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., decided to create a study and support group for the university's remaining African American students (Ross, 2000).

Secret societies at Cornell in 1906 were like Greek-letter organizations and provided students with a support structure, an avenue by which students could find other students with common interests, provided housing, study groups, and a social environment where students can grow with others (Ross, 2000). African American students were excluded from these societies and literally had nowhere to turn but to each other for solutions. Because the study group the African American students created was successful, they began to investigate ways of making the group more purposeful and permanent. The students broached the idea of creating a fraternity, and as a result, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., was founded on December 4, 1906. The founders, or "Seven Jewels of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity," were Henry Arthur Callis, Eugene Kinckle Jones, Robert Harold Ogle, Charles Henry Chapman, Nathaniel Allison Murray, George Biddle Kelly, and Vertner Woodson Tandy (Ross, 2000). Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., the first collegiate fraternity created specifically for African Americans, was the offspring of two American historical movements that contested Jim Crow: the Niagara Movement co-

led by Black intellectuals like W. E. B. DuBois (one of the earliest members of the organization) and the “uplift” movement, which included leaders such as Booker T. Washington (Bradley, 2008; Ross, 2003). The fraternity ideals were based on “manly” deeds, scholarship, and love for all mankind (Ross, 2003).

The fraternity expanded to Howard University and established the Beta Chapter there in 1907 (Ross, 2003). The fraternity’s expansion in the first twenty years of existence created chapters at some of the nation’s best universities (Bradley, 2008). By 1926, the fraternity had chapters at six of the eight Ivy League universities: Cornell, Columbia, Yale, Harvard, Brown, and The University of Pennsylvania. During the two decades following the founding of Alpha, the fraternity had chartered 41 chapters in 24 different states, 11 of which were at HBCUs. In 1912, a chapter was established at the first HBCU, Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. The fraternity became the first to establish a chapter in another country when it chartered a chapter at the University of Toronto in 1908 (Bradley, 2008). Today, the fraternity has over 290,000 members and has been open to men of all races since 1940. Currently, there are more than 730 active chapters in the Americas, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and Asia. Following the establishment of Alpha Phi Fraternity, Inc., Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., was founded in 1911 at Indiana University-Bloomington.

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., began at Howard University in 1910 where founders Elder Watson Diggs and Byron Kenneth Armstrong were originally enrolled (Bryson, 2003). Both men travelled to Indiana University in the fall of that year and found an environment that was not welcoming to African American students. The presence of the 10 African American male students was almost completely ignored by

White students and one African American student may be on campus for weeks without seeing another African American student. These conditions made assimilation into the campus culture impossible for African American students at Indiana University, much similar to the environment at Cornell University. The administration was not welcoming to the students and the African Americans were denied use of entertainment and recreational facilities. They were not allowed to participate in contact sports and were only permitted to display their athletic prowess in track and field (Bryson, 2003).

In order to counteract these conditions, nine men (i.e., Elder Watson Diggs, Byron Kenneth Armstrong, Marcus Peter Blakemore, Edward Giles Irvin, Paul W. Caine, Henry T. Asher, Ezra D. Alexander, Guy Levis Grant, and John Milton Lee) met at the home of Mollie Spaulding and created a temporary organization, Alpha Omega (Bryson, 2003). The organization provided a means for the men to form a bond as they sought each other's company and alleviated that depressing isolation experienced earlier. They began to recognize the merit of Greek letter organizations. The group met again on January 5, 1911, to create a permanent organization with Elder Watson Diggs as permanent chairman, John Milton Lee as the secretary, and Byron Kenneth Armstrong as the sergeant-at-arms. These offices would later become the Polemarch, the Keeper of Records, and the Strategus, respectively. The organization would not pattern itself after the practices or principles of better known Greek letter organizations, nor would it choose members because of the wealth or prestige of their families. The principles of the new fraternity would be based on Christian ideals and the fundamental purpose of achievement. The members aspired to raise the ambitions of African American youth and

inspire them to accomplish goals higher than what they might otherwise be realized or even imagined (Bryson, 2003).

The new fraternity was named Kappa Alpha Nu, perhaps in tribute to the African American students who organized Alpha Kappa Nu Fraternity to create a better life for themselves at Indiana University (Bryson, 2003). The application for incorporation was filed with the State of Indiana on April 11, 1911, with the signatures of Elder Watson Diggs, Ezra D. Alexander, Byron Kenneth Armstrong, Henry T. Asher, Marcus Peter Blakemore, Paul W. Caine, George W. Edmonds, Guy Levis Grant, Edward G. Irvin, John Milton Lee, and Frederick Mitchell. Frederick Mitchell withdrew from the university and did not return, thus never becoming a member of the organization. The fraternity was incorporated on May 15, 1911, the first undergraduate fraternal organization to be incorporated by African Americans as a national body. From the inception, the fraternity never barred anyone membership on the basis of race, religion, or national origin. The name was changed to Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., on April 15, 1915, as a result of a racial comment towards fraternity member Frank Summers as he was competing in a track and field event (Bryson, 2003; Ross, 2000).

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., experienced great expansion in its infancy (Bryson, 2003). The Beta Chapter was established at the University of Illinois in 1913, followed by the Gamma Chapter established in Indianapolis also in 1913. The Indianapolis chapter was short-lived and the name Gamma was transferred to the Delta Chapter established at the University of Iowa in 1914. From then, undergraduate chapters would be designated by Greek letters and graduate chapters would be designated by the cities where they are located. The Delta Chapter was established at Wilberforce

University in 1915 (Bryson, 2003). The years 1914-1918 were a period of great expansion for the fraternity as chapters were established from the Pacific to the Atlantic (Ross, 2000). By 1930, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., had chartered almost 36 chapters (Kimbrough, 2003a). Today, the fraternity has over 150,000 members with 721 undergraduate and alumni chapters in every state of the United States, and international chapters in the United Kingdom, Germany, Korea, Japan, United States Virgin Islands, Nigeria, and South Africa. While Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., were both founded at PWIs to give African American students social and academic support on campus and combat the racist practices of their respective universities, the next three organizations were founded at HBCUs to foster a different purpose.

Howard University is known as the cradle of Black Greek civilization because five of the first eight BGLOs were founded there (Kimbrough, 2003b). Of those five organizations, two were fraternities. Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., was the first BGLO fraternity to be founded on a historically Black campus (Jeffries, 2008). The fraternity was founded on November 17, 1911, when best friends (called “The Three Musketeers”) Edgar A. Love, Oscar J. Cooper, and Frank Coleman met in the office of Dr. Ernest Everett Just, a prominent American scientist and Howard biology professor (Jeffries, 2008; Ross, 2000). Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., had already chartered its Beta Chapter there in 1907 and the first historically Black sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., had been established there in 1908. The three students, with the assistance of their faculty advisor Dr. Just, wanted to create a fraternity that was founded at a historically Black university (Ross, 2000).

Unlike the other chapters and organizations that had been previously established at Howard University, the founding of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., was met with great opposition and resistance from the administration, including Howard President Dr. Thirkield (Ross, 2000). The men did not give up and continued to form and push for the recognition of their fraternity. After meeting with the administration and implementing the changes they suggested, the administration agreed to recognize the organization on the premise it would remain a local fraternity and not expand. The founders and the administration had subsequent meetings and the organization was later recognized as a national organization and the fraternity was incorporated in 1914 (Ross, 2000).

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., was founded upon the principles of scholarship, manhood, perseverance, and uplift (Ross, 2000). The motto became, "Friendship is essential to the soul," which was evident in choosing the Greek letters Omega Psi Phi. Expansion was a slow and steady process for the organization and the Beta Chapter was not established until 1914 at Lincoln University. The fraternity carefully evaluated every prospective campus. The first graduate chapter was chartered in Norfolk, Virginia. By 1918, the organization had only chartered three chapters. By the end of 1923, the fraternity boasted 47 active chapters (Ross, 2000). Today, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., is an international fraternity with over 700 undergraduate and graduate chapters. After Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., was founded at Howard University.

The concept of another fraternity at Howard University began the summer of 1910 in Memphis, Tennessee, where high school senior and future founder Abram Langston Taylor encountered a Howard alumnus who told him stories about the Greek

life on campus (Hughey, 2008a; Ross, 2000). Taylor had already been accepted and decided to attend Howard University and came to college with the idea of creating a new fraternity. On January 9, 1914, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., was founded by Abram Langston Taylor, Leonard Francis Morse, and Charles Ignatius Brown. The founders conceived the organization as a means to deliver services to the general community. Unlike the Black elite organizations that they viewed as becoming a talented tenth cadre of separatist elites, the founders believed the fraternity and society would be better served by employing more democratically inclusive methods for membership. Instead of using the fraternity to acquire knowledge and skills for themselves, the founders sought to return the knowledge they had attained to the communities from which they came. Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., was founded upon the principles of brotherhood, scholarship, and service. The fraternity motto is “Culture for Service and Service for Humanity” (Hughey, 2008a).

The fraternity expanded to Wiley College and chartered the Beta Chapter there March 1915. In December 1915, Elder Watson Diggs of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., sent a letter to the fraternity offering to merge the two fraternities to strengthen expansion efforts in the Midwest, but A. Langston Taylor turned down the offer (Hughey, 2008a). The fraternity experienced continued growth in the 1920s with the addition of over 45 chapters in 25 cities (Ross, 2000). Today, the fraternity serves through a membership of more than 200,000 men in over 700 chapters in the United States, Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean. The Foundation Era of Black Fraternalism ended with the founding of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. (Kimbrough, 2003). The fifth organization would not be established until the early 1960s—Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. (Ross, 2000).

During the 1960s, an increase in activism and a sense of self characterized the climate on campuses (Kimbrough, 2003a). This climate was perfect for developing the spirit of students attending Morgan State University to seek a fraternity experience that was different from the already present mainstream Black Greek fraternities on campus. On September 19, 1963, Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., was founded by Albert Hicks, Lonnie Spruill, Jr., Charles Briscoe, Frank Coakley, John Slade, Baron Willis, Webster Lewis, Charles Brown, Louis Hudnell, Charles Gregory, Elias Dorsey, Jr., and Michael Williams (Ross, 2000).

All of the founders represented a new kind of student on American campuses—the nontraditional student (Ross, 2000). They were all from three to five years older than their peers and many had families and children. Others had spent time in military service and some had fulltime jobs outside of their studies. Another distinction of the founders is that many of them had known each other for most of their lives. Their familiarity with each other and their level of maturity led to their different outlook on the meaning of fraternity. The purpose of the organization was “The development and perpetuation of Scholarship, Leadership, Citizenship, fidelity, and Brotherhood among Men.” The motto of the organization represented the spirit of the Fraternity: “Building on a Tradition, Not Resting on One!” (Ross, 2000).

Expansion between the years 1963 and 1967 was slow for the fraternity for two reasons: most of the members were older, off-campus students, which made recruiting new members difficult and the organization was not a member of the NPHC, which would have legitimized the fraternity (Ross, 2000). The fraternity remained small and local until 1967 when a group of college students called the Pied Pipers joined the

fraternity. This group changed the face of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., and the members sought to spread the fraternity's philosophy throughout the Eastern Seaboard. Expansion began with chapters at Hampton Institute and Delaware State in 1967 and chapters at Norfolk State College and Jersey City State College in 1968. The fraternity was incorporated in Maryland in 1968 and continued to expand with chapters established at Southern Illinois University in 1974 and at San Francisco State University in 1983. The first graduate chapters were established in Baltimore in 1965, Washington, D.C. in 1970, Hampton, Virginia, in 1973, and Boston in 1973 (Ross, 2000). At present, Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., consists of over 30,000 members. There are currently around 300 undergraduate and alumni chapters, as well as colonies located in over 40 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, the Bahamas, Japan and South Korea.

All five of these Black Greek-lettered fraternities were founded as a result of tumultuous times in African American history and the founders sought to unify the African American students on campus to provide a social outlet, improve academic outcomes, and to reach out to the African American community at-large (Kimbrough, 2003a, 2003b; Ross, 2000). Since their founding, these organizations have provided a means by which African Americans can fulfill their personal need for affiliation and belongingness, develop leadership abilities, and collectively engage in social action for the betterment of the African American community. All Black fraternal organizations have continued their community service efforts with a special focus on youth. All organizations have a service-oriented program specifically for youth (Roberts & Wooten, 2008). Philanthropy and civic action are germane to Black fraternal organizations and giving back is a key principle of all of these organizations (Hughey, 2008b). On college

campuses, the presence of BGLOs creates an outlet for involvement and leadership skill development, provides a safe haven from racially insensitive campuses, and provides a source of campus excitement through activities such as stepping (Kimbrough, 2003a). At PWIs, White advisers must be prepared to advise these organizations with the understanding that students of color experience greater feelings of alienation than do White students at PWIs (Johnson, Bradley, Bryant, Morton, & Sawyer, 2008).

### **Outcomes of Greek Life**

Literature exists regarding the impact of Greek membership on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of college students. This section describes literature focusing on Greek life in general and then literature focusing on Black Greek life. Limitations of this research and recommendations for future research will also be presented.

#### **Academic Outcomes**

Pike (2000) and Debard and Sacks (2012) investigated the academic outcomes of college students affiliated with Greek-letter organizations. Both studies employed quantitative methodology and sampled students attending a PWI. Pike conducted a quantitative study that investigated the relationship between Greek affiliation and the college experiences and cognitive development of 827 first-time college students (75.4% female and 11.5% minority). He found that membership has a direct positive relationship with students' social involvement and integration of college experiences and an indirect positive relationship with the general abilities associated with cognitive development. The results indicated that Greek-affiliated students had higher levels of involvement and gains in general abilities than did non-Greek students. Greeks' gains in cognitive development (such as gains in general abilities, and gains in math and science reasoning)

were associated with their social involvement. Findings also indicated that the unique effects of Greek membership were more pronounced for college experiences than for cognitive development (Pike, 2000).

DeBard and Sacks (2012) studied the relationship between Greek membership and the academic outcomes of 45,000 first-year students from 17 institutions. The records used in the study detailed grades, credit hours earned, and retention. Within the sample, 39,983 students were first-year, non-Greek, 4,242 students joined a Greek-lettered organization in the fall semester of their first year, and 1,873 students joined in the spring semester of their first year. An ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) was employed to determine if joining a Greek-lettered organization impacted student GPA or credit hours (controlling for ACT score and high school GPA). Analysis was done on the sample as a whole and for males and females separately to examine possible gender differences.

Results indicated that students joining a Greek-lettered organization in their first year earned significantly higher GPAs than independent students; students joining in the spring semester earned more credit hours in the first year than independent students and those who joined in the fall semester; Greek-affiliated students were retained to their second year at significantly higher rates than those who did not affiliate. Greek-affiliated women earned slightly higher fall, spring and cumulative GPAs during the first year than independent women. Greek-affiliated women earned the same number of credit hours as their independent counterparts, but those who joined in the spring semester earned significantly more credit hours than the other two groups. Greek-affiliated women who joined in the spring semester were retained at a significantly higher rate than the other

two groups. Concerning gender differences, women in all categories performed higher than men in all categories.

Greek-affiliated men in both groups earned higher cumulative first-year GPAs than independent students. Men joining in the spring semester earned the most credits, followed by independent students, and then by men joining in the fall. Greek-affiliated men retained at higher rates than independent students. Greek-affiliated men who joined in the spring semester earned significantly higher GPAs than independent men and men who joined in the fall semester. Further research would involve collecting data from multiple schools in a longitudinal study. Another recommendation is carrying data collection onward beyond the first year (DeBard & Sacks, 2012). Literature exists exploring the psychosocial outcomes of students who are Greek-affiliated.

### **Psychosocial Outcomes**

Abowitz and Knox (2003) and Mathiasen (2005) explored the psychosocial outcomes of students in Greek-letter organizations. Abowitz and Knox employed quantitative methods to study what life goals were most salient to Greek-affiliate students, whereas Mathiasen employed qualitative methods to study the impact of Greek membership on the moral development of college students. Through purposive sampling, Abowitz and Knox surveyed 96 undergraduate Greek students (60% sorority and 40% fraternity) at Bucknell University using a 56-page confidential survey questionnaire. Within the sample, 64% of those surveyed were sophomores and 36% were juniors or seniors. The respondents were primarily white, with only 6% of either sorority women or fraternity men self-identifying as non-white (African American, Hispanic, Asian, Asian-American, or biracial). Of the 19 life goals, the results indicated the goals given highest

priority by the participants were being happy, being in love, having close friends, having a life partner/spouse, and having relatives. Having a role in public life or politics ranked last among 19 life goals. The women viewed goals like being happy, being well-educated, being cultured, and having relatives more importantly than the men. The women also viewed the importance of getting married higher than the men, whereas the men viewed the importance of having a career and work higher than the women (Abowitz & Knox, 2003).

Unlike Abowitz and Knox (2003), Mathiasen (2005) utilized qualitative research methods to examine the association between fraternity membership and moral development. Mathiasen studied a fraternity labeled “Alpha Alpha” at a large Midwestern university and utilized documents, interviews, and observations to conduct a case study. Case studies have been extremely useful in student affairs by preserving the significance of the context where students behave and make interpretations, accounting for influences of diverse student backgrounds. He reviewed five documents: the international headquarters’ web page, the object of the fraternity, the pledge manual, house rules and bylaws, and reports to the international headquarters. Mathiasen conducted 17 individual interviews: 12 members, three alumni, the house mother, and a representative (and alumnus) from the fraternity’s international headquarters. Mathiasen also conducted observations of five weekly meetings, two intramural events, and the rush cookout. Results indicated a positive influence on members’ moral development and four themes emerged: recruiting quality students, upholding house tradition and reputation, emphasizing moral development, and encouraging community service. Although these

findings reveal the positive outcomes of Greek affiliation, there are studies that reveal the negative behaviors associated with Greek affiliation.

### **Negative Behaviors Associated with Greek Affiliation**

There have been several instances of hazing in Greek-lettered organizations, with some instances leading to permanent injury or death. These instances include recent events at Florida A&M University, Prairie View A&M University, and Alcorn State University. Greek parties have been characterized by excessive drinking and drug use, rape, and property damage (Armstrong, Hamilton, & Sweeney, 2006; Martin, n.d.; Shackelford, 2011). These images can and have been known to overshadow the benefits of Greek affiliation and the good that these organizations do.

### **Alcohol Consumption**

Barry (2007) found in a review of 33 articles that persons who are Greek-affiliated tend to consume alcohol in greater quantities, minimize and misperceive the risks associated with alcohol abuse, and emulate a social environment and culture that views alcohol consumption as a key part of life. The results suggested that Greek-affiliated students constitute a subgroup that consumes alcohol in greater quantities, underestimates the risks of alcohol abuse, and emulates a social environment and culture in which drinking alcohol is a key part of life. Barry's findings also indicated that incoming students who had previous alcohol-related problems in high school were more likely to affiliate with Greek-lettered organizations in college than those who had not had those experiences. While Barry's work centers on alcohol consumption, other work centers on hazing.

### **Hazing**

Montague, Zohra, Love, McGee, and Tsamis (2008) in a qualitative study on the reality of hazing by Greek organizations identified the typologies of those that perpetrate hazing and those that receive hazing. This qualitative study utilized primary data from two focus groups (in-person and online) and secondary data from archived discussion board posting. The in-person focus groups consisted of 17 undergraduate fraternity members at a university in the southwestern United States. The participants of the online focus group also self-identified as members of Greek-lettered organizations and added a broader geographical perspective because they were not local to the primary researchers.

Results revealed two typologies of persons who haze as well as three typologies of those who get hazed. The two typologies of persons who haze are the teacher (provides knowledge about the fraternity or sorority and uses any tools to access that knowledge) and the fool (does not use common sense with regard to his/her position over initiates and may have self-esteem problems or brings alcohol or drugs into the initiation process). The typologies of persons who get hazed are the legitimation seeker (seeks a sense of belonging, is concerned with how other perceive him/her, and endures hazing to be considered a real member of the organization), the legacy seeker (joins the same organization as a close relative), and the tunnel-light looker (wants to avoid being hazed, but will endure a bit more because he/she believes the end is near and will go the extra mile). The participants considered anything done against someone's will as hazing. According to the discussion board data, the participants cited that the rationale behind hazing was a general lack of respect for the fraternal goals. With alcohol abuse and hazing, eating disorders are also considered a negative behavior associated with Greek membership.

## **Eating Disorders**

In a longitudinal study, Allison and Park (2004) examined disordered eating among Greek-affiliated and non-Greek-affiliated female students. The sample included 102 female students at a Midwestern state university and was 93.7% White. The women were surveyed in their first semester before they were influenced by the sorority environment and surveyed again during their second and third years in college. Results indicated similar levels of disordered eating attitudes and behaviors between students in a sorority and those who were not. Students in sororities gained more weight on average than students who were not in sororities. Results also indicated that the level of preoccupation with weight decreased for students not in sororities, but remained the same for students in sororities. Thus, issues with weight and dieting continue to be emphasized within sororities (Allison & Park, 2004).

Similar to Allison and Park (2004), Basow, Foran, and Bookwala (2007) investigated the relationship between sorority membership and disordered eating behavior. The sample included 265 female students recruited during the fall semester at a small East Coast liberal arts college. The college had six sororities and approximately 46% of non-first-year women were Greek-affiliated. Within the sample, 99 female students (43 sophomores, 29 juniors, and 27 seniors) either were currently pledging or had already been initiated. Of the remaining students, 49 were first-year students and intended to pledge in their sophomore year and 37 were first-year students who had no intention of pledging. The remainder of the sample included 30 sophomores, 20 juniors, and 30 seniors. Data were collected by a female examiner over a 6-week period. The

students completed the Eating Disorders Inventory-2 (EDI-2; Garner, 1991) and the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS; McKinley & Hyde, 1996).

Results indicated that students in sororities exhibited more risk factors for developing eating disorders than students not in sororities and female students with high levels of risk factors (i.e., higher levels of objectified body consciousness, disordered eating attitudes, and perceived social pressure) were more likely to be attracted to Greek-lettered organizations. Results also indicated that the longer a student lived in the sorority house, the higher the student scored on the Bulimia and Body Dissatisfaction subscales of the EDI-2. Thus, female students with several predisposing factors are particularly risky if they live in the sorority house. Basow et al., also found that students who intended to pledge a sorority were similar to those who were already members with regard to disordered eating attitudes, thus indicating that sororities appeal to female students highly prone to exhibiting drive for thinness and body dissatisfaction. Findings also indicated that sorority members and those that intended to pledge exhibit higher levels of Body Surveillance and Body Shame than did those who were not members of sororities and first-year students with no intention to pledge (Basow et al., 2007).

### **Sexual Aggression**

Murnen and Kohlman (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of 29 studies to investigate how athletic participation and fraternity membership impact sexual aggression among male college students. Murnen and Kohlman conducted computerized searches using grouping variables (i.e., fraternity, athlete, and peer) and criterion variables (rape, sexual, masculinity, and aggression). The search included studies examining the relationships between either fraternity status or athletic status, and any predictor of sexual

aggression. Three dependent measures were used: rape myth acceptance, self-report of past sexually aggressive behavior, and scales to measure hyper-masculinity. With regard to fraternity membership, findings indicated a significant association between fraternity membership and rape myth acceptance, fraternity membership and hyper-masculinity, and fraternity membership and self-report of sexual aggression. The results indicated that fraternity membership has a significant relationship with sexually aggressive behavior in male college students.

Although the research findings here reveal valuable information regarding Greek life, the research findings presented do not deal with BGLOs specifically. More recent research has concentrated on African Americans in BGLOs.

### **Black Greek-Lettered Organizations**

Previous research regarding Greek organizations has focused on predominantly White organizations and usually ignored the distinct history and structure of BGLOs. Further, previous research has rarely distinguished between predominantly White Greek-lettered Organizations and BGLOs (McClure, 2006b). The literature presented in this section focuses specifically on the experiences of African American college students in BGLOs and how this membership is associated with their academic and psychosocial outcomes.

#### **Academic Outcomes**

Harper (2007) noted how previous literature on BGLOs at PWIs focused on hazing and out-of-class engagement, as well as focused on “socially-produced outcomes and the non-academic experiences of members” (p. 2), while studies regarding the academic success of members of BGLOs are nonexistent. He interviewed 131 members

of BGLOs from seven undergraduate chapters at a large Midwestern PWI to explore the effects of membership on the academic performance (classroom participation and student engagement) of their members. All participants held membership in his/her chapter for at least one full semester and all had taken multiple classes where other African American students were underrepresented.

Data were collected in two phases. The first phase comprised of six females and four males representing each BGLO on campus and all were juniors or seniors currently taking at least one course with no other African American students enrolled. The second phase included the remaining 121 students with 76 sorority members and 45 fraternity members. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors were represented in this sample with 86 students currently enrolled in classes where they were the only African American student and 113 presently taking a course with fewer than four other African American students. Individual interviews were conducted, classes in which the participants were enrolled were observed, and focus groups were conducted. The data were collected and analyzed simultaneously.

Although previous research (Allen, 1988; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Feagin, Imani, & Vera, 1996; Fleming, 1984; Sedlacek, 1999; Sedlacek, Helm, & Prieto, 1998) shows that African American students at PWIs show less classroom participation and student engagement and used terms like "alienated, disengaged, disenfranchised, underserved, incompatible, and dissatisfied" to describe their experiences inside and outside of class (p. 98), Harper (2007) revealed five key themes that affected members' classroom participation: underrepresentation (i.e., being the lone African American student); voluntary race representation (i.e., students' voluntary commitment to represent

themselves, their BGLO and African Americans in general); collective responsibility (i.e., how individual grades impact the chapter's success, being a positive role model for other African American students, and responsibility for positively portraying BGLOs on campus); teaching styles (i.e., whether or not the teacher was engaging and interactive); and forced representation (i.e., being forced or pressured to participate and made to represent African Americans or other minorities with regard to issues of race and diversity in class). Underrepresentation, voluntary race representation, and collective responsibility positively affected classroom participation, whereas forced representation negatively affected classroom participation. Teaching styles positively and negatively affected classroom participation in that if the professor is engaging and interactive, the students participated more and if the teacher is less engaging and interactive, they participated less (Harper, 2007).

Literature also exists that focuses specifically on the college experiences of African American males in BGLOs at PWIs. Singleton (2010) and Henry (2012) employed qualitative methods to examine how the college experiences of African American male students at PWIs are affected by membership in BGLOs. Singleton investigated how the presence, policies, and practices of Black Greek-letter fraternities influenced the success of African American males attending a PWI. Using a qualitative methodology, Singleton conducted 11 interviews of African American male students attending Southeast State University, a midsized suburban university in The Southeast. The sample was chosen by purposive sampling and was comprised of eight members of BGLOs representing three of the five NPHC fraternities and three males who were not Greek-affiliated. Singleton also utilized observation of three BGLO events and analysis

of five Black Greek-letter Fraternities' mottos, vision, and mission statements. He found three major themes that helped the participants achieve student success: (a) academic resilience-confidence referred to the students' ability to gain self-confidence through academic acceleration in spite of negativity based on race, background, socioeconomic status, being a first generation student, etc.; (b) motivation and support, which referred to giving and receiving support and motivation contributes to resiliency and achieving student success; and (c) BGLO showcasing, which involved outward presentation and displaying pride in their respective BGLO through programming, events, and social exhibition like stepping, party hopping/strolling, and neophyte presentations (Singleton, 2010).

Like Singleton (2010), Henry (2012) employed qualitative methods to study the African American male student experience in BGLOs at a PWI. Unlike Singleton, Henry not only looked at the role fraternity membership played in their college experiences, she investigated why African American males joined BGLOs. Henry interviewed 20 members of Black Greek fraternities at four metropolitan PWIs; three PWIs were private and the other was public. The sample was comprised of seven members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., five members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., four members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., three members of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., and 1 member of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. Findings indicated that African American male students joined BGLOs because of the support system they gained through brotherhood, the fraternal identity and legacy of their respective organizations, and having personal connections with older members of BGLOs. The positive influences found in the study were being held accountable by peers, engagement in service

opportunities, being able to network, and leadership development. The negative influences were stereotyping, being marginalized, and having competing priorities (Henry, 2012).

### **Student Engagement**

McClure (2006b) in a qualitative study investigated how membership in one BGLO influenced the college experiences of 20 undergraduates who attended a large, southeastern PWI with a long history of racial exclusion. The study utilized a social constructionist framework and employed individual semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that fraternity membership increased the close feelings the participants had toward each other, toward the university, and toward Black history, as well as increased their value in fraternity membership. Fraternity membership also establishes a social network after college that fosters a supportive environment that increases success while in college, satisfaction with the college experience, and possibilities for success after graduation (McClure, 2006b). Although previous research dealt with Greek life solely at a PWI, recent research has compared Greek life at HBCUs and PWIs.

In a quantitative study utilizing archival data from the 2003 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Patton, Bridges, and Flowers (2011) compared the impact of Greek affiliation on African American students' engagement at HBCUs and to the student engagement at PWIs. The sample contained 9,539 African American students, which was comprised of 2,996 HBCU students and 6,543 PWI students. Approximately 8% of the HBCU students were Greek-affiliated and approximately 7% of the PWI students were Greek-affiliated. Results indicated that African American students in BGLOs at HBCUs are slightly more engaged in effective educational practices than their

Greek-affiliated counterparts at PWIs. All Greek-affiliated students were significantly more involved in activities that involved active and collaborative learning and student-faculty interaction scales. At HBCUs, the results indicated that Greek affiliation contributed considerably more to the students' collaborative academic activities with peers and interactions with faculty. African American Greek-affiliated students at PWIs were less engaged than all African American Greek-affiliated students who completed the 2003 NSSE (Patton et al., 2011). Although the previous literature focuses on student engagement, other sources focus on the relationship between BGLO membership and leadership.

### **Leadership**

Kimbrough (1995) utilized quantitative methods to assess attitudes towards leadership among members of BGLOs. The sample included 61 African American students at a public PWI. Of the 61 students, 27 were members of a BGLO and 34 were nonmembers, 17 were first-year students, 14 were sophomores, 24 were juniors, and 5 were seniors. Regarding the gender differences in the sample, 21 were male and 40 were female. A 13-item questionnaire developed by the author was given in two parts and members were asked if BGLO membership improved their leadership skills.

Frequency and percentage analyses were performed on the data from the first section items and a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze the responses to the data from the second section. Results indicated that similarities were found across groups in their self-assessments of their leadership skills. They indicated that members would be more likely to hold leadership positions than nonmembers. Similarities were found in students' self-reported perceptions of the value of leadership.

The hypothesis that members and nonmembers would find value in BGLOs was only marginally confirmed. With student engagement and academic outcomes, mentoring by members of BGLOs has been shown to positively affect the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American males in middle and high schools.

### **Mentoring**

In a conceptual article, Moore and Ratchford (2007) described the experiences of 10 African American male students in the eighth grade at Brogden Middle School, Goldsboro, NC, who were selected to become part of the Boys to Men Mentoring Program. The students were selected because they had the most frequent discipline referrals during their seventh-grade year. The brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., a BGLO, met weekly with the students, provided homework assistance, served as motivational speakers, and became study buddies for the students. Discipline referrals for the 10 students reduced by 59.7% during their eighth grade year and all 10 passed the eighth-grade gateway assessment, which promoted them to the ninth grade. At the time when the article was written, nine of the students were rising tenth graders doing well in their studies and one, who had turned sixteen in the eighth grade, had to drop out in the ninth grade, but was working full time.

### **Gender Identity Development**

McClure (2006a) employed qualitative methods to examine the important role fraternity membership has in constructing a unique masculine identity. With a sample of 20 active undergraduate members of one BGLO at a large, southeastern PWI, McClure conducted semi-structured interviews that lasted an average of 60 minutes. Her findings indicated the influence of two competing types of masculinity. One was a hegemonic

model usually associated with White men, but mainly results from a capitalist economic context emphasizing success, competition, and individualism. The other is an Afrocentric model mainly caused by the importance of race in identity construction for members of oppressed groups, emphasizing community and cooperation. According to McClure, the participants used their fraternity membership to exude the Afrocentric model of cooperation and connectedness to the African American community and to other males. They also conformed to many of the ideals of the hegemonic model (McClure, 2006a).

### **Pilot Study**

I conducted a pilot study in two phases to understand the potential effects of membership in a BGLO on the college experiences of African American males attending a PWI. The pilot study guided the finalization of the research design of the dissertation study. The research question guiding the pilot study was: How does membership in a BGLO affect, if at all, the college experiences of African American males who attend PWIs? The pilot data were collected in two phases. Phase one included data collected to fulfill the requirements for an introductory course in qualitative research methods and examined how undergraduate students viewed their fraternity experiences. Phase two extended the research in phase one to examine how alumni viewed their fraternity experiences.

For phase one of the pilot study, all participants came from the same large, state-supported PWI in the mid-Atlantic region. They were recruited using criterion, theoretical, and snowball sampling methods (Hays & Singh, 2012). The sample included four participants (two juniors and two seniors). The sample also included two members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., one member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., and one

member of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. For phase two, the participants had already graduated from college. I used convenience sampling and recruited the participants from my Facebook and LinkedIn contacts. The sample in phase two included two members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and two members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Three types of data were collected. The first type of data came in the form of interview data and consisted of two collections over two weeks. The first data collection consisted of an individual interview and the second data collection consisted of a focus group of three participants. The semistructured interviews consisted of 12 questions and lasted between 30 and 35 minutes. I also asked follow-up or probing questions to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, seek clarification of the responses, and to further engage the participants. The second type of data consisted of an arts-based data collection. Each participant was asked to take a picture, draw or create a picture, or create a collage portraying what fraternity means to them. The first participant responded and sent me a picture of what fraternity means to him. The third type of data was collected via the internet utilizing a Google document.

Eight themes were identified: (a) knowledge (i.e., how prior knowledge of Greek life affected participants' desire to pledge); (b) collegiate experience (i.e., fraternity experiences positively impacted their academic performance, promoted academic excellence, made them more out-going, and positively impacted their social engagement on campus); (c) home (i.e., distance participant wanted to be away from home and how the chapter was like home for the participant); (d) family (i.e., the fraternity provided a brotherhood and sense of belonging, the members were welcoming to the participants when they first arrived on campus, fraternity provides a bond or network with other

members globally, and fraternity facilitates campus unity, especially with other Greek-affiliated students); (e) giving back (i.e., fraternity members providing assistance to members in need, fraternity members as role models and mentors for other African American males, providing volunteer service, networking with other fraternity members globally, and recruiting young African American males to attend college); (f) commitment (i.e., membership is a lifelong commitment); (g) image (i.e., one's outward appearance and making sure to maintain a positive image on campus; and (h) commitment to the university (i.e., desire to remain at the university and likelihood participants would recommend the university to other young African American males). The artistic data supported themes *home* and *family*.

These findings indicated that membership in Black Greek fraternities positively impacted the college experiences (i.e., academic outcomes and psychosocial outcomes) of these participants (see Appendix A-8). The positive impact extends to their life after college as a result of the bond fraternity membership creates with other members globally. Although the sample in the pilot study only included four participants in phase one and four participants in phase two, the results provide a framework for investigating the potential impact of fraternity membership on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. With this pilot study as a guide, the proposed study seeks to expand the pilot research to include participants from fraternity chapters at PWIs nationwide and members who pledged at a PWI and have graduated college.

### **Limitations of Previous Research**

The literature reviewed here provides valuable information regarding African American male college students, but has limitations. The work of Goode-Cross and Tager (2011) included using a smaller sample size, which limits the transferability of the findings. All the students self-identified as gay, bisexual, or homosexual, which shows their comfort with their sexual orientation and the findings may not reflect the experiences of those who have same-sex partners, but self-identify as heterosexual. The participants regularly involved themselves with other African Americans, which exemplifies commitment to the African American community and the importance of their race/ethnicity, which limits the transferability of the findings to experiences of LGBT African American students who do not value their racial/ethnic identity (Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011).

The literature reviewed also reveals the various outcomes of Greek life but has limitations. The statistics speak to the positive outcomes of Greek life, but do not capture the story behind the college experiences of students in Greek-lettered organizations. The research by Pike (2000) and DeBard and Sacks (2012) also revealed the positive outcomes of Greek membership, but utilized quantitative methods and only studied Greek life in general. Other limitations to Pike's work include his results are specific to one university and the sample does not represent a diverse group of students and the research does not directly assess any negative effects of Greek affiliation on objective measures of cognitive development. Pike did not explain variables like general abilities (Pike, 2000).

Barry (2007) and Montague et al. (2008) studied the negative outcomes of Greek life. Montague et al. (2008) utilized qualitative methods, unlike the previous research. Other limitations to their research include the inability to confirm that online participants

were actually members of Greek-lettered organizations and the data took a large amount of time to arrange. They did not include the number of participants in the online focus groups (Montague et al., (2008). Like the previous research, however, Barry (2007) and Montague et al. (2008) also studied Greek life in general. Barry's literature review was also limited in that his findings were specific to one campus or one region and researcher bias was not taken into account (Barry, 2007).

McClure (2006b) revealed how previous research does not focus on BGLOs and utilized qualitative methods to look at social outcomes of membership in BGLOs, but only studied one organization at one university. As with McClure (2006b), McClure (2006a) only studied one organization at one university. Another limitation is that McClure did not maintain the confidentiality of her participants. Harper (2007) also used qualitative methods to study academic outcomes of African American members of BGLOs. Both McClure and Harper studied BGLOs at PWIs. Neither McClure nor Harper accounted for pre-college biases. Unlike McClure, Harper studied members of various organizations, but only studied African American Greeks at one university. More qualitative research needs to be done regarding the experiences of African American males who attend PWIs and are members of BGLOs. This research should involve participants from different organizations at different universities.

Harper and Harris (2012), Robertson and Mason (2008), and Zell (2011) all provide a framework for improving the academic outcomes of African American male college students, but their work is limited. Harper and Harris' recommendations are specific to public universities. Robertson and Mason (2008) and Zell (2011) both used qualitative methods to capture the participants' voices and how they make meaning of

their college experiences. Their work only focused on data collected at one university or in one area and they employed smaller sample sizes. Robertson and Mason utilized a sample from a university in The South, which is historically known to be less inclusive and more racially hostile. They employed convenience sampling, which means the findings cannot be generalized to African American males at HBCUs, and there was not a comparison group of African American females to determine if these factors were germane to African American males only (Robertson & Mason, 2008). In addition to employing a small sample size, Zell used focus groups which can lead to participants influencing each other or self-censoring remarks. Her findings were not representative of other racial/ethnic groups, and the study used self-report data, which can lead participants to only speak positively about the program and they may be pressured to exaggerate their academic standing among their peers (Zell, 2011). Future research on academic outcomes of African American males should examine psychosocial outcomes and employ larger sample sizes and be performed with students from various universities. Like Zell (2011), Harper (2006b) also relied on self-report data from the participants and the peers were not interviewed. Another limitation is the limited transferability to other types of institutions of higher learning (Harper, 2006b).

Research conducted by Abowitz and Knox (2003) also has limitations. Generalizability should be cautioned because of the small sample from one university, use of purposive sampling, and the lack of diversity among the participants (Abowitz & Knox, 2003). Like Abowitz and Knox, Mathiasen (2005) only collected data from one university. The study did not provide demographic information regarding the diversity of

the sample. The primary investigator did not account for pre-college moral development or for researcher bias. As with qualitative methods, generalizability should be cautioned.

Patton et al. (2011) investigated Greek-affiliation at HBCUs and PWIs, but their work has limitations. Generalizations beyond the HBCUs and PWIs that self-selected to participate in the NSSE should be made with caution. Researchers did not control for pre-college measures of students' engagement or their precollege academic preparation. The study did not specify whether the Greek-affiliated African American students were members of a BGLO or other Greek-lettered organization. The findings stem from older NSSE data.

Allison and Park (2004), Basow et al. (2007), and Murnen and Kohlman (2007) focused on the negative behaviors associated with fraternity and sorority life, but their work was limited. Allison and Park's work was limited by the homogenous racial backgrounds and ages of the women and the high level of involvement in Greek life at the university. For example, 37% and 25% of freshman women rushed and pledged/joined a sorority respectively (Allison & Park, 2004). Basow et al. employed a cross-sectional research design which prevented the establishment of causal relationships between disordered eating behaviors and sorority membership. There was no way to ensure that the first-year women who planned to rush the following year actually did so. They could not control for BMI and the findings have limited generalizability due to the small size of the campus and homogeneity of the student body (Basow et al., 2007). With regard to the research by Murnen and Kohlman, none of the studies that comprised the meta-analysis were experimental so one cannot determine the nature of the associations revealed in these analyses. There are very few longitudinal studies relating male peer

group membership to attitudes and behaviors related to sexual aggression. Such studies would help determine how these attitudes and behaviors might develop over time. In addition, although one cannot ethically examine the exact relationship between group membership and sexual aggression in an experimental method, one could conduct experimental research on variables that are indirectly related to sexual aggression (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007).

Paucity exists regarding literature that focuses solely on how membership in BGLOs affects the college experiences of African American males attending PWIs. Singleton (2010) and Henry (2012) both used qualitative methods to examine the influence of Black Greek fraternity membership on the college experiences of African American male college students at PWIs. Both studies had significant results like revealing the themes that helped African American male students succeed (Singleton, 2010) and revealing the reasons why African American male students seek membership in BGLOs (Henry, 2012), but they were limited. Singleton's sample was comprised of 11 students from one southeastern PWI and only had representation from three of the five historically African American fraternities. The study was limited in that transferability to all African American male students, all Black Greek fraternities, or all PWIs must be cautioned. Another limitation is the study relied on the findings of one analyst and the data was collected in less than twelve months (Singleton, 2010).

Henry (2012) had a sample of 20 African American male students from four universities with representatives from five of the historically African American fraternities. Even though the sample expanded on Singleton's, it was still drawn from one metropolitan area and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., only had one representative.

Another limitation was that Henry was not Greek-affiliated, nor did she have any family members who were Greek-affiliated. The study was limited in that data were based on participants' personal experiences and opinions, which may not be applied to other individual experiences. Some of the participants were members of city-wide chapters, not undergraduate chapters at a university. Another limitation is the data were collected from universities in a localized area in a metropolitan city (Henry, 2012).

Both investigators interviewed students who were currently enrolled in college and did include participants who may have joined at a PWI as an undergraduate, but have since graduated and/or are involved with a graduate chapter. This study seeks to fill in the gaps of these two studies. I seek to recruit participants who joined BGLOs at PWIs from various regions of the country. The sample will have persons from each of the five historically African American fraternities and will include current students and those who are no longer attending college. The next section will describe the research methodology that will be utilized for this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology of this research study. A detailed description of the purpose of the study and the research questions will be provided. This chapter will discuss the research tradition and paradigm used and sampling procedures employed. Next, the procedures for data collection and analysis will be discussed followed by a discussion of strategies for trustworthiness. Limitations of the study will then be addressed.

#### **Research Design**

Stanfield (1994) posited that the experiences of African Americans are too rich to be reduced to statistical tables. He further stated that researchers committed to understanding the experiences of persons of African descent need to employ research methods that are more closely aligned with their worldviews and lived experiences. He suggested research strategies relying on oral communication because they are more consistent with the oral traditions found among Africans and cultures of African descent. These oral research strategies also help to reduce the “Othering” process that often occurs in social science research (Stanfield, 1994). Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to delve deeply into the research setting, discover how participants make meaning of their experiences in the context of the research setting, and reveal more information regarding a topic that has not been previously examined (Gay et al., 2011). Because of these oral traditions and qualities of qualitative research, I employed qualitative methodology to do this study.

Hays and Singh (2012) stated qualitative research has the task of directly experiencing a phenomenon in the most comprehensive and engaged way possible—to

talk to or observe the individuals affected by the phenomenon. Qualitative research occurs in a natural setting with researching investing extensive and intensive time collecting and analyzing data. Qualitative researchers immerse themselves into a setting and eschew any expert status. The cultural phenomena investigated are researched in context with the researchers integrating their new perspectives into their own ways of understanding the phenomenon, the participants, and/or the context. The cultural phenomenon for this study was membership in BGLOs and its impact on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students at PWIs. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative researchers utilize interviews, observations, documents, and archival data to collect data. Qualitative research entails several research traditions with grounded theory being the most influential (Gay et al., 2011; Patton, 2002).

### **Social Constructivism**

Constructivists place priority on the phenomenon being studied and see both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other data sources (Charmaz, 2006). They investigate how and why participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations. Further, the constructivist approach involves more than just exploring how individuals view their situations. Constructivists learn how, when, and the extent to which a studied experience is embedded in larger and hidden positions, networks, situations, and relationships. The constructivist approach uncovers differences and distinctions between people along with the hierarchies of power, communication, and opportunity that maintain and perpetuate those differences and distinctions. Constructivists are alert to the conditions that facilitate and maintain those

differences and distinctions. Rich data and having sufficient knowledge to be able to see differences and distinctions provide the material to anchor the experience. For this study, the constructivist approach allowed me to discover how African American male students make meaning of their experiences in BGLOs and uncover any hidden associations between these experiences and the students' overall college experiences at PWIs. The data gathered from this study facilitated the discovery of what aspects of the fraternity experiences impact (if any) the college experiences of African American male students.

According to Green et al. (2007), social constructivism assumes there is no universal truth because multiple contextual perspectives exist and there are subjective voices that can label truth. Educational phenomena cannot be objective because the voices of participants and researchers are biased and rooted in different cultural experiences and identities. Researchers utilize this paradigm to construct knowledge through social interactions and to understand how individuals construct knowledge. Ontologically, multiple perspectives of experiences in BGLOs exist and these perspectives will be uncovered by examining the experiences of a representative sample of males in each of the five organizations. Epistemologically, these experiences are socially constructed via interaction with the members of their own fraternity and the members of the other four fraternities; therefore, the study will gain information via individual interviews of the members of the organizations.

The experiences of being a member of a BGLO are personal and reflexive. Because the axiology of social constructivism states the values of the researcher are a vital component (Hays & Singh, 2012), the values of the researcher and the participants will be emphasized to develop a shared understanding. Social constructivism is

appropriate for this study because the experiences of members of the fraternities are subjective, and can be understood via dialogue and social interactions between them and me. The study was idiographic in that individual experiences were uncovered and the findings had an emic perspective (insider perspective).

### **Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory methodology consists of a set of systematic and flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to develop a theory grounded in the data collected (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory is an effective tool by which researchers develop new theories that specifically integrate a diversity focus while addressing issues of process that yield theoretical perspectives specific to diverse populations (Green et al., 2007). Grounded theory research is able to fill the void caused by the dearth of literature that has embraced demographic shifts in diversity and the byproducts of those shifts. Grounded theory researchers who accept the premise that demographic shifts in racial/ethnic diversity warrant greater attention and a closer look should not aim to reject, ignore, or remain ignorant of the forces of race or ethnicity, but should explore how these forces permeate processes of social interactions, decision-making, and other processes (Green et al., 2007). Grounded theory is appropriate for this study because the focus was on how being a member of a historically African American fraternity permeates the academic outcomes, psychosocial outcomes, and decision-making processes (with regard to remaining enrolled in their university) of African American male college students at PWIs.

Constructivist grounded theory is laden in the interpretive tradition (Charmaz, 2006). Constructivist grounded theorists are reflexive toward the research process and the

results of that process. They consider how their theories evolve, which involves both researchers and participants interpreting meanings and actions. Not only does constructivism theorize how research participants interpret specific situations, but it posits that the resulting theory is an interpretation. This theory depends on the researcher's view, but it cannot and does not stand outside of it. Constructivist grounded theorists assume that data and analyses are socially constructed and reflect what factors constitute their results. Data analysis is contextual and rests on time, place, culture, and situation. Facts and values are connected and constructivists acknowledge that what they see (and do not see) rests on their values. Constructivists acknowledge their own assumptions and consider how their assumptions affect their research. Grounded theorists import their preconceived ideas if they are not aware of their own assumptions. Thus, constructivism fosters researchers' reflexivity with regard to their own interpretations as well as those of their participants (Charmaz, 2006). Because of my experiences as an African American male who is an alumnus of a PWI and a member of a BGLO, I assumed that the participants' stories will be connected because they all will self-identify as African American, will all be members of a BGLO, and will have attended a PWI. Because of my experiences in a BGLO and the data collected from the pilot study, I also assumed that membership in a BGLO will have a positive impact on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of the participants. I assumed that PWIs have experienced a demographic shift in their minority population, but still have difficulty recruiting and retaining African American males. Another assumption is that PWIs desired to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American males and these students will have positive experiences at PWIs.

Green et al. (2007) delineated six research phases for grounded theory development and gave guidelines for incorporating diversity in each step, depending on the level of importance the primary investigator assigns to the phenomenon studied. The six phases are: problem identification, research question development, data collection, data analysis, validation of findings, and the research report. For the purposes of this proposal, only the first five phases will be discussed. Each step provides an opportunity for the primary investigator to make diversity a priority throughout the course of the study (Green et al., 2007).

Green et al. (2007) also delineated four levels of importance regarding incorporating diversity in grounded theory research. The first level of importance is the *primary level*, which contends that diversity drives the research and race/ethnicity are central to all aspects of the research process, like conceptualization of the research project, developing the research questions, theoretical sampling, data collection and analysis, and writing up the report. The diversity focus is established at the inception of the grounded theory research (Green et al., 2007).

The second level of importance is the *complementary level*, where diversity has a lesser focus, but its importance is still acknowledged (Green et al., 2007). Diversity does not drive the research, but enhances the study at various points and complements the conceptualization of the phenomenon. The *peripheral level*, which is the third level, contends that diversity is merely an add-on and is given little to no value in the research process. The fourth level is the *absent level*. When diversity is absent, it has the lowest level of importance, but has a guiding assumption changing demographics and interactions across racial/ethnic and cultural lines are not relevant to the research process.

Diversity must be allowed to emerge naturally if it is to become essential to the study (Green et al., 2007). For this study, diversity was implemented at the primary level because African American male college students will be the focus of the research. Guidelines for incorporating diversity on this level during the first five phases will be discussed next.

**Identifying the problem.** A researcher's first opportunity to incorporate diversity into the research process is identifying the theory or process that needs to be developed or modified and determining the level of importance with regard to the problem's conceptualization (Green et al., 2007). Defining the research problem is informed by the primary investigator's personal and professional experiences, engagement with diverse populations, academic discipline, and familiarity with relevant literature. At the inception of the research, the primary investigator has to make several choices regarding defining boundaries of the problem area, determining the disciplinary and/or philosophical orientation employed by the study, and making use of relevant literature. Making these choices allows the research to either integrate or remove diversity from the project (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Green et al., 2007). The research problem, disciplinary orientation, and literature work in concert to aid the researcher in that integration or removal process (Green et al., 2007). For the purposes of this study, I took into consideration my membership in a BGLO, my work in student affairs as a residence director at a HBCU, my training as a counselor, and my knowledge of the lack of literature focusing on the experiences of African American male students in BGLOs to integrate diversity at the primary level.

Integrating diversity at this stage does present challenges to grounded theory researchers. One challenge to the researcher is whether to operate contrary to his/her training and asking if diversity is being overlooked or neglected, but has a legitimate place in identifying the problem (Green et al., 2007). I have training as a counselor and am committed to serving underrepresented populations. Improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students is a social justice issue and being involved in advocacy and social justice is part of a counselor's ethical duty (Harper & Harris, 2012; ACA, 2005). I also have training in various areas of student affairs. Institutions of higher learning are becoming more committed to diversity, especially regarding the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper & Harris, 2012). So, because of my training as a counselor and in student affairs, I did not operate contrary to my training in this study.

Another challenge to integrating diversity at this stage is monitoring the balance between objectivity and subjectivity to diversity as an emerging concept. The danger of being too insensitive to diversity is more of an issue than being too sensitive to diversity, especially for those whose discipline generally overlooks its relevance. With this challenge comes the premise that many fields have theories and models that were based on dominant, elite, or majority populations, and are not inclusive of minority populations and their experiences. Both of my disciplines have theories and models that were based on western populations with little to no regard to culture and diversity (Green et al., 2007; Neukrug, 2011). As such, researchers interested in diversity have to move beyond seminal works and become familiar with contemporary literature and debates in the field critiquing these theories/models and their neglect of diverse populations. Doing so will

increase sensitivity to diversity and make the grounded theory researcher more able to maintain a balance between objectivity and subjectivity.

**Developing the research questions.** Grounded theory research questions are meant to be broad and open-ended. They must identify the phenomenon being investigated and what the researcher aims to understand about the phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). When diversity is at the primary level, the central research question focuses on persons of color, their experiences, their voices, and their issues (Green et al., 2007). At this level of importance, the removal of diversity changes the purpose of the research study. In order to effectively incorporate diversity at the primary level in this phase, I solicited feedback from an insider (a member of the population) to review the guiding questions and interview questions to determine their cultural relevance. Another strategy is reading culturally relevant literature. For the purposes of this study, I discussed my research questions and interview protocol questions with members of my dissertation committee, members of my research team, other college student personnel, and members of Black Greek fraternities.

In addition to the strategies proposed by Green et al. (2007), I conducted a pilot study to investigate the relationship between membership in a BGLO and the college experiences of African American male students at PWIs. The pilot study yielded topics like “family,” “collegiate experience,” “college connectedness,” and “giving back.” These topics provided the framework for developing the research questions for the present study.

**Data collection.** Because data collection in grounded theory positions the researcher as the instrument by which data are created and constructed, subjectivity

inevitably enters the research process making room for biases, assumptions, and experiences to influence data collection and analysis (Green et al., 2007). The researcher's self-awareness, knowledge of the phenomenon being investigated, and skills to discern and be sensitive to important, but subtle aspects of the data are vital for qualitative research, especially for grounded theory methodology. By raising the researcher's self-awareness, knowledge, skills, and sensitivity throughout the research process, his/her ability to uncover salient diversity concepts to inform theory development will be enhanced greatly. Increasing chances for diversity to emerge, especially when diversity is at the primary or complementary level, requires addressing key aspects of data collection. The primary form of data collection for grounded theory is face-to-face interviewing (Creswell, 2012). Diversity should be considered during sampling, through the researcher's positionality, and by racial and/or ethnic matching between researcher and participant (Green et al., 2007).

***Sampling.*** For studies where diversity is at the primary level, the sample is comprised of a diverse population (Green et al., 2007). The number of participants of color total more than the number of White participants. The researcher's sample is essentially comprised of participants from diverse populations who represent one culture or multiple cultures (Green et al., 2007). For this study, the participants in phase one self-identified as African American and have joined a Black Greek-letter fraternity at a PWI. For phase two, I had an ethnically diverse sample.

***Positionality.*** A researcher's positionality refers to his/her social position; acknowledging and self-reflection of one's positionality is critical for both the researcher and the research process (Green et al., 2007). Positionality opens the researcher to a type

of cultural bias that directs how the interview is conducted, the types of questions asked, how the interview is recorded, and what observations are ultimately made. To address this bias, the researcher must improve his/her cultural competence with respect to race and ethnicity. Strategies to address this bias include the researcher attending to his/her own awareness of any personal assumptions, biases, and/or values, increasing his/her knowledge and understanding of participants' worldviews, and developing interviewing skills to generate appropriate interview styles or approaches based on investigator-participant interaction. Immersion allows the grounded theorist to increase his/her levels of knowledge, awareness, and skills as well as sensitivity to concepts of diversity. Integrating immersion experience during data collection enriches the data collection process for grounded theory researchers (Green et al., 2007). For this study, I immersed myself into collegiate Greek life and activities of the graduate chapter with which I am affiliated. I am a facilitator for the Fraternity/Sorority Leadership Institute and an investigator of hazing incidents for the Office of Leadership and Student Involvement at a university. I was involved with mentoring members of the undergraduate chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

***Matching between interviewer and respondent.*** Racial and ethnic matching between the researcher and the participants can facilitate access, trust, and rapport between the parties involved (Green et al., 2007). Matching can help resolve distance or asymmetry problems of interracial interviewing. Matching does not ensure that symmetry between researcher and respondent occurs, and a closer researcher-respondent relationship may develop in spite of a lack of obvious symmetry. Matching may not be the absolute cure, but it does present a strategy the researcher can use to address racial

and ethnic differences that could interfere with the researcher-respondent relationship (Green et al., 2007). For this study, the interviewer and the respondents in phase one all self-identified as African American and were members of Black Greek-lettered fraternities, which helped with access to participants and helped build a stronger relationship. After the data collection phase, diversity was integrated at the analysis/interpretation and validation phases.

**Data analysis and validation.** The researcher's awareness, knowledge, and skill as well as experience and exposure to diverse populations continue to have an influence during these processes (Green et al., 2007). The researcher's cultural biases, values, priorities, and beliefs may shape the codes generated, theoretical interpretations, and theoretical validation. At the primary level of importance, the researcher must consider his/her own cultural filters during these processes to increase the likelihood that diversity's relevance will not go unnoticed. Aside from being aware of his/her own cultural filters, other strategies protect against the researcher missing or misunderstanding the respondents' meanings when diversity is integrated at the primary level.

One strategy, which occurs during the initial coding process, involves the researcher directing careful attention to the participants' stories in order to analyze them for cultural clues, statements clarifying racial/ethnic and cultural contexts, and any statements that were omitted that made reference to race/ethnicity being invisible. Another strategy is to engage in member checking to elicit feedback from the respondents. The researcher can assemble a culturally diverse research team and elicit the team members' feedback during the analysis/interpretation and validation phases (Green et al., 2007).

For this study, I have assembled a culturally-diverse research team of two other persons. One is male, African American, and is affiliated with a BGLO; the other is female, White, and is not Greek-affiliated. These persons made sure to address any researcher bias and gave feedback during the analysis/interpretation and validation phases. I also engaged in member checking.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The primary purpose of this grounded theory was to investigate the influence membership in a BGLO has on the college experiences of African American male students at PWIs. While integrating diversity at a primary level of importance in this study, I sought to develop a theory grounded in the data collected that explains the influence of membership in a BGLO. The theory may explain the factors that influence the college experiences of African American college students and their related outcomes as well as highlight potential recommendations to foster positive college experiences. A secondary purpose was to discover the perceptions of counselors and other college student personnel with regard to their role in improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students and what best practices they saw were key to the persistence and success of these students. The findings generated by this study uncovered in-depth information regarding these experiences and provided counselors and college student personnel a theoretical framework to develop these best practices.

Four research questions guided this study:

1. How do participants perceive BGLO-associated activities (e.g., mentorship, student engagement, volunteer service) influencing other college experiences, if at all?
2. What are the college experiences within BGLOs and across the university?
3. What support systems in college do counselors and other college student personnel see as useful in facilitating persistence and success of African American male college students?
4. What recommendations do participants, counselors, and college student personnel have for improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students?

#### **Research Team/Researcher Bias**

I am a 38-year-old African American male who is currently enrolled in a Counselor Education doctoral program at a large, state-supported PWI in the mid-Atlantic region. I am also a graduate of a small, private PWI in the Southeast, and have been an active member of a BGLO since 2006. Even though I did not pledge as an undergraduate, I have had positive experiences in my fraternity and have witnessed the benefits of membership while working as a residence director at a small, state-supported HBCU in the Southeast. I believe that the fraternity experiences of African American students in BGLOs will enhance their college experiences, prompting them to be successful academically and socially, which leads to their graduation and continued success after college. I was on the advisory team for my chapter at the HBCU and have been involved with Greek life at a PWI. Affiliation in BGLOs at a PWI may foster a sense of belonging and facilitate integration into the overall campus culture. I also believe

that the presence of BGLOs at a PWI could enhance the overall campus atmosphere and may serve as a recruitment tool for African American males to attend PWIs because the members might recommend other young African American males to attend the institution.

To help minimize researcher bias, I intended to employ a research team of at least two other individuals. The members of the research team were in the same doctoral program in Counselor Education as I am and took a class in qualitative research methods. They also had knowledge of BGLOs and Greek life in general. The members of the research team were not involved in the data collection process or interview transcription. They provided feedback on the development and revision of the interview protocols. They assisted in coding the data collected. They also assisted in member checking and keeping me aware of my biases, which will increase trustworthiness. The demographics of the research team allowed for a variation of ethnicity, gender, and Greek affiliation (or the lack thereof). The research team members were in same doctoral cohort as the primary investigator and have taken the same doctoral-level qualitative research course as I am. One research team member was an African American male, Greek-affiliated, and joined at a PWI. The other research team member was a Latina female and was not Greek-affiliated.

### **Participants**

Data collection for this study occurred in two phases: phase one entailed interviewing African American males who are members of BGLOs who joined at PWIs, and phase two entailed interviewing counselors and college student personnel. I had the sole responsibility of conducting the interviews. The purpose of phase one was to reveal

how participants' fraternity experiences influence their overall college experiences (if at all), what are the participants' activities within the BGLO and the university at-large, and what are their perceived outcomes of their membership (i.e., how has membership affected their academic and psychosocial outcomes, if at all). The purpose of phase two was to reveal what recommendations counselors and college student personnel have for improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students and what support systems need to be in place to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students.

**Phase one.** Participants for this phase of the study were recruited using homogenous, theoretical, and snowball sampling methods (Green et al., 2007). Persons eligible to participate in the study self-identified as Black or African American, were at least 18 years old, pledged a BGLO fraternity at a PWI, and either currently attend a PWI or have graduated from a PWI. I recruited 20 participants to maximize representation for the five NPHC fraternities. I sought to have at least four members from each of the five NPHC fraternities, and have an equal number of undergraduate brothers and alumni brothers. I also sought to maximize representation from various types of PWIs (i.e., small or large, private or state-supported, from various regions of the United States) in order to gain different perspectives with regard to their fraternity experiences. Please see Table 1 for a complete listing of the phase one participants.

Participant BGLO001 is a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. He currently attends a mid-sized, state-supported liberal arts and sciences university in the Southeast. He had no prior knowledge of the Divine Nine and pledged to become more in touch with his cultural identity and his gender identity.

Participant BGLO002 is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. He attended a mid-sized, private research university in the Northeast. He was an athlete as an undergraduate. He had very little knowledge of the Divine Nine and pledged because of the friendship he forged with some of the members.

Participant BGLO003 is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. He attended a large, public research university in the Southeast. His knowledge of the Divine Nine came from his mother and father who are both Greek-affiliated and he pledged because of his mentors in college were members of his organization and his father is a member.

Participant BGLO004 is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He attended a mid-sized, public research university in the Midwest. He was an athlete as an undergraduate. He had extensive knowledge of the Divine Nine and pledged because he saw Spike Lee's *School Daze*.

Participant BGLO005 is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He attended a large, public research university in the Midwest. He had no real knowledge of the Divine Nine and pledged because of the contribution to the overall campus culture members of BGLOs made with regard to their involvement and leadership. He also pledged because of the image exuded by members of his fraternity.

Participant BGLO006 is a member of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. He attended a large, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region. BGLO006 had no prior knowledge of the Divine Nine and pledged because of the brotherhood and service to the community.

Participant BGLO007 is a member of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. He attends a large, public research university in the South. Participant BGLO007 had very little knowledge of the Divine Nine and pledged because he liked the image the fraternity members portrayed on campus.

Participant BGLO008 is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He attended a large, public research university in the Midwest. He had no prior knowledge of the Divine Nine and pledged because of the image of his fraternity and the desire to be a change agent for the community.

Participant BGLO009 is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He attended a mid-sized, public research university in the South. BGLO009 gained knowledge of the Divine Nine from family members who were members of his fraternity and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and pledged because of the influence, brotherhood, opportunity, and greatness of his organization.

Participant BGLO010 is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. He attended a small, public liberal arts university in the Northwest. He knew about the Divine Nine organizations through their service to the community and pledged because of the networking.

Participant BGLO011 is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He attended a large, public research university in the South. Participant BGLO011 only knew of the basic aspects that he learned from being a student at his university and pledged because of the values of his fraternity and the fraternity's image on campus.

Participant BGLO012 is a member of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. He attended a large, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region. BGLO012 had extensive

knowledge of the Divine Nine and pledged because he had several family members in his fraternity.

Participant BGLO013 is a member of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. He attends a large, public research institution in the Midwest. Participant BGLO013 gained knowledge of the Divine Nine from family members who were members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and what he saw in the media. He pledged because of the bond, the brotherhood, and the motto of his organization.

Participant BGLO014 is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. He attended a small, private liberal arts university in the Midwest. He gained prior knowledge of the Divine Nine from this extensive research and pledged because of the connection to other likeminded men and the fraternity's emphasis on achievement.

Participant BGLO015 is a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. He attended a large, public research university in the Northeast. He gained prior knowledge of the Divine Nine from members of the NPHC on his campus and in his home town and he has worked with each NPHC organization. He pledged because of the brotherhood, to prove to himself that he could endure the pledge process, and because of Spike Lee's movie *School Daze*.

Participant BGLO016 is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He attended a mid-sized, public research university in the South. BGLO016 gained knowledge of the Divine Nine from his uncles who were all members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and pledged to join with other African American males at his university and the lifelong commitment to his fraternity.

Participant BGLO017 is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. He attended a mid-sized, public research university in the South. BGLO017 gained knowledge of the Divine Nine because his father is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and has family members who are members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. He pledged because of the love for his organization instilled in him by his father.

Participant BGLO018 is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He attends a large, public research institution in the Midwest. BGLO018 had prior knowledge of the Divine Nine because of the famous members of his organization and his grandfather was a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. He pledged because of the community service, his fraternity's national programs, and his father is a member of his fraternity.

Participant BGLO019 is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He attends a large, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region. He did not have much knowledge of the Divine Nine before coming to college. BGLO019 pledged because he saw the members of his organization excelling while he was growing up.

Participant BGLO020 is a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. He attends a large, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region. He did not have much knowledge of the Divine Nine before coming to college. BGLO020 pledged because he wanted be a part of something bigger than himself and to feel a sense of belonging.

**Phase two.** The participants for phase two of the study included 10 college student personnel who worked in offices like housing and residence life, career and academic advising, student activities and leadership, and multicultural affairs at a PWI. I had an equal number of males and females and sought to have equal representation from

private and public institutions of higher learning. Also, I was able to recruit college student personnel employed at some of the same universities as the participants of phase one. All participants in this phase are/were Greek-affiliated. Please see Table 2 for a complete listing of these participants.

Participant HESA001 is an African American female and has eight years' experience in working in student affairs. She works as the Assistant Director of the Center for Multicultural Student Services at a mid-sized, public research institution in the Mid-Atlantic region. She has responsibility over the NPHC.

Participant HESA002 is a White female and has 2.5 years' experience working in student affairs. She works as the Assistant Director for Greek Life at a large, public research university in the Midwest. She has responsibility over all Greeks.

Participant HESA003 is a Latino male has 11 years' experience working in student affairs. He works as the Assistant Director of Campus Activities at a mid-sized, public liberal arts university in the Northeast. He has responsibility over all Greeks.

Participant HESA004 is an African American male and has 14 years' experience working in student affairs. He works as the Associate Director of Housing at the same university that participants BGLO007 and BGLO011 attend.

Participant HESA005 is an African American female and has 11 years' experience working in student affairs. She works as the Director of Sorority and Fraternity life at the same university that participants BGLO013 and BGLO018 attend.

Participant HESA006 is an African American male has two years' experience working in student affairs. He works as an Academic Advisor at a large, public university in the Midwest.

Participant HESA007 is a White female and has three years' experience working in student affairs. She works as the Coordinator for Special Projects, Fraternity and Sorority Life, and the NPHC Advisor at the same university that participants BGLO019 and BGLO020 attend.

Participant HESA008 is an African American female and has nine years' experience working in student affairs. She works as the Director of Multicultural Affairs at a small, private liberal arts university in the South. She has responsibility over the NPHC.

Participant HESA009 is a White male and has six years' experience working in student affairs. He works as the Coordinator of Sorority and Fraternity Life at a large, public teaching and research university on the West Coast. He has responsibility over the NPHC.

Participant HESA010 is a White male and has 25 years' experience working in student affairs. He works as the Coordinator of Greek Life at a mid-sized, public research university in the Northwest.

### **Data Sources**

Corbin and Strauss (2008) posited that a grounded theory may utilize interviews, observations, journals, documents and/or audiovisual data. Creswell (2012) stated that the primary form of data collection includes face-to-face interviewing, which was utilized in this study. Data collection for this study occurred in two phases. Data from each phase were collected simultaneously.

Laszloffy (2000) stated that previous research on the experiences of African American students at PWIs was quantitative, which did not capture the essence of their

experiences effectively. In order to accurately capture the rich stories of the participants and the meanings they ascribe to their experiences, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews that lasted approximately 20 minutes in length in phase one. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or via Skype and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview protocol consisted of 10 questions, but allowed for follow-up questions. Some of the questions asked what drew the participants to the university, what were some of their activities they have been involved with while in college, what has been their most memorable experience while in college, what prompted them to pledge, how their fraternity experiences have affected their college experiences, if at all, how the university has perceived their organization and its activities, how likely the participants will either recommend or discourage others to attend their university, and what they recommend for their university or other universities to make the campus culture more welcoming and receptive to their organizations and male students of color (see Appendix A-1).

In phase two, I conducted individual interviews with 10 persons who were student affairs personnel at a PWI that lasted approximately 10 minutes in length. Like the interviews in phase one, the interviews in this phase were conducted face-to-face or via Skype. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview protocol for this phase included six questions that asked the participants what drew them to the field of higher education, their perception of the effectiveness of their university in affecting the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students, what programs their university has in place to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students, what is their role in improving the

academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students, what role do they see student engagement in improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students, and what recommendations they have for universities to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students (see Appendix A-2).

**Procedures.** For phase one, I recruited participants from universities by contacting members of undergraduate and graduate chapters of BGLOs, Greek Life advisors, and other student affairs personnel. These persons gave me names and contact information for members of BGLOs that fit the criteria to be participants for the study. Additionally, I used social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn. For phase two, I recruited members using social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn because both sites have groups devoted to persons working on college campuses. Participants recruited from these social networking sites included friends and acquaintances with whom I have been in contact since I conducted my pilot study.

Once I had received oral agreement from potential participants that they would participate in the study, they were sent an e-mail link to a demographic questionnaire created as a Google document (see Appendices A-5 and A-6). Once the participants completed the demographic questionnaire, they were assigned a code name and e-mailed the informed consent document (see Appendices A-3 and A-4). The participants were instructed to read it, and were informed that his/her participation indicated agreement. I ensured the participants understood the document during the interview. For the face-to-face interviews, the participants and I both agreed on a time and place for the interviews to occur. For Skype interviews, the participants and I shared Skype information for the

purposes of the study and ended contact after the study had been completed. I sent the participants a copy of the recorded interview in case the participant wanted to modify any of their answers or if there is anything else they thought I should have asked. Once the interviews were transcribed, the participants were sent a copy of the transcript to make sure I accurately captured what he/she had to say and gave the participants the chance to alter their responses as needed. The participants also received a copy of the final codebook.

Any data collected were kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office or on a password-protected computer and only I had access to the data. All identifying information was removed to ensure the confidentiality of all participants. Once the interviews were transcribed and member checking has occurred, the recorded sessions were destroyed. Once the final report has been written, the transcriptions were destroyed.

### **Data Analysis**

This section describes the data analysis procedures the research team and I utilized in this study. Data analysis in grounded theory occurs in four phases: (a) qualitative coding, (b) memo-writing, (c) theoretical sampling, and (d) theory reconstruction (Charmaz, 2006). Coding prompts the researcher to stop and ask questions about the data collected. Memo-writing allows the researcher to write informal analytical notes about the data and begin to assemble data into theoretical categories. Through theoretical sampling, the researcher elaborates and refines the categories reconstituting the developing theory. Finally, theory reconstruction synthesized the categories developed in the previous phases to explain the data collected (Charmaz, 2006). For this

study, memo-writing and theoretical sampling occurred simultaneously with focused coding.

**Qualitative coding.** Qualitative coding is the process of defining what the data are about and is the first step in data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher moves beyond concrete statements to interpretive analysis of the data by breaking down the data into segments, naming them in concise terms, and ascribing an analytic handle to develop abstract ideas used to interpret each data segment. In other words, the researcher breaks up the data into smaller parts and assigns a simpler term or terms to the segment; in turn, that term will be used to analyze that segment. Coding describes what is happening, why it happens, and connects data collection with developing a theory that explains the data (Charmaz, 2006).

Grounded theory coding provides the bones of data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Taken together, the codes become the elements of an emerging theory that explains the data and leads to further research. According to Charmaz, careful attention to coding weaves two major threads in the fabric of grounded theory: “generalizable theoretical statements that transcend specific times and places and contextual analyses of actions and events” (p. 46). Grounded theory coding occurs in at least two phases: (a) an initial phase where the researcher names each word, line, or segment and (b) a focused, more selective phase where the researcher sorts, synthesizes, and organizes large amounts of data using the most significant or frequent initial codes. Other phases include axial coding and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006).

**Initial coding.** Initial coding allows the researcher to determine the fitness and relevance of the intended study (Charmaz, 2006). During the initial phase, the researcher

must closely read the data and remain open to all possible theoretical directions according to how the researcher reads the data. Researchers engage in simultaneous data collection and analysis to discover any gaps and holes in the data. Researchers should move quickly through the data and engage in constant comparative methods (i.e., comparing data with data within interviews and in different interviews, or comparing data earlier and later within interviews of the same individual or observations of different times and places). Codes should be simple, concise, and precise. Charmaz suggested three guidelines for how to code data: word-by-word coding, line-by-line coding, and coding incident to incident.

***Focused coding.*** During this phase, researchers take the codes developed from the initial phase and create codes that are more directed, selective, and conceptual (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher sifts through large amounts of data using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes in order to synthesize and explain large segments of data. Focused coding is not a linear process and may prompt the researcher to revisit earlier data. Thus, I may revisit earlier participants to further explore topics that need more explanation. Focus codes are derived from constant comparison and comparing data to these codes helps to refine the codes. The strength of grounded theory coding is derived from the researcher's concentrated, active involvement in the data collection/analysis process (Charmaz, 2006).

***Theoretical coding.*** Theoretical coding is a sophisticated level of coding that follows focused coding (Charmaz, 2006). Theoretical coding eliminates the need for axial coding because it specifies possible relationships between categories developed during focused coding. These codes are integrative in that they organized the focus codes that

have been developed. Theoretical codes weave a coherent, analytical story. Thus, not only do theoretical codes conceptualize the relationship among focused codes, theoretical codes move the analytic story towards theoretical development (Charmaz, 2006).

For the purpose of this study, my research team and I engaged in semi-structured research team meetings to employ consensus coding and simultaneous data collection and analysis, which increased trustworthiness (Hays & Singh, 2012). During the initial coding phase, each member of the research team was given copies of each interview transcript and individually engaged in initial coding, employing line-by-line coding. For phase one, the research team met after the first three interviews to engage in consensus coding. Once consensus is reached with the first set of interviews, the research team members engaged in constant comparison, comparing the codes found in each subsequent set of interviews to those found in the first set and those found in the pilot study. Once saturation was reached, the research team members collaboratively created a codebook. For phase two, the research team members met after the third interview to analyze the transcripts for the role that student affairs personnel play in supporting African American male students, the role of student organizations in improving the persistence and success of these students, and what programs would be effective in improving the persistence and success of these students. Next, the research team moved to focused coding.

During focused coding, the research team members collaboratively refined the initial codes and began to synthesize the data. The team members met and engaged in consensus coding to refine the a priori codebooks. Through constant comparison, the team members revisited the data collected to further refine the codes. I engaged in

member checking to ensure that I captured the meaning the participants conveyed in the interview. Focused coding led to theoretical coding.

In order to discover relationships between categories developed during focused coding, the research team members met and made connections among the focused codes. We utilized consensus coding to collapse the focus codes into larger, more substantive theoretical codes that will lead to theoretical development. The team members collaborated to finalize the codebooks, while engaging in constant comparison with the data collected in the interviews to ensure the final codebooks embodied the meaning the participants intended in the data collections. To assist in refining the codes, the research team and I engaged in memo-writing throughout the coding process.

**Memo-writing.** To write memos, researchers stop and analyze their ideas about codes that occur to them in the moment (Charmaz, 2006). Memo-writing is a crucial step in grounded theory analysis because it directs the researcher to analyze the data and codes early in the research process. Memos capture the researcher's thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections made, and crystallize questions and direction for the research to pursue. Writing memos keeps the researcher involved in the data analysis and helps increase the researcher's level of abstraction of ideas. As memo-writing progresses, certain codes stand out and take form as theoretical categories. Memos help the researcher to make comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes of data and other codes, codes and category, and category and concept, and help the researcher conjecture about these comparisons (Charmaz, 2006).

For the purposes of this study, the research team and I involved memo-writing during focused coding. Memo-writing raises focused codes to conceptual categories

(Charmaz, 2006). First, we assessed which codes best represented what we saw happening in the data. Utilizing a memo, we raised these codes to conceptual categories to develop the analytic framework. We gave the codes conceptual definition and analytical treatment in narrative form in the memo. Once these categories were established, any subsequent codes will be treated as potential categories. We went from asking what category does this piece of data indicate to asking what category did this code indicate. During memo-writing, we took a step back from data collection and initial coding to move to another conceptual step in data analysis. Throughout focused coding and memo-writing, we developed succinct focused codes resulting in sharp, clear categories. As a result, we established criteria to facilitate constant comparison. In order to further refine our categories, the research team and I engaged in theoretical sampling.

**Theoretical sampling.** According to Charmaz (2006), writing memos leads directly to theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling involves collecting data to elaborate and refine categories in the emerging theory. Theoretical sampling is employed to develop the properties of the categories until saturation (i.e., no new properties emerge) is reached. Researchers saturate the categories with data and subsequently sort and/or diagram the categories to integrate the emerging theory. Theoretical sampling differs from initial sampling in grounded theory in that initial sampling provides the starting point whereas theoretical sampling provides the direction in which the researcher must go. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to collect data to further explain the categories. Once the categories are full, the categories reflect the qualities of the participants' experiences and provide a useful hand to understand them. Theoretical sampling deals only with conceptual and theoretical development (Charmaz, 2006).

### Memo-writing uncovers incomplete categories and gaps in data analysis

(Charmaz, 2006). Theoretical sampling helps to predict where to go and how to find the needed data to fill those gaps and saturate categories. In order to engage in theoretical sampling, I followed hunches about where to collect data to make the categories more robust and collect more data. The research team and I coded this data and compared these codes with each other, initial codes, and our emerging categories. We wrote increasingly more abstract and conceptual memos as we recorded our new comparisons, which filled out our categories. Employing theoretical sampling allowed us to construct full and robust categories and clarify relationships between categories. We engaged in grounded theory sorting, which provided logic for organizing our analysis and a way to create and refine theoretical links. Thus, we made comparisons between categories. We used Post-it® notes to diagram our categories, which provided a visual representation of our categories and our relationships. These strategies assisted in refining our categories and led to theory development.

**Theory development.** Interpretive theory entails imaginative understanding of the phenomenon being investigated (Charmaz, 2006). Some assumptions of interpretive theory include the existence of multiple realities, facts and values are linked, truth is provisional, indeterminacy, and social life is processual. As stated before, constructivist grounded theorists seek to explain how and why participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations. They see that facts and values are linked and the data collected rests on values. Theory development involves stopping the flow of the experience being investigated and taking it apart. Researchers look at the studied experience from multiple perspectives, make comparisons, follow leads, and build upon

ideas. Once the research team and I analyzed the data through coding, made connections with the data to forge relationships between the categories, we constructed a theory grounded in the data and our own values to explicate how members of BGLOs at PWIs make meaning of their fraternity experiences, how their fraternity experiences affect their overall college experiences (if at all), and how college student personnel perceive their role in supporting African American male students.

### **Strategies for Trustworthiness**

According to Hays and Singh (2012), with regard to social constructivism, trustworthiness replaces concepts like reliability and validity to establish scientific rigor. Hays and Singh discussed several criteria of trustworthiness that help make qualitative designs stronger, several of which are relevant to this study. Credibility refers to the believability of the study. Confirmability is how much the findings represent the genuine reflections of the participants. Authenticity is achieved when researchers strive to be authentic in their representation of the participants. Coherence denotes how appropriate the research design is for the study. Sampling adequacy is achieved when the sample is appropriate for the research tradition. Ethical validation refers to adhering to ethical guidelines and engaging in research that provides insight to real-world problems. Substantive validation relates to whether the findings significantly contribute to the profession. Creativity refers to the researcher utilizing novel methods and being flexible in the research design (Hays & Singh, 2012). With each criterion, there are strategies for trustworthiness that help maximize these criteria.

I employed several strategies for trustworthiness throughout the course of the study. A reflexive journal, which is a strategy to achieve ethical validation, was kept in

order to reflect upon the process of developing the theory. This journal included my thoughts, feelings, successes, pitfalls, and biases regarding the data collection and analysis of the study. Reactions toward the participants and the research team members were also included.

I also employed member checking, a strategy to achieve confirmability, authenticity, sampling adequacy, ethical validation, and substantive validation. Probing questions were asked during the data collection to help clarify participants' responses and allow the participant to go deeper with their responses. The participants were sent a copy of the interview transcript to make sure the investigator captures the essence of their responses or to add to their responses. I also contacted the participants to ask them of their thoughts about the process and ask if there is anything they thought should have been asked, but was not.

Because I am an alumnus of a PWI and am a member of a BGLO, I employed prolonged engagement, which helped to achieve confirmability, authenticity, and substantive validation. I remained in contact with the participants and not only interviewed them, but attempted to attend NPHC meetings and some of the social activities sponsored by the participants' fraternities. By observing the participants in another environment, I was able to add contextual information (i.e., how membership affects relationships between members and Greek/non-Greek affiliated students). I also communicated with the participants via social networking sites, especially those that facilitated data collection. By remaining in contact with the participants, I engaged in member checking and uncovered any impact membership in their BGLO may have on their life after they have graduated.

Theory development, which helps to attain substantive validation, is another strategy of trustworthiness I employed. Because a grounded theory research tradition was employed, the data was analyzed to create a theory explaining the experiences of African American males in BGLOs and the effects, if any, on their college experiences while attending a PWI.

The research team and I engaged in simultaneous data collection and analysis, which allowed us to see any emerging themes early in the process and continue to modify the interview protocol. At times, one theme identified by one participant prompted asking another question of the next participant. This strategy helped to achieve credibility, confirmability, authenticity, sampling adequacy, and substantive validation.

A thick description of the research design and the findings was also utilized, which helped maximize credibility, transferability, confirmability, authenticity, coherence, and substantive validation. Thoroughly describing the research design helped to legitimize the data collected and increased the transparency of the methods used to collect the data. A thick description of the findings allowed anyone reading the findings to understand my findings and answer any questions the stakeholders, gatekeepers, key informants, and the general public may have regarding your study or the findings.

A final strategy of trustworthiness I employed is compiling an audit trail. This audit trail, which helped to maximize credibility, coherence, substantive validation, and creativity, presented a timeline of the research process from beginning to end. It is a collection of evidence of the research process that can be reviewed by an auditor or any consumer (Hays & Singh, 2012). According to Hays and Singh (2012), the audit trail can and will include, but is not limited to, reflexive journals, a research timeline, drafts of

codebooks, transcripts, interview protocols, research team meeting notes, and audiovisual data.

### **Limitations**

Because saturation for a grounded theory tradition requires approximately 30 participants, the view of fraternity experiences were limited. To address this limitation, I recruited participants from different types of institutions in different regions of the country. The nature of the sample will produce bias, which is another limitation. To address this limitation, the interview protocol entailed open-ended questions and I engaged in member-checking. Researcher bias occurred because I could also be a participant in the study. To address this limitation, I employed a research team to address any researcher bias that arises. I also kept a reflexive journal to remain aware of any biases that arise.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of this study and reveal how the findings answered the research questions. Four research questions guided this study.

They are:

1. How do participants perceive BGLO-associated activities (e.g., mentorship, student engagement, volunteer service) influencing other college experiences, if at all?
2. What are the college experiences within BGLOs and across the university?
3. What support systems in college do counselors and other college student personnel see as useful in facilitating persistence and success of African American male college students?
4. What recommendations do participants, counselors, and college student personnel have for improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American college students?

Eleven themes were identified in this study: collaborative relationships, resources, giving back, sense of belonging, accountability, diversity, familial relationship, identity, image, achievement, and inclusion.

#### **Perception of BGLO-Associated Activities**

**Collaborative relationships.** The first research question pertained to how participants perceived BGLO-associated activities influencing other college experiences. One theme I identified showed that membership in a BGLO helped participants forge collaborative relationships with members of their chapter, members of chapters at other universities, other Greeks, and the campus community at-large. Participant BGLO004

talked about how his membership allowed him to forge a bond and friendship with members of his chapter. This participant stated,

Um, friendship, man, it is that bond that uh you and another brother have, you know. I'm Greek for life. You know, it's that bond of we recognize that we have something in common that we endured something, that we share, you know, whatever secrets that, that you know, there may be, that you know we have that pride, you know...I mean, I look at it as, even though I am not as close to my sands as I would like, you know when someone has a child or when someone gets married, you know we're always there. I mean, you know when one of the bruhs got married in Puerto Rico, most of us went...you know, that's that type of support, you know, beyond that, life-changing moments, we wanted to be a part of it...it definitely means, it is that friendship, man. We have a chance to make a bond that um others outside of it wouldn't understand...I see another bruh, and you know I haven't seen in a while, and I give him that, you know, I give him that handshake, that dap, and I hold him tight, and I say to him, 'Bruh, you know, it's good to see you,' that love.

Participant BGLO001 talked about being a part of his fraternity allowed him to forge brotherhood and a network with members of his fraternity's chapters at other universities. He said,

But, um, and also, I guess just like networking. Just like, I'm meeting...I've been on so many road trips this semester alone. Um, I've went to [university name here] and I've met with, you know, with bros

there, um, with like many like, with many of their events to support them [simulates quotation marks with his fingers]. Also, just to meet like the brothers of like our like brother chapter because there are three schools um in the [city name here] area.

Participant 012 talked about his most memorable college experience and said,

At [university name here], um, I guess just joining the, the Greek um family there 'cause of the fact that I actually became a member of Iota Phi Theta the first semester that I transferred to [university name here]. So, it's almost as if I was, at [university name here] I had a month or two to get acclimated toward the school culture. Then, I jumped right onto uh intake.

Here, he is saying that becoming a part of his fraternity connected him with the Greek family, which is what he remembers most about his college career. He also talked about how being a member of his fraternity connected him with the student body and helped him become involved with the student population. He stated,

It kinda got me acclimated, kinda created a bridge between myself and uh, the student population...at [university name here]...I wouldn't have been that involved. It's actually given me a, another way of involvement and, um just being a part of the student population.

Participant BGLO001 talked about collaborating with other organizations and offices on campus and said,

And, you know, we try to do a lot of things with like our Black Student Union, you know our, the multicultural programs and services here, uh,

just, I guess, just kinda like, educate the larger community, the community at-large about you know, I guess, what it means to be Black.

**Giving back.** Another theme associated with the perception of BGLO-associated activities is the ability to give back. Part of giving back involved educating the campus community about BGLOs and African American students. Participant BGLO001 responded,

And, you know, we try to do a lot of things with like our Black Student Union, you know our, the multicultural programs and services here, uh, just, I guess, just kinda like, educate the larger community, the community at-large about you know, I guess, what it means to be Black. Um, and, yeah, what it means to be Black or, you know there are certain things that you can't say or do you know with Black people. Um, I guess just, I guess just to be like, you know, this is who we are, you know like understand us.

You know, we're trying to understand you, and stuff like that.

Participant BGLO008 also stated, "We have to take time to educate those who are around us about how we're different from uh people who are a part of other councils." Another part of giving back is supporting the community. Participant BGLO001 responded, "You know, we're trying to make a difference. I feel like, you know, being on a PWI, NPHC's just really important here just because like the point of these organizations is to uplift the community." When asked what fraternity meant to him, participant BGLO014 said, "spaces for academic and social uplift." For participant 011, BGLOs affected his own college experiences by,

Building bonds with people, affecting people's lives, like I said, from doing pageants to community service, just affecting, helping out a lot of people, meeting a lot of people that have organizations that wanna help out kids, that wanna help out uh homeless people, wanna help out single moms, single fathers, a lot of things.

Giving back also includes giving back to the students that come after you and to the fraternity. Participant BGLO003 said that his most memorable college experiences involved anything dealing with Kappa. His fraternity experiences were so memorable that he wanted to help other students have the same experience. He stated,

Just because I had such an active Greek life that I wanna be the same for other people and stuff, you know, when they try to come through and stuff, too, so...I got so much out of my experience that I'm hoping down the line, I can do the same thing for somebody else, so.

Participant BGLO015 talked about what fraternity means to him and he responded, "We're passionate about what we're doing and giving back to the organization." Another aspect of giving back is making a difference. When participant BGLO008 was asked what fraternity meant to him, he said, "being change agents for communities of color." When asked about the impact that BGLOs had on his campus, participant BGLO010 stated,

So, they had only two on that campus at the time that I crossed. Um, those two were doing big things and you know, uh, making the world a better place, and they were successful. Those are the things I'm all about, you know, improving myself, improving my community.

Mentoring is another aspect of giving back. Participant BGLO003 attributes his success to being mentored by a member of his organization, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. He said,

Uh, I mean, like I said, like, I wouldn't be where I was without Kappa because the way I got introduced to Kappa was through, uh, a good friend of mine who's also my brother. He was my [program acronym here] mentor. And, [program acronym here] is, uh, [program name here] that they had at [university name here]. So, you would go in, uh, six weeks before class starts and you would stay on the campus, and then, um, then you would take classes, and then, like, you would have like mentors there and stuff so they would be showing you around campus and all different types of events and stuff, so. One of my mentors for that program, he was a Kappa at [chapter name here], and, um, so me and him just got really close throughout the whole, you know, the whole process, 'cause like I didn't want to be there. I just had graduated high school. I didn't want, like, I was like, yo I do not want to do school again, like [throws his hands up] school again, so...I was all not about being there, so. But, you know, talking with him, he really like kinda sit me down and was like, you know, things will get better and stuff, so. You just gotta work it out and stuff, so.

When asked what fraternity meant to him, he said, "I think fraternity is kinda...honestly, I think it's a broad kind of perspective that it can be mentoring. It can be advising." The

final aspect of giving back involves providing leadership in other organizations around campus. When talking about members of BGLOs, participant BGLO004 stated,

They were the voice for the Black students. Uh, you know, regardless of what, uh, affiliation you were, even if you weren't affiliated, uh, the Black Greeks were there. They were the movers and shakers when it came to students. So, if they were gonna be a protest, if they were going to be someone going to administration or something like that, even in administration, I would say probably 2/3 of African Americans that were in administration on campus belonged to, um, a Black Greek Organization.

He later said, "Black Greeks were the leaders on campus then, you know. In every aspect, you know, they were on the forefront of getting things done." When talking about other organizations on campus, participant BGLO005 responded, "The thing with those organizations is that many of the same NPHC people were on the e-board, active members in those organizations, too." Participant BGLO007 talked about the overall impact that BGLOs have on his campus and he responded, "A lot of them have like student leadership positions. So, as far as leadership goes, like a lot of people see that and they kinda equate the Black Greek-letter Organizations with leadership here."

**Accountability.** Membership in BGLOs also provided accountability, especially with regard to doing well academically. Participant BGLO001 said,

Yeah, just because it's like, it's not just me I'm worried about, like when I get bad grades and it's like we all get bad grades. If I get, you know, make a bad grade in a class, then it brings the chapter GPA down. Um, I'm like,

also, there's like, I was on like a type of like probation where like my advisors, they would ask for my grades every single week. So, kinda like, it helped me to be accountable for my actions.

Participant BGLO003 also said,

When my grades started slipping, and stuff, like my frat brothers would check me and stuff. I never had anybody to check me for my grades and stuff, except my parents, and stuff so. That was like, 'cause I'm an only child, and stuff so. It was like an eye-opener, 'cause I had never had anybody check me with grades, so, you know, when my frat brothers would check me with my grades and stuff, they would be doing it out of love 'cause they knew that I was better than that, and stuff so. When that happened, it was kinda like, oh like. At first, I was angry, but then, I was like, 'I really appreciated it,' 'cause like not that many people would like check on me with my grades and stuff.

Participant BGLO004 stated,

You know, all of us did well in school and you know the academic aspect was even after we crossed, we mandated to do 12 minimum to 18 uh study hours in the library for all members...you know, 12-18 hours in the library, we had to give an account for it. If you didn't do it, we had this thing called the hot seat. We would put you in the middle of the room, put one chair there. The bruhs would surround you and everybody would come at you. So, we made sure that everyone graduated and that everyone pursued anything they wanted.

**Identity.** Another theme was identity. Membership in a BGLO fraternity impacted their development of their racial and gender identity, and represented male empowerment. Participant BGLO001 talked about his racial identity development and male empowerment. When asked what fraternity meant to him, he responded,

Fraternity means like empowerment, empowerment among the men, because, I mean, I feel there are a lot of programs and there are lot of things for like women to be, you know become empowered and know their worth. But, I don't think they're enough programs for men. You know, for it to feel like, for me being in, you know, this organization, I'm helping, I'm helping empower other men, you know, because they're seeing me, um, you know, they're seeing me mess up and be fine every week. They're seeing me. They're seeing me, um, create all these programs. They're seeing me being, uh, they're seeing me be a leader. You know, I wanna do what [BGLO001] is doing. Like I wanna, you know. I wanna be like that because that's how I was.

With regard to his racial identity, he said, "One of the reasons why I mean, like, and I kinda said this in the thing that I filled out, being in like a Black Greek organization, I guess, is like really, it's helped to, you know, shape and grow my love, you know, for being Black." When talking about BGLOs, he said,

These organizations, they were just more than, like, you know, small, like, little clubs. These were like support systems that helped, you know, that helped get these students through, that helped, you know, say like, 'Hey,

like, we're here.' This is like the Black voice. It was their vehicle for saying, like, 'Hey, don't mess with us.' And, I just found that so powerful.

When asked about how his fraternity experiences affected his overall college experiences, participant BGLO009 responded, "Overall, I think, from an identity development standpoint, it put me in a position where I had to really figure out who I was, um, in relation to the organization and also alone. Like, I had to, I had to um revisit that many times because I'm an only child and so, I'm used to being alone." Participant BGLO015 responded to this question by saying, "[Membership] impacted my development as a, um, as a, you know, as a male, as a young man, too, but embracing full manhood, responsibility, uh, uh, in terms of with ideals of a Greek-letter organization."

**Image.** Membership in a BGLO impacted the participants' image while in college. Participant BGLO001 stated,

We've really been making noise with like, you know with like our professional, um we have professional Wednesdays. We dress up in like navy blue blazer, white shirt, blue tie, khaki pants. Um, so that's like every Wednesday, everybody's looking on campus like, 'Oh yeah, like the Sigmas are, you know, dressing up again.' Um, that's how like all of us would wear...

With regard to how his fraternity experiences impacted his overall college experiences, participant BGLO010 responded,

I think, I think once became a man of Kappa Alpha Psi, I think my professionalism went to the next level, I think...it helped me take that next step into being a professional. Everything switched for me, whether it was

from the way I carried myself as a person all the time...I used to love wearing athletic shorts and sweats to class, but at that point, I think I tried to switch to the more professional wear every day because I want people to see me in one light being; you never know who you're gonna meet when you're traveling. You never know who you might meet. So, you always wanna be prepared, um, to leave a first, a good first impression. I think that's one of the first messages I took away from the organization when it came to the professional world.

**Academic achievement.** Membership in a BGLO impacted the participants' academic achievement with regard to pursuit of advanced degrees and perseverance. Participant BGLO002 would not have ventured into his current profession had he not joined his fraternity. He said,

I work as a Greek advisor now, so clearly, [his probate show] made a lasting impression...[Greek experiences] definitely gave me an opportunity to get into this field when this was not my field of choice, not choice, but profession. I worked in the private sector for some time before I came over to Higher Ed and because of my work with my institution, my home institution...um, and you know, working with my own undergraduate chapter and being an advisor for them, I thought this was a natural progression. I wanted to get my Master's and Ph.D. and I knew that if I stayed in my current profession, my former profession, then that wouldn't have happened.

For participant BGLO004, being a member of his chapter is assisting him with the pursuit of his doctorate. He said, "I'll be honest with you. Uh, going for my dissertation, I have a fraternity brother who is on my committee...when I went for, going to a doctoral program, there was a brother at [university] who is the head of that department. He made sure I got in...he took care of me." Membership also impacted his line brothers' pursuit of advance degrees. He later said,

In our organization, especially in our chapter, you know on my line, I had, every one of us on our line minus one...there were 14 of us, 13 of which have graduate degrees. Uh, two of them are practicing medical doctors. And so, you know that aspect of always pushing for our grades and things of that nature, we didn't want to be that stereotype of just being, you know, the big, you know, the dumb jocks.

Participants BGLO001 and BGLO009 talked about how their fraternity experiences helped them to persevere through their college experiences. According to participant BGLO001, "It's giving you, like, it's giving you...I guess Sigma in my chapter has given me something like to look forward to like: why I could stay here, why, you know, I need to keep fighting." When talking about his pledge process, participant BGLO009 said,

Going through a process, too, was a lot. It's something that really, um, taught me a lot, and I kinda, I kinda use that experience as a filter to, you know, decide whether or not what I'm going through is that serious. Like, if I've made it through a process, I can make it through anything.

**Familial relationships.** Familial relationships as they relate to becoming a part of BGLOs also was identified as a theme. For participant BGLO003, being a legacy helped determine his college choice. He said,

One of the big things I knew I did wanna do was Greek life and stuff and since my father is a Kappa, I didn't really have that many, uh, options...and, uh, you know, choosing a Greek-letter organization and stuff, and over at [university name here], they were, uh, on suspension 'til my junior year. So, I knew I wouldn't be able to do that 'til my junior year and that was still a maybe then.

Participant BGLO017 is also a legacy. He said, "I pledged because I found the love for Kappa through my father. Seeing it growing up made me love it." One of the reasons participant BGLO018 pledged Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., is because his father is a member of that fraternity. When asked why he pledged, he responded, "I wanted an organization where I could affect change on campus and in the community. I really liked Alpha Phi Alpha's national programs focusing on education and voting, and my dad is an Alpha!" Participant BGLO001 pledged in spite of familial objection to Greek life. He said, "Everybody was really excited. So, like, the whole me like performing, like I told, I didn't tell my mom that I was doing it because she was against it, too."

These themes (collaborative relationships, accountability, giving back, image, achievement, identity, and familial relationships) are associated with how the participants perceive their fraternity experiences affecting their overall college experiences.

### **College Experiences within BGLOs and Across the University**

Many of the participants talked about how members of BGLOs not only held leadership positions in their respective chapters, but were involved in other organizations on campus and were the leaders around campus. Members of BGLO fraternities have an obligation to be a part of other organizations on campus. Participant BGLO004 stated, “You know Black Greeks were the leaders on campus then, you know. In every aspect, you know, they were on the forefront of getting things done.” When talking about other members of his chapter, participant BGLO008 also said, “But, when I looked at the members on campus, then I realized that like, not all were members of like this organization. They’re a part of other organizations on campus.” Participant BGLO014 stated,

I don’t personally think we can be very successful fraternities if we can’t change the dynamics of students on campus. So, when I think about students who join our organizations and then pull out of every other organization they were a part of before earning fraternity membership, I question their true understanding of what it means to be a fraternity man.

Participants in phase one were involved in several different types of organizations. Some of the participants were engaged in similar organizations on their respective campuses. Participants BGLO007, BGLO008, BGLO015, BGLO018, and BGLO019 served as presidents of their chapters. Participants BGLO001, BGLO002, BGLO003, BGLO005, BGLO009, BGLO011, BGLO013, BGLO014, BGLO017, and BGLO020 held other leadership positions in their chapters. Participant BGLO015 served as student body president of his university, and participants BGLO001, BGLO009, and BGLO014 were university senators in the student government. Participants BGLO002

and BGLO004 were student athletes. Participants BGLO003 and BGLO013 served as NPHC president and participants BGLO014 and BGLO018 were involved with the NPHC. Participants BGLO005 and BGLO019 were members of their school's gospel choir. Participants BGLO002, BGLO003, BGLO005, BGLO008, BGLO009, BGLO010, BGLO014, and BGLO017 were members of their Black student organizations and participants BGLO009 and BGLO010 served as president. Participants BGLO004, BGLO005, BGLO011, BGLO013, and BGLO016 were all involved in the NAACP. Participants BGLO009 and BGLO015 were involved in the Collegiate 100 and participant BGLO017 served as president. Participants BGLO010, BGLO014, and BGLO018 were involved in orientation. Please see Table 3 for a complete listing of the organizations with which the participants are affiliated.

#### **Support systems for African American male college students**

**Student organizations.** Participants in phase two offered several support systems they found useful in supporting African American male college students. All of the participants talked about the role that student organizations play in supporting African American male college students. According to the participants, student organizations provide mentoring, leadership development, academic support, and aid in the retention of students. Participants HESA005 and HESA007 talked about how student organizations give students the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom and apply what they have learned in the classroom to real-life situations. Participant HESA002 said she doesn't think there is any better type of organization than fraternities and sororities for a student to join because they get a values-based leadership development experience. With regard to BGLOs, she said,

You're getting a connection to something larger than yourself. You're giving back to the university. You are performing based on your values of scholarship, service, and leadership, and brotherhood and sisterhood. And then, it's got this other lifetime element piece...through engaged alumni because you had a positive experience at your undergraduate institution. I think I have a very integral role in helping with all of that just based on my position and, um, with the students that I work with. They've created these organizations that are just awesome.

Participant HESA003 talked about how student engagement facilitates the success of the student and how being involved with his organization helped him to persist in college. He said,

I think they're very important. I mean, we all look at the different developmental theories and I think that, um, it talks a lot about student engagement that the better a student is connected to the university, the better his or her success rate will be.

He later responded,

I look at why I endured my undergraduate experience. It was tough inside the classroom uh 'cause I just didn't have the language or the understanding in terms of how to deal with my predominantly White peers and how they viewed me and things like that in the classroom, but my out of classroom experiences made my undergrad experiences like just soooooo like beyond worth it.

Participant HESA007 talked about how students who are involved are more apt to remain at the university where they started and graduate. Her university boasts that the African American males are the most involved of all groups, which could contribute to them being the group that consistently graduate within 4-6 years at a rate higher than all other groups on campus.

**Institutional support for diversity.** Another support system was institutional support for diversity. Participant HESA001 talked about how her university is not very effective, but the new president is committed to diversity and has proposed several new initiatives, one specifically for African American males. Her university does a good job of supporting multicultural initiatives, providing financial support, and having strong African American males working at the university. Participant HESA004 mentioned that the extent to which a university invests in its commitment to students of color determines the extent to which it sees success. He suggested making sure the university devotes financial resources to supporting African American male students to take care of essentials like housing, meals, books, and other stressors that may lead to dropping out.

**Diversity offices.** Having offices devoted to diverse populations is another support system for African American males. These offices can sponsor programming like mentoring programs, support groups, academic support, pre-college programs, and oversee the recruitment of students of color. Participant HESA004, who works at a university known for successfully retaining African American males, said programs that relate to their academic needs like transition programs, pipeline programs, and preparatory programs are essential as they relate to the academic and the student services side. His university also has someone who works solely in Black male student

achievement. Participant HESA005's university has a center devoted to the success of African American male students. Her university also has a diversity office that has a diverse staff and has a Black cultural center that offers programs and academic support.

**Diverse faculty and staff.** Another strategy is making sure that the faculty and staff is diverse, especially in areas of the university that support students of color. Participant HESA004 proposed that African American students need to see African Americans in positions of power because that can be empowering to them and will contribute to their academic success. Participant HESA005's university has faculty and staff that are trained and knowledgeable about African American males and serve as a resource. Participant HESA006 talked about how some African American faculty and staff are afraid of being that Black person who mainly supports African American male students. He stated that there needs to be African American faculty and staff who are willing to be that Black person who supports that population. Participant HESA007 works at a university she believes does an effective job of recruiting a diverse faculty and staff and she believes that students tend to gravitate towards persons who are similar to them. Diversity across the university is crucial to having diverse student populations and providing them support and role models, thereby facilitating their academic success.

**Diversity programs and policies.** Not only should the university be deliberate about having African Americans in positions of power, the university should implement effective programs and policies that benefit African American male students. Participant HESA004 suggested true and intentional collaborative programs with K-12 organizations and community colleges that service African Americans and making sure there are support structures in place to prepare them to come to a university and support them

while they are in college. He and participant HESA010 suggested universities be proactive with their programming as opposed to being reactive. The fourth research question asked what recommendations the participants have for improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American college students.

### **Recommendations for Improvement**

**Empathy.** One recommendation was that counselors and college student personnel develop a deeper level of empathy for African American college students. Participant HESA001 responded, “You have to get to know the Black male. And, it starts there...I think it starts with getting to know the norms of the Black man.” Participant BGLO002 said, “I guess my biggest thing is meeting them where they are...and, and understand what their drivers are.” Participant BGLO009 said,

The biggest thing is, for me, I think the biggest thing is showing that [school counselors and college student personnel] they value the experience of Black male individuals and being able to connect that experience to college...what we really need to do is take the time to get to know people and understand them and, um, value them enough to understand their experience or get to know them well enough to see how you can connect their hopes, their dreams, their expectations for life TO school.

He later said,

The realest thing that I can say is they have to care, like, they, they have to care for the sake of, of empathy, of understanding that, um, understanding that if they really wanna cultivate a culture of belonging and help people

feel like they belong, then they're going to have to take some honest and authentic steps in doing that...it has to come from a place of we really want this to be an inclusive environment.

**Resources.** Another recommendation is making sure the university has adequate resources for African American students. Participants BGLO002 and BGLO004 were able to attend college due to the financial resources afforded them by being athletes. Participant BGLO008 said he attended his university because of the reciprocity for in-state tuition. Participant BGLO013 is attending his university because he was given a full tuition scholarship. Participant BGLO001 said one of his reasons for attending his university was the resources available for persons of color. Participant BGLO004 emphasized student support services. He suggested that counselors be knowledgeable about these support services and introduce them to high school students attending college. Participants BGLO001, BGLO010, and BGLO011 attended their university because of their specific major. Participants BGLO004 emphasized the importance of offering and supporting an Africana Studies department.

**Sense of belonging.** The participants also emphasized creating a sense of belonging and how being a part of their organizations helps to create that sense of belonging. Participant BGLO003 recommended PWIs help create a sense of belonging for African American male students and participant BGLO008 talked about how his fraternity helped create that sense of belonging. Participant BGLO004 also talked about finding a home away from home. He said, "I think it's just, it's trying to find that home away from home. I think, and I think that's the biggest thing I think with like, with Kappa, I found a home away from home." When talking about his university, participant

BGLO001 said, “Yeah, it was a good fit just because the size, um, you know, it feels like, you know, the family atmosphere, um. Also, the campus is, like, integrated among the city.”

**Inclusion.** Inclusion is another recommendation from the participants. Participant BGLO004 suggested that universities showcase Black Greeks, teach about Black Greeks, and utilize Black Greeks. Black Greeks should be included in the campus welcome week and in the campus literature and website. Participant BGLO015 recommended having abundant Black student organizations to create a community. Participant BGLO014 talked about harnessing the potential of BGLOs to provide a support system to keep Black men in college. Participant BGLO001 talked about the university recognizing the presence of students of color because of the presence of BGLOs. He said,

And, it’s kinda like we, as you know, people of color, ‘cause there’s not, I think like 8 or 10% of like minorities on this campus. And, I feel like it kinda helps like I guess show that we’re here. You know, we’re trying to make a difference. I feel like, you know, being on a PWI, NPHC’s just really important here just because like the point of these organizations is to uplift the community.

He later said, “I’m going to do what I can to make sure that, you know, Black people are heard and you know, Black people, people of color, people like, that were heard, that were recognized, but were never understood. And, Sigmas have been helping out with that.” Participant BGLO004 talked about how African American males experience invisibility at a PWI and how being a part of a BGLO helps combat that feeling of being invisible.

**Diversity.** Diversity is another recommendation for PWIs. With regard to attending a PWI and recommending his university to other African American males, participant BGLO003 responded,

I highly advise it just for the fact that, you know, especially with the NPHC side, you know you're able to get more out of it in my opinion, just because you're such a small entity that when you do big things on like a, you know, PWI and stuff, you'll be able to get more accreditation. And, plus, you'll be able to meet more of a well-versed, round of people, than when you go to a HBCU, and you know, pretty much majority you see is yourself, and stuff. But, when you're, you know, go to a school like a PWI and stuff like that, you'll be seeing like a lot of different types of nationalities and races and, you know, when you get into the workforce and stuff, that's kinda how the workforce is. You'll see the different people. You'll have different people around you, and stuff so. It's kinda, it helps you kinda get accustomed to that, you know, the life after college in my opinion when you go to a PWI, so.

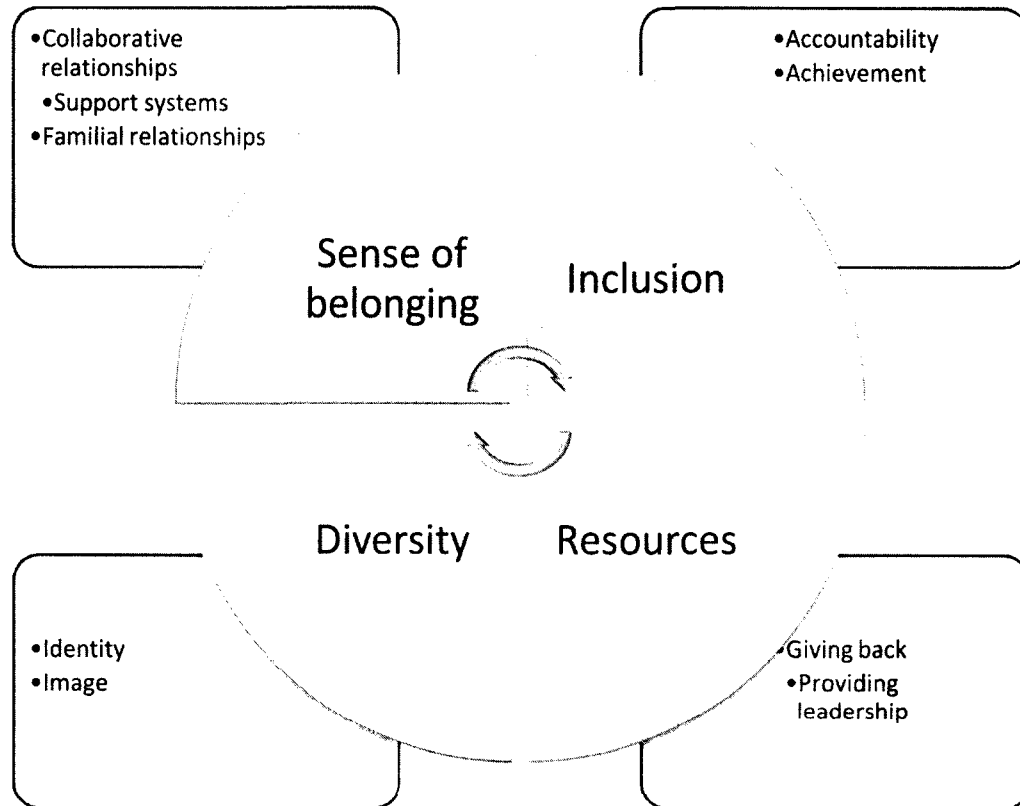
Participant BGLO009 talked about how universities have to show cultural responsiveness and celebrate differences. Participant BGLO011 suggested that PWIs showcase diversity, especially in the campus literature and website. Participant BGLO012 suggested that PWIs understand and accept the culture of African American males and participant BGLO013 suggested PWIs value the impact of BGLOs on diversity.

**Faculty and staff involvement.** Another recommendation is that faculty and staff get involved with the students. Participants HESA002 and HESA004 stated that higher

educational personnel have an obligation for supporting all students, not just students of color. Participant BGLO008 suggested that counselors should be attending BGLO events and providing outreach. They should introduce themselves to students of color and be more present on campus. He also suggested that school counselors should tell students of color about the college experience, get to know students, and use BGLOs. Participant BGLO009 said schools have to help create an inclusive environment with their hiring, and mission and vision of the university. Participant BGLO012 proposed that staff of color should become more involved with BGLOs. Participant HESA003 suggested that offices in Student Affairs partner with faculty and staff to provide mentorship and guidance in order to bridge the disconnect he sees between faculty/staff and students. He believes his role is being able to have those difficult, yet honest conversations with African American male students, especially from a brother-to-brother perspective. Another recommendation is being able to refer students to the proper resources on campus, like counseling services, for example. Participant HESA001 suggested that faculty/staff help African American male students connect with other men to help navigate their scholastic endeavors, and be successful in school and after they graduate. They also have a responsibility to mentor African American male students and teach them about appropriate manhood.

The 11 themes and the recommendations found in this study reveal how being a member of a BGLO impacts the overall college experiences and what best practices the participants recommend PWIs implement to improve the persistence and success of African American male students. See Figure 1 to see how these themes are connected.

Figure 1 The Empathy Wheel



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results of the research study. The purpose statements and the methodology will be reviewed. Each category will be described as it relates to the purpose statements. The categories will be compared to the existing literature.

Participants with similarities will also be compared. Limitations and any difficulties in the research will also be detailed. Implications for counseling, student affairs, and Greek life will be given. Lastly, directions for future research will be given.

The primary purpose of this research study was to investigate the influence (if any) of membership in a BGLO on the college experiences of African American male students at PWIs. The secondary purpose was to discover the perceptions of counselors and other college student personnel with regard to their role in improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students and what best practices improve the persistence and success of these students. Data were collected in two phases. Phase one included a sample of 20 participants who self-identified as Black/African American and pledged a BGLO at a PWI. The sample included five members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., five members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., three members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., three members of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., and four members of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. Phase two included a sample of 10 participants who work at a PWI.

Using a constructivist grounded theory research methodology, I found 11 themes and a plethora of recommendations for PWIs to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male college students. Seven themes were associated with the primary purpose: giving back, accountability, collaborative relationships, familial

relationships, identity, image, and achievement. The remaining four were associated with the secondary purpose: diversity, inclusion, sense of belonging, and resources.

### **Primary Purpose**

#### **Academic Outcomes**

**Accountability.** The participants spoke about how being a part of their fraternity had a positive impact on their academics because their fraternity brothers held them accountable for their grades. Not only would the members hold each other accountable for earning good grades, they would provide support mechanisms for members whose grades are faltering to help bring them improve their GPAs. The participants felt a responsibility to their fraternity and their chapters to perform well academically because of their connection to the fraternity and the fact that the fraternity has to maintain a certain cumulative GPA to remain active.

**Achievement.** Participants reported that being a part of their fraternity not only pushed them to finish their undergraduate degree, but further their education with graduate and terminal degrees. Their line brothers, chapter brothers, and fraternity brothers pushed each other to attain advanced degrees. Some even chose their careers because of their fraternity involvement. The participants pursued or aspire to pursue graduate degrees and positions in Higher Education/Student Affairs because of their involvement in a Black Greek fraternity. Membership also gave the participants the tools to endure the difficult times in college and persist until they graduate. The pledge process taught them perseverance, which was applied to their academic success.

With regard to both accountability and achievement, participants reported they had to remain at their universities until they graduated because of their responsibility to

their chapters (i.e., they could not leave their chapters because of the obligation they felt to their chapter) and graduating from college was the end result of academic success.

These two themes indicate that membership in BGLOs has a positive impact on the academic outcomes of African American males at PWIs. Five other themes are associated with the psychosocial outcomes of African American male students.

### **Psychosocial Outcomes**

**Collaborative relationships.** The participants placed much emphasis on the bond, brotherhood, and network created by being a part of their fraternity. Some referred to their relationship as one that others outside of the fraternity would not understand. They feel connected to each other and to other fraternity members who pledged elsewhere. They also feel more connected to their campuses and become involved with other organizations. The participants also referred to BGLOs as contributing to unity in the African American community on campus. These collaborative relationships are what hold the fraternity members accountable to each other. Their love for each other and the bond they have allow them to check each other when one is not performing well.

**Giving back.** The participants placed great emphasis on giving back and how being a member was the avenue by which they gave back to their community. Giving back included educating the community about the culture of African Americans and how to interact with them, supporting the community through volunteer service, making a difference, and mentoring. The participants emphasized leadership and several talked about how the Black Greeks were the leaders on campus or were the mover and shakers on campus. They were the ones advocating for the African American student community.

Like collaborative relationships, giving back is connected to academic achievement through mentoring other members and assisting them with their academics.

**Familial relationships.** Three of the participants talked about how they were influenced by their father's involvement in their fraternity. Others had family members who were members of other BGLOs, also. Another participant talked about how he pledged despite experiencing opposition from his mother. His mother was against him joining a fraternity and he did not tell her until his neophyte presentation. He asked her to come, but did not tell her what it was truly about.

**Identity.** Membership also impacted the identity development of the participants. One participant became in touch with his African American cultural heritage through his fraternity experiences. For this participant, fraternity also meant male empowerment. For him, his fraternity connects him with other men and empowers men. Other participants discussed how being in a BGLO positively impacted their identity as a man and connected them with other like-minded men.

**Image.** Membership in a BGLO also impacted the image the participants presented. Participants emphasized how their level of professionalism improved and how the members of the overall campus community had their eyes upon them because of their fraternal affiliation. Because they were under public scrutiny, they felt obligated to exude success academically and socially. They were the leaders and at the forefront of being change agents for their university. Some commented how others viewed and treated them differently once they pledged and other's expectations of them changed. Some were looked upon more favorably and others were held more accountable because of their Greek affiliation.

These themes are associated with the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students at PWIs and how their Greek affiliation impacts those outcomes. All but two of the participants in phase one (participants BGLO006 and BGLO020) reported a positive impact on their overall college experiences. For most of the participants, their most memorable college experience centered around their fraternity experiences, whether it is their probate show, the image associated with being in a BGLO fraternity, and/or the bond/network resulting from membership. These themes closely parallel those found in my pilot study and the experiences of the participants in the pilot study are closely aligned with those of this research study. Participant BGLO006 in this study is in the same fraternity as participant BGLO001 of my pilot study and both talked about having negative fraternity experiences. Participant BGLO020 in this study is in the same chapter as participant BGLO002 of my pilot study, but their experiences are quite different. Participant BGLO002 of my pilot study spoke very favorably of his fraternity experiences, whereas participant BGLO020 of this study spoke negatively of his fraternity experiences. One possible explanation of this difference could be difference in time each has been in the fraternity. Participant BGLO020 had just crossed at the time of our interview, which could have impacted his experiences.

### **Secondary Purpose**

#### **Role of Counselors and College Student Personnel**

**Counselors.** Participants suggested that school counselors help prepare African American males for college. This preparation starts with counselors getting to know African American males and understanding their history, their story, their needs, and their goals and aspirations. There is no one way to do something; this is their experience

and the school counselor's role is to support them in that experience in order for them to be successful. Participants urged school counselors to be knowledgeable about student support services and inform students of these resources. School counselors could also talk about the college experience, partner with BGLOs, and be aware of organizations on campus for students of color. They could also inform students of Greek life events on college campuses. They could also inform students of college prep programs like Upward Bound and TRIO.

School counselors could also value the experience of African American males and connect that experience to college. Another role of school counselors is making a case for college and providing encouragement and options. They could be knowledgeable about resources to help students be successful while in college (i.e., financial resources) and connect the students with those services. With regard to empathy, school counselors could get to know African American males and understand them. They could help them find their own identity. School counselors would also do well to show that college is possible and share the success stories of African American college students.

College counselors and college student personnel have an obligation to help all students succeed. Participants suggested college counselors and college personnel reach out to high schools to reach students. College student personnel could be willing to have those difficult and honest conversations with African American male students with regard to their decorum and how the outside views them. They could also get involved with Greek life and the university in general. College student personnel could attend Greek life events and get involved with outreach. They could introduce themselves to students of

color and be more present on campus. Specifically, counselors could also be involved with the admissions process.

### **Recommendations for PWIs**

Participants in both phases offered a plethora of recommendations for PWIs to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. These institutions could exude a deeper level of empathy for African American male students. Institutional support for diversity is another recommendation participants suggested. Helping to create a sense of belonging for African American male students and including them in the overall campus culture are other strategies the participants talked about. Universities also could ensure the proper resources are available for African American male students to succeed.

**Empathy.** Predominantly White Institutions have to show a deeper level of empathy for African American male students. Empathy manifests itself as the university faculty and staff showing that they genuinely care about African American male students and their success while in college. College student personnel could get to know African American males and seek to understand the history, plight, and needs of African American males. They do not believe there is one way to assist students, but because of being empathic, college student personnel could implement resources tailored to African American male students. Having empathy for African American male students also manifests itself as valuing the presence and contribution of these students to the overall campus culture. With empathy, institutional support for diversity is another recommendation for PWIs.

**Diversity.** The participants talked about the importance of having a diverse student body and its impact on their college experiences and those of African American males in general. Many of the participants chose a PWI over a HBCU because of the diversity of the student body. Diversity gave the participants a broader perspective and prepares them for a global society. They also talked about the importance of having a diverse faculty and staff, which could serve as a support structure for students of color. Institutional support for diversity comes in the form of deliberate recruitment of students, faculty, and staff of color, having offices devoted to students of color, and sponsoring programming focusing on the needs of students of color. This support also means creating, supporting, and sustaining majors such as African or Africana studies. College student personnel could also help create a sense of belonging for African American students.

**Sense of belonging.** Participants talked about feeling invisible and not being noticed at PWIs. They talked about desiring a sense of belonging, feeling at home, and the university being a good fit for them. The participants talk about how their membership in their fraternities helped create this sense of belonging. The fraternity was like a family or a home for them, which helped them connect to the campus at-large. PWIs could allow these organizations to be chartered on campus, support them financially, and include them in the campus culture. Also, PWIs need to value African American male students and their impact on the overall campus culture; do not just use them for their athletic abilities and be mindful of the messages sent to students regarding their worth and usefulness to campus. One example is not suggesting that all African

American men are from poverty or academically inferior. Inclusion is associated with this sense of belonging.

**Inclusion.** PWIs must create an inclusive environment for African American male students. When BGLOs are present on campus, PWIs could showcase them during the opening week of the university and other university events. BGLOs and students of color should be included in the university literature and on the university website. PWIs have to be intentional about the engagement of students in BGLOs and intentional about educating potential members. Another recommendation is ensuring African American male students have adequate resources available to succeed.

**Resources.** PWIs must make sure that African American males have access to the resources needed to ensure their success in college. One resource that was mentioned repeatedly was finances. Finances should be in the form of scholarships (merit- and need-based), money for books, room and board, or other types of financial resources that need not be repaid. Another resource is having an office devoted to students of color and their needs. This office should be staffed by supportive staff members, sponsor programming, mentoring, and academic support. This office should also have financial support from the university and have financial resources for students. A diverse and supportive faculty and staff is another resource that PWIs can implement to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. Faculty and staff must be willing to interact and collaborate with student organizations (i.e.—BGLOs). Another resource is having student organizations for African American male students, like BGLOs and supporting these organizations. Not only is programming from the diversity office important, but having programming from various sources focused on male students

of color is crucial to their success. Many of the participants talked about programs that allowed them to visit campus, spend the night on campus, and possibly take some classes before the school year started. These programs were crucial to them coming to college, getting acclimated to the campus culture, and being successful in college. Some participants attended their universities because of the majors offered, the family atmosphere, the location, and the beauty of the campus.

The results of this study indicate that membership in a BGLO has a positive impact on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students at PWIs. The participants also offered several recommendations for PWIs to improve these outcomes for African American male students. The stories of the participants were a valuable resource for this study and many of the participants had similarities in their backgrounds that warrant further investigation. The next section will compare and contrast the stories of the participants.

### **The Participants**

Participants BGLO007 and BGLO011 attended the same large, state-supported research-intensive university in the Southeast, but pledged different organizations and pledged three years apart. Neither participant had much prior knowledge of The Divine Nine before coming to college, but was influenced by their respective organizations on campus. Participant BGLO011 reported that the NPHC did not have much impact on his campus while he was there, but participant BGLO007 reported that the NPHC impacts the social atmosphere and the students equate BGLOs with leadership. Both would recommend their university to young African American males and both reported their most memorable college experience was related to their fraternity. The difference in

impact could be attributed to the difference in organizations and the NPHC being more active on campus. Participant HESA004 works at this university and boasts that the university is number one in the country with regard to retaining African American males. Participant BGLO011 talked about providing resources for students who show promise, but may not have the grades required and participant HESA004 stated that their university now has programs in place for persons in this situation.

Participants BGLO009, BGLO016, and BGLO017 attended the same large, state-supported research-intensive university in the Southeast. Participants BGLO009 and BGLO016 pledged the same chapter, but BGLO016 pledged six years before BGLO009. Participants BGLO009 and BGLO017 pledged two years apart, but were in school at the same time. Participants BGLO009 and BGLO016 both received their undergraduate and graduate degrees from this university. Participant BGLO009 also works in a capacity mentoring African American male undergraduates at this university. All three participants talked about how they were influenced by members of their families who were members of NPHC fraternities, which led to them pledging. All participants would highly recommend another African American male to attend their university. Participants BGLO009 and BGLO017 stated that their most memorable college experience was related to their fraternity, whereas participant BGLO016 had a different memorable experience that involved feeling a sense of belonging created by the students from his hometown and the mentoring he received from that community. While participant BGLO016 was in school, the NPHC did not have a significant impact due to the university having few BGLOs on campus. Participants BGLO009 and BGLO017 painted a different picture regarding the impact that BGLOs had on their university. According to

them, the NPHC had a large impact on the overall campus community while they were there. This difference in stories could be attributed to the effect diversity programs had on the African American community at-large. Many of the programs in place while BGLO009 and BGLO017 were in school were just beginning when BGLO016 was in school. Both participants were chapter officers and members of Collegiate 100 Black Men of America. All three were members of the Black Student Association.

Participants BGLO013 and BGLO018 are undergraduates at the same large, research-intensive public institution in the Midwest where participant BGLO014 is pursuing his Ph.D. and where participant HESA005 works. Both BGLO013 and BGLO018 attended the university because of the financial resources afforded to them. Both participants would highly recommend their university because of the resources available for African American male students, the student organizations, and the multicultural center. For both participants, their most memorable experience is related to their academics. Participant BGLO018 pledged his fraternity a year before BGLO013 pledged. Participant BGLO018 stated that the NPHC had a huge impact when he first pledged, but that impact has waned. Participant BGLO013 stated that the NPHC currently has a large impact, but it could be better. They both made reference to their multicultural resource center where participants BGLO014 and HESA005 work. This center provides a lot of resources and programming for African American male students and has a great impact on the persistence and success of African American male students.

Participants BGLO006 and BGLO012 are line brothers, but have different stories with regard to their fraternity experiences. Both participants transferred in from other universities. Both would recommend their university depending on the needs of the

student, like their personality or their intended major. The two participants had different college experiences he considered to be most memorable. For participant BGLO006, his experience involved an incident where he could have received harsh disciplinary action, but was given a chance. For participant BGLO012, his most memorable experience involved him joining the Greek family at his university. Both participants reported that the NPHC had a large and positive impact on their university. It added culture, educated the general campus culture about African Americans, and made the students hold the African American Greeks in high regard. Participant BGLO006 reported his fraternity had a negative impact on his college experiences, whereas participant BGLO012 reported a positive impact. Participant BGLO006 had a story that was similar to participant BGLO001 in my pilot study. They are both members of the same fraternity and considered their fraternity experiences to be negative. This difference in impact could be due to the prior knowledge of the Divine Nine. Participant BGLO001 from my pilot study and BGLO006 from this study had little prior knowledge of the NPHC before college, whereas BGLO012 had several family members who were Greek-affiliated. With regard to academics, BGLO006 reported that his fraternity experiences had a negative impact on his academics, but BGLO012 had a positive impact on his academics. Participant BGLO006 attributed a lot the negativity to his chapter and fraternity being small which caused the members to take on several tasks within the chapter. Participant BGLO012 found that the activity was a positive and utilized his experiences as a way to get more involved with the campus community. This involvement is what kept him at his university until he graduated. Neither participant reported being affiliated with other

organizations on campus, which could also be attributed to the amount of work each had to do with their own fraternity.

Participant HESA004 works at the same university that from which participant BGLO011 graduated and participant BGLO007 currently attends. Both participants from phase one referred to an aspect of their fraternity experiences as their most memorable college experience. Both would recommend their universities to another young African American male student. For participant BGLO011, the NPHC did not have a large impact on the campus community at-large because there was not much Greek unity. The Greeks were known individually, but did not work together much. According to BGLO007, the NPHC had a large impact on the social atmosphere. The Greeks were in leadership positions and the campus community equated BGLOs with leadership. His story is similar in that he, too, talked about how the Greeks were great individually. He did not mention the level of unity among the Greeks. Participant HESA004 talked about how the university was the best in the country regarding persistence and success of African American male students. The university just hired someone whose sole responsibility is to support African American male students, which could mean the university is committed to the success of African American males. This commitment could explain why participants BGLO007 and BGLO011 were satisfied with their university and would recommend it to other African American males. Both participants recommended that PWIs have resources (i.e.—programs and finances) geared specifically to African American males, which is what their university is doing.

The stories of the participants had a great amount of parallel with each other. Many of them stated that their most memorable college experience involved their

fraternity, they were not hesitant to recommend their university to another African American male student, and their fraternity experiences had a huge impact on their university and on their own personal experiences. Many of them cited a positive impact on their academics and pursuing graduate and terminal degrees. There was also a parallel between this study and the pilot study with regard to the themes found and the participants' stories. There were no regional differences found, nor were there any differences between current undergraduate members and those who had already graduated. There were three instances where I matched participants in phase two with students at their universities in phase one. All three schools note positive academic and psychosocial outcomes for their African American males. In each instance (with the exception of one participant in phase one), the students reported satisfaction with their university and with their fraternity membership. The spoke well of the programs their respective universities offered, and highly recommended their universities to other young African American males. This information was valuable to my study and I would like to investigate this further. The results also paralleled the existing literature. The next section details the similarities between what I found and literature relevant to this study and any new knowledge I found.

### **The Literature**

The findings of my study mirror the findings in existing literature. Some themes found in my study that are found in the literature are as follows: diversity, collaborative relationships, resources, identity, image, achievement, giving back, sense of belonging, accountability, fraternity membership, student engagement, and reason for pledging. This

section discusses how each of these themes relates to what is found in the literature relevant to this study.

### **Diversity**

The participants talked about how diversity was one of the reasons why they chose their respective universities, how having a diverse student body, faculty and staff enhances their learning environment, gives them a broader perspective, and prepares them for a global society. Diversity among the faculty and staff enables students to have a support system and someone who looks like them that can hold them accountable for their actions. The literature reveals that diversity allows for cognitive development, gives students the opportunity to learn from various cultures, see various points of view, creates opportunities for social support, role models, and mentoring, allows for greater levels of satisfaction with their university, and trains students for a global society (Bollinger, 2007; Gurin et al., 2002; Rudenstine, 2001; Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). The participants also talked about how they benefited from institutional support for diversity, which is similar to what Lundberg (2010) found. Thus, diversity and institutional support for diversity have a positive impact on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students.

### **Collaborative Relationships**

Forging collaborative relationships with their fraternity brothers, other students of color, and other members of the campus community (i.e., White Greeks, other student organizations, and faculty/staff) provided benefits for the participants and membership in their respective fraternities facilitated the establishment of these relationships. These findings align with findings indicating that students benefit from engagement in

diversity-related activities. These students report a greater knowledge of and ability to connect with persons of different races and cultures, better academic outcomes, and increased persistence (Denson & Chang, 2009; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Umbach & Kuh, 2006). Robertson and Mason (2008) posited that faculty/staff relationships correlated with the academic success of African American male students, which was supported by what my participants said in their interviews. My participants also talked about the bond created with older members of their fraternity, which correlated with the work of McClure (2006b). McClure's participants reported that membership established a social network after college that fosters a supportive environment that increases college success.

### **Resources**

The participants proffered several suggestions for resources to improve the persistence and success of African American male students. These resources include finances, programs devoted to African American male students, diversity within the student body and faculty/staff, and having offices devoted to students of color. They also talked about supporting student organizations focusing on students of color. These suggestions parallel findings proffered by Harper and Harris (2012), Robertson and Mason (2008), and Zell (2011). Specifically, the participants talked about how their fraternities were impactful not only on their own college experiences, but to the campus at-large. PWIs should provide resources to support and sustain these organizations. Harper (2006b) posited a similar suggestion in that BGLOs provide social support and academic encouragement and universities should support these organizations and increase African American male interest in membership.

### **Identity**

According to the literature, racial identity development influences the educational experiences of African American students at a PWI (Baber, 2012). My results build upon this study in that participants reported their fraternity membership impacted their racial identity development, gender identity development, and assists in male empowerment. Harper and Quaye (2007) found that leadership and student development helped African American male students become comfortable with their own Blackness, and my study builds upon this premise. The findings that fraternity membership impacted gender identity development and assists in male empowerment are similar to those of McClure (2006a).

### **Image**

Image is another theme that was identified as it related to how the campus community viewed the participants and fraternity showcasing. Being in their fraternity had a positive impact on the participants' image and how others viewed them, especially when they were in leadership positions. Some participants talked about their probate/neophyte presentations, step shows, and strolling. They also talked about the fraternity improved their professionalism and visibility in the community. These findings were similar to those of Singleton (2010), who studied male BGLOs at PWIs. Singleton found that BGLO showcasing had a positive impact on the success of African American males at PWIs.

### **Achievement**

The participants talked about how their fraternity membership pushed them to excel academically, helped them to persevere through adversity, and pursue graduate and terminal degrees. For my participants, membership had a positive impact on their

academic outcomes. Some participants learned better study habits and time management. Some participants either brought up their grades or maintained their good grades. They gained a greater sense of academics and scholarship. These findings are related to literature stating that the presence of BGLOs is positively correlated with the retention/academic success of African American male students at PWIs, peer support through involvement in student organizations plays a role in the academic success of high-achieving African American male students at PWIs, and membership in BGLOs positively impacts the academic outcomes of African American male students at PWIs (Harper, 2006b; McClure, 2006b; Robertson & Mason, 2008).

In essence, the fraternity increased my participants' level of self-efficacy, which is similar to DeFreitas (2012) who found a positive relationship between higher levels of self-efficacy and better academic achievement. Some challenges students of color face are meeting the academic demands of coursework and integrating into the academic life of college (Landry, 2003). The participants talked about facing these barriers, but being a part of their fraternity helped the participants address and withstand these challenges to getting their education. The participants also benefited from being held accountable by their fraternity brothers, which is one of themes Zell (2006) found when he investigated B2B peer groups.

Participants also talked about how membership in their fraternity equips them with tools they can use in college and after they have graduated, which correlates with a finding by Harper & Harris (2006). Another aspect of this achievement is found when the participants talked about how being involved in their fraternities and involvement in student organizations allows them to apply what they have learned in the classroom. This

aspect parallels with the finding that membership facilitates positive gains in knowledge application (Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994).

Another aspect of achievement is that fraternity membership led some of my participants to pursue graduate and terminal degrees. Membership opened their eyes to graduate school education. Involvement helped many of them pursue graduate education and foray into their current career. Although previous literature mentioned how membership in a BGLO at a PWI improves the possibility of success after college (McClure, 2006b), no studies allude specifically to membership in a BGLO leading to pursuing graduate and terminal degrees.

### **Giving Back**

The participants saw fraternity membership as a way to give back to the African American community and the campus community. Giving back is a key principle of Black fraternal organizations (Hughey, 2008b). One aspect of giving back was mentoring fellow members of their fraternity and mentoring young African American males. Peer support positively impacted the academic and psychosocial outcomes of my participants, which parallels what is found in previous literature (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Grier-Reed et al., 2008; Harper, 2006b; Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2011; Singleton, 2010; Zell, 2011). The participants also talked about mentoring young African American males and how they would gladly recommend their universities to young African American males. Their fraternity gave them the opportunity to support their young counterparts. Some participants suggested that school counselors partner with the Black Greek fraternities to mentor young African American males, which correlates with the work of Moore and

Ratchford (2007) in that the students chronicled in that article benefited from being mentored by members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Another aspect of giving back was educating the campus culture about African Americans and African American culture. Fraternity membership helped participants serve their campus community by being cultural emissaries, an example of voluntary race representation. Landry (2003) posited that being a cultural emissary was a barrier that students of color face at PWIs, whereas Harper (2007) found that voluntary race representation positively affected classroom participation. How my study differs is that being a cultural emissary is applied to the overall college experience and not just to classroom participation and being a cultural emissary is not seen as a barrier to college success.

Leadership is another way the participants gave back to their community. Many of the participants were leaders in their chapters, the fraternity at-large, the NPHC, and in other organizations. They also equated BGLO with leadership and said a majority of African American students in leadership positions on their campuses were members of BGLOs. These results parallel Kimbrough (1995) in that he found members of BGLOs were more likely to hold leadership positions than students who were not members. Kimbrough (2003a) also found that BGLOs create an outlet for leadership skill development. Henry (2012) found that leadership development was a positive influence of BGLO fraternity membership.

### **Sense of Belonging**

The literature suggests that some of the unique challenges students of color experience are isolation and alienation, establishing a sense of belonging, and creating a

suitable niche in the social life of college (Landry, 2003; Mills-Novoa, 1999). The participants talked about feeling invisible and needing to feel a sense of belonging at their universities. Because of their fraternity experiences, they were able to let the overall campus community know that they were present and gained notoriety because they were Black Greeks. They were able to experience that sense of belonging and become connected with their African American peers and the campus community at-large. This premise closely parallels the work of McClure (2006b) in that he found that membership in a BGLO fraternity at a PWI positively impacted the feelings the participants had toward each other, toward the university and toward Black history. McClure also posited that membership provides relationships with other fraternity members that counteract the alienation African American male student experience at PWIs, which is supported by the stories of my participants. As with McClure's participants, my participants also experienced a greater level of satisfaction with their college experience due to their fraternity membership.

### **Accountability**

Accountability emerged as the members holding each other accountable for their academic achievement, being responsible for the academic and psychosocial well-being of other members, and being responsible for the image of the fraternity. For my participants, accountability had a positive impact on their academic outcomes.

Accountability/responsibility was also found in the literature. Personal growth in the form of cultivating responsibility for others' achievement was found as a positive impact of membership in B2B peer groups for African American male college students (Zell, 2011). Harper (2007) found that collective responsibility (i.e., how individual grades

impact the chapter's success, being a role model for other African American students, and responsibility for exuding a positive image of BGLOs on campus) had a positive impact on the classroom participation of members of BGLOs at a PWI. Henry (2012) found that being held accountable by peers was a positive influence of being a BGLO fraternity, which is supported by my findings.

### **Fraternity Membership**

While most of my participants proffered positive outcomes from fraternity membership, one participant talked about how his chapter was small and the members had to take on several roles to ensure the success of the chapter. Because of these extra roles and the work involved, his grades began to suffer, which resulted from competing priorities. Henry (2012) also found that competing priorities were a negative influence on the college experiences of African American males in BGLOs at a PWI.

### **Student Engagement**

Previous literature discussed how African American students involved themselves in several different organizations on campus like the Black student union, the NAACP, the NSBE, the university Gospel choir, and other minority student organizations (Harper, 2006a; Young, 2005). Membership in BGLOs also provides campus involvement and peer/social support (Harper, 2007; McClure, 2006b; Patton, Flowers, & Bridges, 2011). These findings are supported by the organizations in which my participants are involved. Other organizations with which my participants have affiliated include Student government, honor societies and other academically-related organizations, peer mentoring organizations, service-oriented organizations, orientation, pre-college programs, and athletic teams.

### **Reasons for Pledging**

Henry (2012) investigated the reasons why her participants joined their fraternities and found that they joined because of the support system gained through brotherhood, the fraternal identity and legacy of their fraternity, and connections with older members of BGLOs. Some reasons my participants decided to pledge included being around like-minded individuals, being around other men because of a lack of male role models, being a part of something bigger than themselves, experiencing a sense of belonging, the brotherhood/bond they saw on campus, the friendship, and networking. These reasons parallel Henry's finding that her participants pledged because of the support system they gained from the fraternity. Other reasons my participants mentioned were the fraternity's motto and ideals, their programming, their sense of service to the community, being a change agent for the community, their image on campus, and the legacy of notable members of the fraternity. These reasons are closely related to the identity and legacy of their fraternity. My participants also talked about having family members who were members of their and other fraternities, which influenced them to pledge. They also had mentors who were members of a BGLO. Having a connection to family members and mentors mirrors Henry's finding regarding having personal connections with older members, but goes a step further by considering the legacy perspective. Two reasons that were not found in previous literature were having to prove to oneself that he could endure the pledge process and going to see Spike Lee's movie *School Daze*.

My dissertation findings closely mirror what is found in existing relevant literature. The findings also provide knowledge not found in the existing literature.

Previous literature does not mention the impact that membership in BGLOs has on the pursuit of graduate and terminal degrees. Previous literature refers to being a cultural emissary as a deterrent to classroom participation. My study shows that being a cultural emissary is a positive result of membership in BGLO fraternities. The participants mentioned other organizations with which they were affiliated that were not previously mentioned in existing literature. My participants also mentioned other reasons why they pledged like being a legacy, having to prove oneself, and after watching Spike Lee's movie *School Daze*. Like the previous literature, my study has its limitations. The next section discusses the limitations and difficulties I encountered executing this study.

### **Limitations and Difficulties**

#### **Limitations**

Limitations for this study include researcher bias and inexperience, participant bias, and sample size. One bias is my preference for PWIs and Greek life at a PWI. In order to address this bias, I elicited the assistance of one of my peers to help with the data analysis and provide an objective voice throughout the research process. Another bias is my lack of experience with qualitative research. In order to address this bias, I have taken three doctoral-level courses in qualitative methods and used several sources to develop my research methods, procedures, and data analysis/interpretation. I also have a faculty mentor who is an expert at qualitative and quantitative research methods. Another bias is my preference for Greek life in general. As a result of this bias, my questions were all positive and there was no negative case analysis regarding the participants who had negative experiences in their fraternities.

Participant bias is another limitation of my study. This bias manifested itself in phase one because I am a member of a BGLO as were my participants. Because of our membership in a BGLO, the participants may be compelled to cite only positive experiences with their fraternities. This bias may be more pronounced with members of my fraternity. Another aspect of this bias is that the participants could already be high-achievers. Being high-achievers could account for positive academic outcomes and achieving graduate and terminal degrees. Involvement in student organizations, working in Student Affairs, and/or aspiring to work in Student Affairs is another aspect of this bias. In order to address this bias, I asked the participants to be honest in their answers and made sure to let them know that their authentic stories were valued and confidential. I also made sure there was little to no bias in my questions. My research team reviewed my questions, as well. In the future, I could mask my Greek affiliation. Because of my sampling procedures (i.e., using Facebook and LinkedIn groups devoted to Greek membership and/or Student Affairs), my Greek membership was at the forefront and made known to my participants.

Another limitation in phase one is that I did not account for athletic participation, which may have impacted the findings for two of my participants. Future research should be deliberate in not including participants who were involved in athletics. Even though I wanted to recruit members who crossed at the universities they attended, I had one participant who cross-pledged and another who had to pledge in a city-wide chapter. Future research will be deliberate about ensuring that participants pledged at the universities they attended.

For phase two, all of the participants worked in Student Affairs and were affiliated with Greek-letter organizations. They were all members of these organizations and some advised these organizations. A majority of them worked in Greek life offices on their campuses. Their bias manifested itself in their preference for student engagement in general and Greek life specifically. As in phase one, I instructed the participants to be honest in their answers and ensured that my questions had little to no bias. My research team also reviewed these questions. Another limitation in phase two involved the length of the interviews. Unlike the interviews in phase one which lasted approximately 20 minutes, these interviews lasted approximately 10 minutes, which could have limited the amount of information gathered from these interviews. In the future, I will ensure that I ask follow-up questions when information may be missing.

Another limitation that involves both researcher bias and participant bias is my Greek affiliation. I did not mask my Greek affiliation in order to facilitate getting participants more easily. Because of my Greek affiliation, participants in both phases could have tailored their answers to insure a positive impact resulting from BGLO membership. The effect of this bias may have been stronger among members of my fraternity and among those affiliated with my university. While having a research team helped to reduce this bias, future research could benefit from the researcher either masking his/her Greek affiliation or not being affiliated at all.

### **Difficulties**

I faced some difficulties while executing this study. One difficulty was the use of technology. All but three of the interviews were done via Skype. There were times when the signal was weak, which caused interruptions in the video and audio. The audio

equipment made some of the answers inaudible and the program used to record the Skype interviews distorted the audio output. I also lost two of my interviews because the audio files were corrupt and would not play. In order to overcome these difficulties, I used two different recording devices and engaged in member checking to fill in the gaps produced by technical difficulties. Member checking presented another difficulty because some participants did not respond with any changes to their transcripts.

Another difficulty was entering the field. My goal was to have four representatives from each of the NPHC fraternities and have an equal number of current undergraduate members and graduate members. I wanted the members of phase two to give me potential participants from their campuses in order to match their answers. While I was able to do that with a few of the participants in the two phases, I did meet some difficulties. Some potential participants did not have Skype, which prevented them from participating. Some schools required that I go through their IRB process, which did not fit within my timeline of completion. Some students did not have the time to participate in the study. As a result, my sample included five members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., five members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., three members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., three members of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., and four members of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. I also wanted to talk to faculty members, but was not able to get any for phase two. Six participants were still in school and the others had already graduated from college.

Even though my study has limitations and difficulties, the findings are still relevant, add to the existing literature, and have implications for the field. There are

several areas of research that can extend this research, as well. The next section discusses the implication of this research and ideas for further study.

### **Implications and Further Study**

#### **Implications**

My study has implications for the counseling field, higher education, and Greek life. Counselors in all settings would benefit from being knowledgeable about BGLOs and their impact on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American males. School counselors are instrumental making sure African American male students receive the necessary preparation for college. They also are instrumental in presenting college as an option for young African American male students and suggesting college to these students is a good practice. Another good practice is getting to know African American male students and understanding their needs, their barriers to pursuing education, and knowing about the available resources available for these students. School counselors and mental health counselors in community agencies, especially those who work in predominantly African American areas, could build partnerships with members of undergraduate and graduate chapters of BGLO fraternities to mentor young African American males. The fraternity members could do an exhibition to capture the attention of the students and then pair up with a student and provide mentoring and academic support. They could also talk to the students about college and give them a realistic view of college life. As a result, the young African American males could see college as an option and see other African American males succeed at college. Young African American males could also express interest in joining a BGLO while in college.

Counselors on college campuses could get involved with the admissions process. They also could initiate mentoring programs and build partnerships with undergraduate members of BGLO fraternities to mentor and tutor African American male students. They could be more visible on campus and collaborate on programming with BGLOs or introduce themselves to African American students. They could also establish support groups for African American male students. Counselors on college campuses could serve as advisors for BGLOs or other diversity-related organizations on campus. Counseling center administrators could be deliberate about hiring a diverse counseling center staff. Another implication is for persons with a counseling background to work in various areas of student affairs. If counselors are more visible and become involved with the African American students, they could help demystify the counseling process for African American students and they may be more compelled to seek out counseling services. Doing so could lower the stigma associated with seeking counseling services experienced by African American students. If African American males have positive experiences with counselors, they may be compelled to foray into counseling in order to give back to the profession and provide the same support for younger African American males they received.

Implications for higher education include a list of strategies to implement to improve the persistence and success of African American male students. These strategies are:

1. Institutional support for diversity.
  - a. Accepting a diverse student body at the undergraduate and graduate level
  - b. Hiring a diverse faculty/staff

2. Exuding empathy for African American males.
  - a. Getting to know the needs and concerns of African American males
  - b. Learning the history of African American males
  - c. Showing you genuinely care about the plight of African American males
  - d. Showing you value the presence of African American male students and BGLOs
  - e. Having a warm, welcoming, and open faculty/staff
3. Creating offices and resource centers devoted to supporting African American male students
  - a. Ensuring these offices have adequate financial resources to sponsor programming
  - b. Hiring persons who are solely responsible for the success of African American male students
4. Supporting diverse student organizations
  - a. Allowing BGLOs to charter chapters at PWIs.
  - b. Supporting and sustaining BGLOs by providing financial resources for these organizations and have realistic expectations for membership.
5. Inclusion
  - a. Including African American males in the university literature, the university website, and the overall campus community
  - b. Including BGLOs in the university literature, the university website, and the overall campus community (i.e., welcome week activities).

- c. Creating a welcoming environment and fostering a sense of belonging for African American male students
- 6. Financial resources
  - a. Making sure there are scholarships, monies for books, and other expenses are available for African American male students at the undergraduate and graduate level
  - b. Providing financial resources for students who may come to college as average achievers, but show promise
- 7. Pre-college programs
  - a. Providing opportunities for young African American males to visit college, stay on campus, and take classes before college
  - b. Funding programs like Upward Bound, TRIO programs, and GEAR UP.
- 8. Majors and other academic activities
  - a. Developing, supporting, sustaining diverse majors/minors, like Africana studies
  - b. Providing access to internships, assistantships, and apprenticeships to African American males
  - c. Provide study abroad opportunities for African American male students

This list is not by any means exhaustive, but it does provide a framework for PWIs to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. College student personnel have a substantial role in improving the persistence and success of African American male students. Their role is to be supportive, provide academic/career advising and mentoring, be able to have those tough, but real

conversations with them about their professionalism and their image, be a resource for students, to educate themselves on the African American male and BGLOs, and integrate themselves into the overall campus at-large. My study also has implications for Greek life.

My study revealed that membership in BGLOs has a positive impact on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students and the presence of BGLOs has a positive impact on the campus at-large. It also adds to the existing literature regarding fraternity membership and provides new knowledge regarding this phenomenon. Findings like these can overshadow the negative image of BGLOs portrayed in the media due to hazing events. BGLOs also benefit from these findings in that they show PWIs that these organizations have merit and can assist them in improving the persistence and success of African American male students. BGLOs could be allowed to charter chapters at PWIs without these organizations and support and sustain these organizations to provide a support structure for African American male students. PWIs with BGLOs could use my findings to develop ways to integrate these organizations into the overall campus culture and showcase them, thus showing they are aware of the impact of these organizations on the campus at-large.

Another implication for higher education and BGLOs concerns counselors' and administrators' views of BGLOs. One participant talked about how one of the administrators at his university disliked Black Greeks and she wanted to get rid of them. My findings and findings from future studies like mine could inform the fields of Counseling and Student Affairs of the positive impact that BGLOs have on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. These findings may

improve the image of BGLOs and change opinions held by counselors and administrators on at PWIs. With these implications, there are several directions for further research.

### **Future Research**

I would like to extend this research to include a larger sample of undergraduate members and compare the findings to existing NSSE data. I would also like to create a scale that measures fraternity/sorority satisfaction based on data from my qualitative study and from NSSE data. Another direction would be using Latino Critical Race Theory and Grounded Theory to measure the impact that membership in Latino Greek-letter Organizations has on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of Latino male college students. One finding that I want to explore further is how membership in BGLOs impacts the racial identity development of undergraduate members at PWIs. Using Cross' Theory of Nigrescence and the Cross Racial Identity Scale (Cross, 1971; Cross & Vandiver, 2001), I want to measure the correlation between membership in BGLOs and the racial identity development of African American males at PWIs. Another research idea would be to investigate the conversations that school counselors are having with African American college students with regard to attending college and their college choices, especially those who are currently attending PWIs. Lastly, several of the participants of phase one either work in student affairs or aspire to work in student affairs. All of the participants in phase two were or still are Greek-affiliated. Many of them work in an area that has direct oversight of Greek life. I would like to investigate the correlation between Greek affiliation and aspirations to work in student affairs. Two of the participants in this study and one participant from my pilot study indicated that their fraternity experiences were negative. I would like to perform a negative case

analysis and explore others who have had negative experiences within their fraternities or if membership as had a negative impact on their overall college experiences.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study reveal that membership in BGLOs positively impacts the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American males at PWIs. They also reveal that the presence of BGLOs has a positive impact on the overall campus culture at-large. With regard to the secondary purpose, the role of college student personnel is to provide academic and psychosocial support for African American male students and several strategies were suggested to help PWIs improve the persistence and success of these students. While my study had limitations and difficulties, the results are valuable nonetheless. Unlike the studies by Singleton (2010) and Henry (2012), I was able to have representation from all five of the NPHC fraternities, have a representative sample from various regions of the country, and include members who had already graduated from college. The findings from phase two present knowledge not currently found in existing literature. I look forward to carrying out this research further.

**CHAPTER SIX****MANUSCRIPT**

A Grounded Theory of the College Experiences of African American Males in Black

Greek-Letter Organizations

David J. Ford and Danica G. Hays

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Student involvement can improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students (Harper, 2006b; Robertson & Mason, 2008; Williams & Justice, 2010), and African American fraternities and sororities (i.e., Black Greek-letter organizations [BGLOs]) are the primary venues by which African American students become involved on campus (Harper, Byars, & Jelke, 2005). This grounded theory study examined the relationship between membership in a BGLO and the overall college experiences of African American male college students at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Eleven themes were identified, indicating that membership had a positive impact on the college experiences of African American male college students at a PWI. Implications for counseling, higher education, and Black Greek life are provided.

## A Grounded Theory of the College Experiences of African American Males in Black Greek-Letter Organizations

Statistics indicate only 14.8% of African Americans (12.5% males, 16.5% females) enroll in degree granting institutions (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2011). Additionally, two-thirds of African American male undergraduate students who attend public institutions of higher learning do not graduate within six years, which is the lowest college completion rate of any other segment of the U.S. population in higher education (Harper & Harris, 2012). These data are unfortunate given the general benefits of education, including reduced engagement in criminal behavior (Groot & van den Brink, 2010; Hawkins, 2011; Lochner & Moretti, 2004). Further, having a diverse student body provides additional benefits such as identity development, cognitive growth, and enhanced classroom experiences (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002); seeing different points of view (Rudenstine, 2001); opportunities for social support, role models, and mentoring; breaking down stereotypes and aiding in student retention (Smith & Schonfeld, 2000); training for a global society (Bollinger, 2007). Students who attend universities where students were more engaged with diversity (i.e., through coursework/curriculum, or engagement in activities like diversity awareness workshops and student organizations) reported higher levels of self-change in their knowledge of and the ability to get along with persons of differing races and cultures (Denson & Chang, 2009). Umbach and Kuh (2006) posited that engagement in diversity-related activities is associated with higher levels of academic challenge, more frequent participation in active and collaborative learning, greater gains in personal and educational growth, and greater satisfaction with overall college experiences.

This paper will present a study that examines the impact (if any) that membership in BGLOs has on the overall college experiences of African American male students attending PWIs.. First, available literature on academic and psychosocial outcomes is presented regarding college students of color in general and African American males more specifically. In addition, a brief review on BGLOs is presented.

### **Academic and Psychosocial Outcomes**

A wealth of literature exists focusing on college students of color and their academic and psychosocial outcomes. Using a phenomenological approach and a sample comprised of 31 female and 19 male low socioeconomic college students of color, Morales (2008) found that females faced more familial resistance, were more strongly motivated by their post-graduate professional goals, and were less concerned about the gender of their mentor. With a national sample of 3,332 students of color, Lundberg (2010) found that students of color benefited from institutions that value diversity, benefited when they were involved in the college experience, and learned more when administrative personnel and faculty were viewed as approachable, helpful, and encouraging. Melguizo (2010) found that the probability of earning a bachelor's degree was significantly associated with the selectivity of the institution.

Palmer, Maramba, and Dancy (2011) explored the factors affecting the retention and persistence of STEM students of color at a PWI using a constructivist grounded theory approach and a sample of six participants. They identified three themes: peer group support, involvement in STEM-related activities, and strong high school preparation. Blume, Lovato, Thyken, and Denny (2012) investigated the relationship between microaggressions and alcohol use and anxiety among students of color at a PWI

and found that students of color experience microaggressions at significantly higher levels than White students, which was associated with higher anxiety, underage binge drinking, and the aversive consequences of drinking alcohol. Using data collected from a university-wide undergraduate survey of 7,417 students, Baker and Robnett (2012) examined what factors affected the retention of Hispanic students and other students of color and found that first-year cumulative GPA, student engagement, speaking English as their first language and social support from within the college affected retention (Baker & Robnett, 2012).

The literature presented here reveals the factors that affect the retention of college students of color. The literature discussed can provide a framework for improving the retention of college students of color. The next section focuses on African American college students.

### **African American College Students**

Baber (2012) used a phenomenological approach to examine the psychosocial outcomes of African American college students and investigated the influence of racial identity development on the education experiences of first-year African American students at a PWI. Using the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) as a theoretical framework and a sample of 15 self-identified African American students, he identified five themes: established racial identity, reconsidering identity through heterogeneous community experience, conflict between ideologies, resiliency against hostility, and uncovering complexity of identity (Baber, 2012).

DeFreitas (2012) and Grier-Reed, Madyun, and Buckley (2008) explored the academic outcomes of African American college students. DeFreitas used a survey

design to examine differences between African American and White first-year college students for self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and academic achievement. With a sample of 187 students, he found that higher levels of self-efficacy had a positive relationship with better academic achievement for both groups. The findings also suggested that African American students with negative outcome expectations exhibited better academic achievement than those with more positive outcome expectations; the opposite pattern was found for the White students (DeFreitas, 2012). Grier-Reed et al. (2008) wrote a conceptual article detailing how two university faculty responded to low retention of African American students at a PWI by creating the African American Student Network (AFAM). AFAM promotes the social support systems and psychological well-being of African American students at the PWI.

Tovar-Murray, Jenifer, Andrusyk, D'Angelo, and King (2012) and Lindsey et al. (2011) explored psychological outcomes focusing on the effects of stress on African American college students. Tovar-Murray et al. (2012) employed a survey design and a sample of 163 students to examine how racism-related stress and ethnic identity affected the career aspirations of African American college students at a PWI; they found an indirect correlation between race-related stress and career aspirations. Lindsey et al. (2011) investigated African American students attending a historically Black college and university (HBCU) and their top stressors. With a sample of 95 students, Lindsey et al. found the top stressors were making important decisions about your education, having peers respect what you say, having too many things to do at once, having a lot of responsibilities, and financial burdens (Lindsey et al., 2011).

### **Black Greek Letter Organizations**

Student engagement in campus organizations is an aspect of college life that affects the academic and psychosocial outcomes of college students of color. Organizations include the Black student union, undergraduate NAACP chapters, the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), the university Gospel choir, BGLOs, and other minority student organizations (Harper, 2006a; Young, 2005), with BGLOs as the primary organizations with which African American students affiliate (Harper et al., 2005). BGLO members often engage in tutoring, mentoring, contributing financially to the university and charitable organizations, providing community service, promoting a sense of belonging among their members, and contributing to the social atmosphere of the university (Harper, 2007; Ross, 2000). Further, involvement in a BGLO has been shown to provide campus involvement and peer/social support (Harper, 2007; McClure, 2006b; Patton, Flowers, & Bridges, 2011), particularly related to social and academic adjustment (Abowitz & Knox, 2003; Harper et al., 2005; Kimbrough & Hutchinson, 1998; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2004). Membership in Black Greek fraternities has been shown to help African American students develop practical competence, which refers to the set of transferable skills acquired through curricular and co-curricular experiences to be used in educational and career experiences after the college years (Harper & Harris, 2006); help African American students reconnect with their African cultural and social identity (Branch, 2001); help African American students develop a stronger, more positive sense of self-esteem and racial identity (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995); positively affect African American students' cognitive development, especially mathematical reasoning, critical thinking skills, composite test scores, and reading comprehension (Pascarella et al., 1996); help African American males to develop a

masculine identity that helps to resolve contradictory expectations of their race, class, and gender identities (McClure, 2006a); and leads to African American students exhibiting positive gains in cognitive complexity, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge application (Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gurnek, 1994).

Research also indicates that the moral development (Mathiasen, 2005), cognitive development (Pike, 2000), and GPA and retention rate (DeBard & Sacks, 2012) of Greek members in general is positively influenced by membership. Unfortunately, these previous quantitative studies focused primarily on White members and were limited usually to one university (see Abowitz & Knox, 2003; DeBard & Sacks, 2012; Mathiasen, 2005).

There are three studies available to date specific to BGLOs. Further, conceptual writings on BGLOs focused on hazing, out-of-class engagement, social and non-academic outcomes (Harper, 2007). McClure (2006b) in a qualitative study explored the impact of membership in a BGLO on the college experiences of African American males at a PWI. The findings indicated that fraternity membership had a positive impact on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students at a PWI. Kimbrough (1995) used quantitative methods and examined the attitudes towards leadership among members of BGLOs and found that members of BGLOs were more likely to hold leadership positions than nonmembers. Harper (2007) used qualitative methods to investigate the effects of membership in BGLOs on academic performance and found that membership in BGLOs positively affected the academic performance of African American students. Although these studies are useful for studying BGLOs, the studies are limited primarily to one university. Additional studies are needed to explore

in-depth the perceived outcomes of students in BGLOs given the benefits cited in the literature and the potential of these organizations as a recruitment tool for African Americans in general.

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the influence membership in a BGLO has on the college experiences of African American males attending PWIs. A secondary purpose for this study was to inform counselors and other college student personnel of best practices to implement to improve the persistence and success rates of African American male college students. Three research questions guided this study: (1) How do participants perceive BGLO-associated activities (e.g., mentorship, student engagement, volunteer service) influencing other college experiences, if at all?; (2) What are the college experiences within BGLOs and across the university?; and (3) What recommendations do participants have for improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American college students?

### **Method**

Qualitative methods are most appropriate for this study because they are aligned with the oral traditions of the African culture (Stanfield, 1994) while capturing the human meanings of social life as the participants live them, experience them, and understand them (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011). A grounded theory approach was used to generate a theory explaining the factors that influence the college experiences of African American male college students and their related outcomes as well as highlighted potential recommendations to foster positive college experiences. Further, a social constructivist lens was used to learn how, when, and the extent to which a studied experience is embedded in larger and hidden positions, networks, situations, and

relationships (Charmaz, 2006), while valuing multiple contextual perspectives (Hays & Singh, 2012). The data gathered from this study facilitated the discovery of what aspects of the fraternity experiences impact (if any) the college experiences of African American male students.

### **Participants**

Participants for this study were recruited using homogenous, theoretical, and snowball sampling methods (Green, Creswell, Shope, & Plano-Clark, 2007). Persons eligible to participate in the study self-identified as Black or African-American, were at least 18 years old, pledged a BGLO fraternity at a PWI, and either currently attend a PWI or have graduated from a PWI. The primary author recruited 20 participants to maximize representation from each of the five NPHC fraternities. He sought to have at least four members from each of the five NPHC fraternities, and have an equal number of undergraduate brothers and alumni brothers. He also sought to maximize representation from various types of PWIs (i.e., small or large, private or state-supported, from various regions of the United States) in order to gain different perspectives with regard to their fraternity experiences. Table 1 presents the demographic data for the 20 BGLO members.

### **Research Team/Researcher Bias**

The primary author is a 38-year-old African American male who is currently enrolled in a Counselor Education doctoral program at a large, state-supported PWI in the mid-Atlantic region. He is also a graduate of a small, private PWI in the Southeast, and has been an active member of a BGLO since 2006. Even though he did not pledge as an undergraduate, he has had positive experiences in my fraternity and have witnessed the benefits of membership while working as a residence director at a small, state-supported

HBCU in the Southeast. He believes that the fraternity experiences of African American students in BGLOs will enhance their college experiences, prompting them to be successful academically and socially, which leads to their graduation and continued success after college. He was on the advisory team for his chapter at the HBCU and was involved with Greek life at a PWI. Affiliation in BGLOs at a PWI may foster a sense of belonging and facilitate integration into the overall campus culture. He also believes that the presence of BGLOs at a PWI could enhance the overall campus atmosphere and may serve as a recruitment tool for African American males to attend PWIs because the members might recommend other young African American males to attend the institution.

To help minimize researcher bias, he intended to employ a research team of at least two other individuals. The members of the research team were in the same doctoral program in Counselor Education as he was and took a class in qualitative research methods. They also had knowledge of BGLOs and Greek life in general. The members of the research team were not involved in the data collection process or interview transcription. They provided feedback on the development and revision of the interview protocols. They assisted in coding the data collected. They also assisted in member checking and keeping me aware of my biases, which will increase trustworthiness. The demographics of the research team allowed for a variation of ethnicity, gender, and Greek affiliation (or the lack thereof). The research team members were in same doctoral cohort as the primary investigator and have taken the same doctoral-level qualitative research course as I am. One research team member was an African American male, Greek-

affiliated, and joined at a PWI. The other research team member was a Latina female and was not Greek-affiliated.

### **Data Sources**

**Individual interviews.** The primary author conducted individual semi-structured interviews that lasted approximately 20 minutes in length. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or via Skype and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview protocol consisted of 10 questions, including questions about what attracted the participants to their respective university, what were some of their activities they have been involved with while in college, what has been their most memorable experience while in college, what prompted them to pledge, how their fraternity experiences have affected their college experiences, if at all, how the university has perceived their organization and its activities, how likely the participants will either recommend or discourage others to attend their university, and what they recommend for their university or other universities make the campus culture more welcoming and receptive to their organizations and male students of color. See Appendix 1 for the interview protocol.

**Demographic questionnaire.** The primary author instructed participants to complete a demographic questionnaire that asked what fraternity they pledged, when they pledged, what university they attended, year they graduated or anticipate graduating, reason they pledged, prior knowledge of The Divine Nine (if any), involvement in other organizations (if any), leadership positions held (if any), and if they were members of graduate chapters. See Appendix 2 for the demographic form.

### **Data Analysis**

During the initial coding phase, each member of the research team was given copies of each interview transcript and individually engaged in initial coding, employing line-by-line coding. The research team met after the first three interviews to engage in consensus coding. Once consensus is reached with the first set of interviews, the research team members engaged in constant comparison, comparing the codes found in each subsequent set of interviews to those found in the first set. Once saturation was reached, the research team members collaboratively created a codebook. Next, the research team moved to focused coding.

During focused coding, the research team members collaboratively refined the initial codes and began to synthesize the data. The team members met and engaged in consensus coding to refine the a priori codebooks. Through constant comparison, the team members revisited the data collected to further refine the codes. The primary author engaged in member checking to ensure that he captured the meaning the participants conveyed in the interview. Focused coding led to theoretical coding.

In order to discover relationships between categories developed during focused coding, the research team members met and made connections among the focused codes. The research team utilized consensus coding to collapse the focus codes into larger, more substantive theoretical codes that will lead to theoretical development. The team members collaborated to finalize the codebooks, while engaging in constant comparison with the data collected in the interviews to ensure the final codebooks embodied the meaning the participants intended in the data collections.

## **Findings**

The research team identified 11 themes that corresponded with the three research questions: collaborative relationships, resources, giving back, sense of belonging, accountability, diversity, familial relationship, identity, image, achievement, and inclusion.

### **Perception of BGLO-Associated Activities**

**Collaborative relationships.** Membership in a BGLO helped participants forge collaborative relationships with members of their chapter, members of chapters at other universities, other Greeks, and the campus community at-large. Participant BGLO004 talked about how his membership allowed him to forge a bond and friendship with members of his chapter. This participant stated,

Um, friendship, man, it is that bond that uh you and another brother have, you know. I'm Greek for life. You know, it's that bond of we recognize that we have something in common that we endured something, that we share, you know, whatever secrets that, that you know, there may be, that you know we have that pride, you know...I mean, I look at it as, even though I am not as close to my sands as I would like, you know when someone has a child or when someone gets married, you know we're always there. I mean, you know when one of the bruhs got married in Puerto Rico, most of us went...you know, that's that type of support, you know, beyond that, life-changing moments, we wanted to be a part of it...it definitely means, it is that friendship, man. We have a chance to make a bond that um others outside of it wouldn't understand...I see another bruh, and you know I haven't seen in a while, and I give him that,

you know, I give him that handshake, that dap, and I hold him tight, and I say to him, 'Bruh, you know, it's good to see you,' that love.

Participant BGLO001 talked about being a part of his fraternity allowed him to forge brotherhood and a network with members of his fraternity's chapters at other universities. He said,

But, um, and also, I guess just like networking. Just like, I'm meeting...I've been on so many road trips this semester alone. Um, I've went to [university name here] and I've met with, you know, with bros there, um, with like many like, with many of their events to support them [simulates quotation marks with his fingers]. Also, just to meet like the brothers of like our like brother chapter because there are three schools um in the [city name here] area.

Participant 012 talked about his most memorable college experience and said,

At [university name here], um, I guess just joining the, the Greek um family there 'cause of the fact that I actually became a member of Iota Phi Theta the first semester that I transferred to [university name here]. So, it's almost as if I was, at [university name here] I had a month or two to get acclimated toward the school culture. Then, I jumped right onto uh intake.

Here, he is saying that becoming a part of his fraternity connected him with the Greek family, which is what he remembers most about his college career. He also talked about how being a member of his fraternity connected him with the student body and helped him become involved with the student population. He stated,

It kinda got me acclimated, kinda created a bridge between myself and uh, the student population...at [university name here]...I wouldn't have been that involved. It's actually given me a, another way of involvement and, um just being a part of the student population.

Participant BGLO001 talked about collaborating with other organizations and offices on campus and said,

And, you know, we try to do a lot of things with like our Black Student Union, you know our, the multicultural programs and services here, uh, just, I guess, just kinda like, educate the larger community, the community at-large about you know, I guess, what it means to be Black.

**Giving back.** Another theme associated with the perception of BGLO-associated activities is the ability to give back. Part of giving back involved educating the campus community about BGLOs and African American students. Participant BGLO001 responded,

And, you know, we try to do a lot of things with like our Black Student Union, you know our, the multicultural programs and services here, uh, just, I guess, just kinda like, educate the larger community, the community at-large about you know, I guess, what it means to be Black. Um, and, yeah, what it means to be Black or, you know there are certain things that you can't say or do you know with Black people. Um, I guess just, I guess just to be like, you know, this is who we are, you know like understand us. You know, we're trying to understand you, and stuff like that.

Participant BGLO008 also stated, “We have to take time to educate those who are around us about how we’re different from uh people who are a part of other councils.” Another part of giving back is supporting the community. Participant BGLO001 responded, “You know, we’re trying to make a difference. I feel like, you know, being on a PWI, NPHC’s just really important here just because like the point of these organizations is to uplift the community.” When asked what fraternity meant to him, participant BGLO014 said, “spaces for academic and social uplift.” For participant 011, BGLOs affected his own college experiences by,

Building bonds with people, affecting people’s lives, like I said, from doing pageants to community service, just affecting, helping out a lot of people, meeting a lot of people that have organizations that wanna help out kids, that wanna help out uh homeless people, wanna help out single moms, single fathers, a lot of things.

Giving back also includes giving back to the students that come after you and to the fraternity. Participant BGLO003 said that his most memorable college experiences involved anything dealing with Kappa. His fraternity experiences were so memorable that he wanted to help other students have the same experience. He stated,

Just because I had such an active Greek life that I wanna be the same for other people and stuff, you know, when they try to come through and stuff, too, so...I got so much out of my experience that I’m hoping down the line, I can do the same thing for somebody else, so.

Participant BGLO015 talked about what fraternity means to him and he responded, “We’re passionate about what we’re doing and giving back to the organization.” Another

aspect of giving back is making a difference. When participant BGLO008 was asked what fraternity meant to him, he said, “being change agents for communities of color.” When asked about the impact that BGLOs had on his campus, participant BGLO010 stated,

So, they had only two on that campus at the time that I crossed. Um, those two were doing big things and you know, uh, making the world a better place, and they were successful. Those are the things I’m all about, you know, improving myself, improving my community.

Mentoring is another aspect of giving back. Participant BGLO003 attributes his success to being mentored by a member of his organization, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. He said,

Uh, I mean, like I said, like, I wouldn’t be where I was without Kappa because the way I got introduced to Kappa was through, uh, a good friend of mine who’s also my brother. He was my [program acronym here] mentor. And, [program acronym here] is, uh, [program name here] that they had at [university name here]. So, you would go in, uh, six weeks before class starts and you would stay on the campus, and then, um, then you would take classes, and then, like, you would have like mentors there and stuff so they would be showing you around campus and all different types of events and stuff, so. One of my mentors for that program, he was a Kappa at [chapter name here], and, um, so me and him just got really close throughout the whole, you know, the whole process, ‘cause like I didn’t want to be there. I just had graduated high school. I didn’t want,

like, I was like, yo I do not want to do school again, like [throws his hands up] school again, so...I was all not about being there, so. But, you know, talking with him, he really like kinda sit me down and was like, you know, things will get better and stuff, so. You just gotta work it out and stuff, so.

When asked what fraternity meant to him, he said, "I think fraternity is kinda...honestly, I think it's a broad kind of perspective that it can be mentoring. It can be advising." The final aspect of giving back involves providing leadership in other organizations around campus. When talking about members of BGLOs, participant BGLO004 stated,

They were the voice for the Black students. Uh, you know, regardless of what, uh, affiliation you were, even if you weren't affiliated, uh, the Black Greeks were there. They were the movers and shakers when it came to students. So, if they were gonna be a protest, if they were going to be someone going to administration or something like that, even in administration, I would say probably 2/3 of African Americans that were in administration on campus belonged to, um, a Black Greek Organization.

He later said, "Black Greeks were the leaders on campus then, you know. In every aspect, you know, they were on the forefront of getting things done." When talking about other organizations on campus, participant BGLO005 responded, "The thing with those organizations is that many of the same NPHC people were on the e-board, active members in those organizations, too." Participant BGLO007 talked about the overall impact that BGLOs have on his campus and he responded, "A lot of them have like

student leadership positions. So, as far as leadership goes, like a lot of people see that and they kinda equate the Black Greek-letter Organizations with leadership here.”

**Accountability.** Membership in BGLOs also provided accountability, especially with regard to doing well academically. Participant BGLO001 said,

Yeah, just because it’s like, it’s not just me I’m worried about, like when I get bad grades and it’s like we all get bad grades. If I get, you know, make a bad grade in a class, then it brings the chapter GPA down. Um, I’m like, also, there’s like, I was on like a type of like probation where like my advisors, they would ask for my grades every single week. So, kinda like, it helped me to be accountable for my actions.

Participant BGLO003 also said,

When my grades started slipping, and stuff, like my frat brothers would check me and stuff. I never had anybody to check me for my grades and stuff, except my parents, and stuff so. That was like, ‘cause I’m an only child, and stuff so. It was like an eye-opener, ‘cause I had never had anybody check me with grades, so, you know, when my frat brothers would check me with my grades and stuff, they would be doing it out of love ‘cause they knew that I was better than that, and stuff so. When that happened, it was kinda like, oh like. At first, I was angry, but then, I was like, ‘I really appreciated it,’ ‘cause like not that many people would like check on me with my grades and stuff.

Participant BGLO004 stated,

You know, all of us did well in school and you know the academic aspect was even after we crossed, we mandated to do 12 minimum to 18 uh study hours in the library for all members...you know, 12-18 hours in the library, we had to give an account for it. If you didn't do it, we had this thing called the hot seat. We would put you in the middle of the room, put one chair there. The bruhs would surround you and everybody would come at you. So, we made sure that everyone graduated and that everyone pursued anything they wanted.

**Identity.** Another theme was identity. Membership in a BGLO fraternity impacted their development of their racial and gender identity, and represented male empowerment. Participant BGLO001 talked about his racial identity development and male empowerment. When asked what fraternity meant to him, he responded,

Fraternity means like empowerment, empowerment among the men, because, I mean, I feel there are a lot of programs and there are lot of things for like women to be, you know become empowered and know their worth. But, I don't think they're enough programs for men. You know, for it to feel like, for me being in, you know, this organization, I'm helping, I'm helping empower other men, you know, because they're seeing me, um, you know, they're seeing me mess up and be fine every week. They're seeing me. They're seeing me, um, create all these programs. They're seeing me being, uh, they're seeing me be a leader. You know, I wanna do what [BGLO001] is doing. Like I wanna, you know. I wanna be like that because that's how I was.

With regard to his racial identity, he said, “One of the reasons why I mean, like, and I kinda said this in the thing that I filled out, being in like a Black Greek organization, I guess, is like really, it’s helped to, you know, shape and grow my love, you know, for being Black.” When talking about BGLOs, he said,

These organizations, they were just more than, like, you know, small, like, little clubs. These were like support systems that helped, you know, that helped get these students through, that helped, you know, say like, ‘Hey, like, we’re here.’ This is like the Black voice. It was their vehicle for saying, like, ‘Hey, don’t mess with us.’ And, I just found that so powerful.

When asked about how his fraternity experiences affected his overall college experiences, participant BGLO009 responded, “Overall, I think, from an identity development standpoint, it put me in a position where I had to really figure out who I was, um, in relation to the organization and also alone. Like, I had to, I had to um revisit that many times because I’m an only child and so, I’m used to being alone.” Participant BGLO015 responded to this question by saying, “[Membership] impacted my development as a, um, as a, you know, as a male, as a young man, too, but embracing full manhood, responsibility, uh, uh, in terms of with ideals of a Greek-letter organization.”

**Image.** Membership in a BGLO impacted the participants’ image while in college. Participant BGLO001 stated,

We’ve really been making noise with like, you know with like our professional, um we have professional Wednesdays. We dress up in like navy blue blazer, white shirt, blue tie, khaki pants. Um, so that’s like every Wednesday, everybody’s looking on campus like, ‘Oh yeah, like the

Sigmas are, you know, dressing up again.' Um, that's how like all of us would wear...

With regard to how his fraternity experiences impacted his overall college experiences, participant BGLO010 responded,

I think, I think once became a man of Kappa Alpha Psi, I think my professionalism went to the next level, I think...it helped me take that next step into being a professional. Everything switched for me, whether it was from the way I carried myself as a person all the time...I used to love wearing athletic shorts and sweats to class, but at that point, I think I tried to switch to the more professional wear every day because I want people to see me in one light being; you never know who you're gonna meet when you're traveling. You never know who you might meet. So, you always wanna be prepared, um, to leave a first, a good first impression. I think that's one of the first messages I took away from the organization when it came to the professional world.

**Academic achievement.** Membership in a BGLO impacted the participants' academic achievement with regard to pursuit of advanced degrees and perseverance. Participant BGLO002 would not have ventured into his current profession had he not joined his fraternity. He said,

I work as a Greek advisor now, so clearly, [his probate show] made a lasting impression...[Greek experiences] definitely gave me an opportunity to get into this field when this was not my field of choice, not choice, but profession. I worked in the private sector for some time before

I came over to Higher Ed and because of my work with my institution, my home institution...um, and you know, working with my own undergraduate chapter and being an advisor for them, I thought this was a natural progression. I wanted to get my Master's and Ph.D. and I knew that if I stayed in my current profession, my former profession, then that wouldn't have happened.

For participant BGLO004, being a member of his chapter is assisting him with the pursuit of his doctorate. He said, "I'll be honest with you. Uh, going for my dissertation, I have a fraternity brother who is on my committee...when I went for, going to a doctoral program, there was a brother at [university] who is the head of that department. He made sure I got in...he took care of me." Membership also impacted his line brothers' pursuit of advanced degrees. He later said,

In our organization, especially in our chapter, you know on my line, I had, every one of us on our line minus one...there were 14 of us, 13 of which have graduate degrees. Uh, two of them are practicing medical doctors. And so, you know that aspect of always pushing for our grades and things of that nature, we didn't want to be that stereotype of just being, you know, the big, you know, the dumb jocks.

Participants BGLO001 and BGLO009 talked about how their fraternity experiences helped them to persevere through their college experiences. According to participant BGLO001, "It's giving you, like, it's giving you...I guess Sigma in my chapter has given me something like to look forward to like: why I could stay here, why, you know, I need to keep fighting." When talking about his pledge process, participant BGLO009 said,

Going through a process, too, was a lot. It's something that really, um, taught me a lot, and I kinda, I kinda use that experience as a filter to, you know, decide whether or not what I'm going through is that serious. Like, if I've made it through a process, I can make it through anything.

**Familial relationships.** Familial relationships as they relate to becoming a part of BGLOs also was identified as a theme. For participant BGLO003, being a legacy helped determine his college choice. He said,

One of the big things I knew I did wanna do was Greek life and stuff and since my father is a Kappa, I didn't really have that many, uh, options...and, uh, you know, choosing a Greek-letter organization and stuff, and over at [university name here], they were, uh, on suspension 'til my junior year. So, I knew I wouldn't be able to do that 'til my junior year and that was still a maybe then.

Participant BGLO017 is also a legacy. He said, "I pledged because I found the love for Kappa through my father. Seeing it growing up made me love it." One of the reasons participant BGLO018 pledged Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., is because his father is a member of that fraternity. When asked why he pledged, he responded, "I wanted an organization where I could affect change on campus and in the community. I really liked Alpha Phi Alpha's national programs focusing on education and voting, and my dad is an Alpha!" Participant BGLO001 pledged in spite of familial objection to Greek life. He said, "Everybody was really excited. So, like, the whole me like performing, like I told, I didn't tell my mom that I was doing it because she was against it, too."

These themes (collaborative relationships, accountability, giving back, image, achievement, identity, and familial relationships) are associated with how the participants perceive their fraternity experiences affecting their overall college experiences. See Figure 1 to see how the themes are related.

### **College Experiences within BGLOs and Across the University**

Many of the participants talked about how members of BGLOs not only held leadership positions in their respective chapters, but were involved in other organizations on campus and were the leaders around campus. Members of BGLO fraternities have an obligation to be a part of other organizations on campus. Participant BGLO004 stated, “You know Black Greeks were the leaders on campus then, you know. In every aspect, you know, they were on the forefront of getting things done.” When talking about other members of his chapter, participant BGLO008 also said, “But, when I looked at the members on campus, then I realized that like, not all were members of like this organization. They’re a part of other organizations on campus.” Participant BGLO014 stated,

I don’t personally think we can be very successful fraternities if we can’t change the dynamics of students on campus. So, when I think about students who join our organizations and then pull out of every other organization they were a part of before earning fraternity membership, I question their true understanding of what it means to be a fraternity man.

Participants in phase one were involved in several different types of organizations. Some of the participants were engaged in similar organizations on their respective campuses. Participants BGLO007, BGLO008, BGLO015, BGLO018, and BGLO019 served as

presidents of their chapters. Participants BGLO001, BGLO002, BGLO003, BGLO005, BGLO009, BGLO011, BGLO013, BGLO014, BGLO017, and BGLO020 held other leadership positions in their chapters. Participant BGLO015 served as student body president of his university, and participants BGLO001, BGLO009, and BGLO014 were university senators in the student government. Participants BGLO002 and BGLO004 were student athletes. Participants BGLO003 and BGLO013 served as NPHC president and participants BGLO014 and BGLO018 were involved with the NPHC. Participants BGLO005 and BGLO019 were members of their school's gospel choir. Participants BGLO002, BGLO003, BGLO005, BGLO008, BGLO009, BGLO010, BGLO014, and BGLO017 were members of their Black student organizations and participants BGLO009 and BGLO010 served as president. Participants BGLO004, BGLO005, BGLO011, BGLO013, and BGLO016 were all involved in the NAACP. Participants BGLO009 and BGLO015 were involved in the Collegiate 100 and participant BGLO017 served as president. Participants BGLO010, BGLO014, and BGLO018 were involved in orientation. See Table 2 for a complete listing of the organizations with which the participants were affiliated

### **Recommendations for Improvement**

**Empathy.** One recommendation was that counselors and college student personnel develop a deeper level of empathy for African American college students. Participant BGLO002 said, "I guess my biggest thing is meeting them where they are...and, and understand what their drivers are." Participant BGLO009 said,

The biggest thing is, for me, I think the biggest thing is showing that [school counselors and college student personnel] they value the

experience of Black male individuals and being able to connect that experience to college...what we really need to do is take the time to get to know people and understand them and, um, value them enough to understand their experience or get to know them well enough to see how you can connect their hopes, their dreams, their expectations for life TO school.

He later said,

The realest thing that I can say is they have to care, like, they, they have to care for the sake of, of empathy, of understanding that, um, understanding that if they really wanna cultivate a culture of belonging and help people feel like they belong, then they're going to have to take some honest and authentic steps in doing that...it has to come from a place of we really want this to be an inclusive environment.

**Resources.** Another recommendation is making sure the university has adequate resources for African American students. Participants BGLO002 and BGLO004 were able to attend college due to the financial resources afforded them by being athletes. Participant BGLO008 said he attended his university because of the reciprocity for in-state tuition. Participant BGLO013 is attending his university because he was given a full tuition scholarship. Participant BGLO001 said one of his reasons for attending his university was the resources available for persons of color. Participant BGLO004 emphasized student support services. He suggested that counselors be knowledgeable about these support services and introduce them to high school students attending college. Participants BGLO001, BGLO010, and BGLO011 attended their university

because of their specific major. Participants BGLO004 emphasized the importance of offering and supporting an Africana Studies department.

**Sense of belonging.** The participants also emphasized creating a sense of belonging and how being a part of their organizations helps to create that sense of belonging. Participant BGLO003 recommended PWIs help create a sense of belonging for African American male students and participant BGLO008 talked about how his fraternity helped create that sense of belonging. Participant BGLO004 also talked about finding a home away from home. He said, “I think it’s just, it’s trying to find that home away from home. I think, and I think that’s the biggest thing I think with like, with Kappa, I found a home away from home.” When talking about his university, participant BGLO001 said, “Yeah, it was a good fit just because the size, um, you know, it feels like, you know, the family atmosphere, um. Also, the campus is, like, integrated among the city.”

**Inclusion.** Inclusion is another recommendation from the participants. Participant BGLO004 suggested that universities showcase Black Greeks, teach about Black Greeks, and utilize Black Greeks. Black Greeks should be included in the campus welcome week and in the campus literature and website. Participant BGLO015 recommended having abundant Black student organizations to create a community. Participant BGLO014 talked about harnessing the potential of BGLOs to provide a support system to keep Black men in college. Participant BGLO001 talked about the university recognizing the presence of students of color because of the presence of BGLOs. He said,

And, it’s kinda like we, as you know, people of color, ‘cause there’s not, I think like 8 or 10% of like minorities on this campus. And, I feel like it

kinda helps like I guess show that we're here. You know, we're trying to make a difference. I feel like, you know, being on a PWI, NPHC's just really important here just because like the point of these organizations is to uplift the community.

He later said, "I'm going to do what I can to make sure that, you know, Black people are heard and you know, Black people, people of color, people like, that were heard, that were recognized, but were never understood. And, Sigmas have been helping out with that." Participant BGLO004 talked about how African American males experience invisibility at a PWI and how being a part of a BGLO helps combat that feeling of being invisible.

**Diversity.** Diversity is another recommendation for PWIs. With regard to attending a PWI and recommending his university to other African American males, participant BGLO003 responded,

I highly advise it just for the fact that, you know, especially with the NPHC side, you know you're able to get more out of it in my opinion, just because you're such a small entity that when you do big things on like a, you know, PWI and stuff, you'll be able to get more accreditation. And, plus, you'll be able to meet more of a well-versed, round of people, than when you go to a HBCU, and you know, pretty much majority you see is yourself, and stuff. But, when you're, you know, go to a school like a PWI and stuff like that, you'll be seeing like a lot of different types of nationalities and races and, you know, when you get into the workforce and stuff, that's kinda how the workforce is. You'll see the different

people. You'll have different people around you, and stuff so. It's kinda, it helps you kinda get accustomed to that, you know, the life after college in my opinion when you go to a PWI, so.

Participant BGLO009 talked about how universities have to show cultural responsiveness and celebrate differences. Participant BGLO011 suggested that PWIs showcase diversity, especially in the campus literature and website. Participant BGLO012 suggested that PWIs understand and accept the culture of African American males and participant BGLO013 suggested PWIs value the impact of BGLOs on diversity.

**Faculty and staff involvement.** Another recommendation is that faculty and staff get involved with the students. Participant BGLO008 suggested that counselors should be attending BGLO events and providing outreach. They should introduce themselves to students of color and be more present on campus. He also suggested that school counselors should tell students of color about the college experience, get to know students, and use BGLOs. Participant BGLO009 said schools have to help create an inclusive environment with their hiring, and mission and vision of the university. Participant BGLO012 proposed that staff of color should become more involved with BGLOs.

The 11 themes and the recommendations found in this study reveal how being a member of a BGLO impacts the overall college experiences and what best practices the participants recommend PWIs implement to improve the persistence and success of African American male students.

## DISCUSSION

### Academic Outcomes

**Accountability.** The participants spoke about how being a part of their fraternity had a positive impact on their academics because their fraternity brothers held them accountable for their grades. Not only would the members hold each other accountable for earning good grades, they would provide support mechanisms for members whose grades are faltering to help bring them improve their GPAs. The participants felt a responsibility to their fraternity and their chapters to perform well academically because of their connection to the fraternity and the fact that the fraternity has to maintain a certain cumulative GPA to remain active.

**Achievement.** Participants reported that being a part of their fraternity not only pushed them to finish their undergraduate degree, but further their education with graduate and terminal degrees. Their line brothers, chapter brothers, and fraternity brothers pushed each other to attain advanced degrees. Some even chose their careers because of their fraternity involvement. The participants pursued or aspire to pursue graduate degrees and positions in Higher Education/Student Affairs because of their involvement in a Black Greek fraternity. Membership also gave the participants the tools to endure the difficult times in college and persist until they graduate. The pledge process taught them perseverance, which was applied to their academic success.

With regard to both accountability and achievement, participants reported they had to remain at their universities until they graduated because of their responsibility to their chapters (i.e., they could not leave their chapters because of the obligation they felt to their chapter) and graduating from college was the end result of academic success. These two themes indicate that membership in BGLOs has a positive impact on the

academic outcomes of African American males at PWIs. Five other themes are associated with the psychosocial outcomes of African American male students.

### **Psychosocial Outcomes**

**Collaborative relationships.** The participants placed much emphasis on the bond, brotherhood, and network created by being a part of their fraternity. Some referred to their relationship as one that others outside of the fraternity would not understand. They feel connected to each other and to other fraternity members who pledged elsewhere. They also feel more connected to their campuses and become involved with other organizations. The participants also referred to BGLOs as contributing to unity in the African American community on campus. These collaborative relationships are what hold the fraternity members accountable to each other. Their love for each other and the bond they have allow them to check each other when one is not performing well.

**Giving back.** The participants placed great emphasis on giving back and how being a member was the avenue by which they gave back to their community. Giving back included educating the community about the culture of African Americans and how to interact with them, supporting the community through volunteer service, making a difference, and mentoring. The participants emphasized leadership and several talked about how the Black Greeks were the leaders on campus or were the mover and shakers on campus. They were the ones advocating for the African American student community. Like collaborative relationships, giving back is connected to academic achievement through mentoring other members and assisting them with their academics.

**Familial relationships.** Three of the participants talked about how they were influenced by their father's involvement in their fraternity. Others had family members

who were members of other BGLOs, also. Another participant talked about how he pledged despite experiencing opposition from his mother. His mother was against him joining a fraternity and he did not tell her until his neophyte presentation. He asked her to come, but did not tell her what it was truly about.

**Identity.** Membership also impacted the identity development of the participants. One participant became in touch with his African American cultural heritage through his fraternity experiences. For this participant, fraternity also meant male empowerment. For him, his fraternity connects him with other men and empowers men. Other participants discussed how being in a BGLO positively impacted their identity as a man and connected them with other like-minded men.

**Image.** Membership in a BGLO also impacted the image the participants presented. Participants emphasized how their level of professionalism improved and how the members of the overall campus community had their eyes upon them because of their fraternal affiliation. Because they were under public scrutiny, they felt obligated to exude success academically and socially. They were the leaders and at the forefront of being change agents for their university. Some commented how others viewed and treated them differently once they pledged and other's expectations of them changed. Some were looked upon more favorably and others were held more accountable because of their Greek affiliation.

These themes are associated with the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students at PWIs and how their Greek affiliation impacts those outcomes. All but two of the participants in phase one (participants BGLO006 and BGLO020) reported a positive impact on their overall college experiences. For most of

the participants, their most memorable college experience centered around their fraternity experiences, whether it is their probate show, the image associated with being in a BGLO fraternity, and/or the bond/network resulting from membership.

### **Recommendations for PWIs**

Participants in offered a plethora of recommendations for PWIs to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. These institutions could exude a deeper level of empathy for African American male students. Institutional support for diversity is another recommendation participants suggested. Helping to create a sense of belonging for African American male students and including them in the overall campus culture are other strategies the participants talked about. Universities also could ensure the proper resources are available for African American male students to succeed.

**Empathy.** Predominantly White Institutions have to show a deeper level of empathy for African American male students. Empathy manifests itself as the university faculty and staff showing that they genuinely care about African American male students and their success while in college. College student personnel could get to know African American males and seek to understand the history, plight, and needs of African American males. They do not believe there is one way to assist students, but because of being empathic, college student personnel could implement resources tailored to African American male students. Having empathy for African American male students also manifests itself as valuing the presence and contribution of these students to the overall campus culture. With empathy, institutional support for diversity is another recommendation for PWIs.

**Diversity.** The participants talked about the importance of having a diverse student body and its impact on their college experiences and those of African American males in general. Many of the participants chose a PWI over a HBCU because of the diversity of the student body. Diversity gave the participants a broader perspective and prepares them for a global society. They also talked about the importance of having a diverse faculty and staff, which could serve as a support structure for students of color. Institutional support for diversity comes in the form of deliberate recruitment of students, faculty, and staff of color, having offices devoted to students of color, and sponsoring programming focusing on the needs of students of color. This support also means creating, supporting, and sustaining majors such as African or Africana studies. College student personnel could also help create a sense of belonging for African American students.

**Sense of belonging.** Participants talked about feeling invisible and not being noticed at PWIs. They talked about desiring a sense of belonging, feeling at home, and the university being a good fit for them. The participants talk about how their membership in their fraternities helped create this sense of belonging. The fraternity was like a family or a home for them, which helped them connect to the campus at-large. PWIs could allow these organizations to be chartered on campus, support them financially, and include them in the campus culture. Also, PWIs need to value African American male students and their impact on the overall campus culture; do not just use them for their athletic abilities and be mindful of the messages sent to students regarding their worth and usefulness to campus. One example is not suggesting that all African

American men are from poverty or academically inferior. Inclusion is associated with this sense of belonging.

**Inclusion.** PWIs must create an inclusive environment for African American male students. When BGLOs are present on campus, PWIs could showcase them during the opening week of the university and other university events. BGLOs and students of color should be included in the university literature and on the university website. PWIs have to be intentional about the engagement of students in BGLOs and intentional about educating potential members. Another recommendation is ensuring African American male students have adequate resources available to succeed.

**Resources.** PWIs must make sure that African American males have access to the resources needed to ensure their success in college. One resource that was mentioned repeatedly was finances. Finances should be in the form of scholarships (merit- and need-based), money for books, room and board, or other types of financial resources that need not be repaid. Another resource is having an office devoted to students of color and their needs. This office should be staffed by supportive staff members, sponsor programming, mentoring, and academic support. This office should also have financial support from the university and have financial resources for students. A diverse and supportive faculty and staff is another resource that PWIs can implement to improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. Faculty and staff must be willing to interact and collaborate with student organizations (i.e.—BGLOs). Another resource is having student organizations for African American male students, like BGLOs and supporting these organizations. Not only is programming from the diversity office important, but having programming from various sources focused on male students

of color is crucial to their success. Many of the participants talked about programs that allowed them to visit campus, spend the night on campus, and possibly take some classes before the school year started. These programs were crucial to them coming to college, getting acclimated to the campus culture, and being successful in college. Some participants attended their universities because of the majors offered, the family atmosphere, the location, and the beauty of the campus.

The results of this study indicate that membership in a BGLO has a positive impact on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students at PWIs. The participants also offered several recommendations for PWIs to improve these outcomes for African American male students. There were no regional differences found, nor were there any differences between current undergraduate members and those who had already graduated. The results also paralleled the existing literature. The next section details the similarities between what the primary author found and literature relevant to this study and any new knowledge he found.

### **The Literature**

The findings of this study mirror the findings in existing literature. Some themes found in this study that are found in the literature are as follows: diversity, collaborative relationships, resources, identity, image, achievement, giving back, sense of belonging, accountability, fraternity membership, student engagement, and reason for pledging. This section discusses how each of these themes relates to what is found in the literature relevant to this study.

#### **Diversity**

The participants talked about how diversity was one of the reasons why they chose their respective universities, how having a diverse student body, faculty and staff enhances their learning environment, gives them a broader perspective, and prepares them for a global society. Diversity among the faculty and staff enables students to have a support system and someone who looks like them that can hold them accountable for their actions. The literature reveals that diversity allows for cognitive development, gives students the opportunity to learn from various cultures, see various points of view, creates opportunities for social support, role models, and mentoring, allows for greater levels of satisfaction with their university, and trains students for a global society (Bollinger, 2007; Gurin et al., 2002; Rudenstine, 2001; Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). The participants also talked about how they benefited from institutional support for diversity, which is similar to what Lundberg (2010) found. Thus, diversity and institutional support for diversity have a positive impact on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students.

### **Collaborative Relationships**

Forging collaborative relationships with their fraternity brothers, other students of color, and other members of the campus community (i.e., White Greeks, other student organizations, and faculty/staff) provided benefits for the participants and membership in their respective fraternities facilitated the establishment of these relationships. These findings align with findings indicating that students benefit from engagement in diversity-related activities. These students report a greater knowledge of and ability to connect with persons of different races and cultures, better academic outcomes, and increased persistence (Denson & Chang, 2009; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Umbach & Kuh,

2006). Robertson and Mason (2008) posited that faculty/staff relationships correlated with the academic success of African American male students, which was supported by what the participants said in their interviews. My participants also talked about the bond created with older members of their fraternity, which correlated with the work of McClure (2006b). McClure's participants reported that membership established a social network after college that fosters a supportive environment that increases college success.

### **Resources**

The participants proffered several suggestions for resources to improve the persistence and success of African American male students. These resources include finances, programs devoted to African American male students, diversity within the student body and faculty/staff, and having offices devoted to students of color. They also talked about supporting student organizations focusing on students of color. These suggestions parallel findings proffered by Harper and Harris (2012), Robertson and Mason (2008), and Zell (2011). Specifically, the participants talked about how their fraternities were impactful not only on their own college experiences, but to the campus at-large. PWIs should provide resources to support and sustain these organizations. Harper (2006b) posited a similar suggestion in that BGLOs provide social support and academic encouragement and universities should support these organizations and increase African American male interest in membership.

### **Identity**

According to the literature, racial identity development influences the educational experiences of African American students at a PWI (Baber, 2012). The results in this study build upon this study in that participants reported their fraternity membership

impacted their racial identity development, gender identity development, and assists in male empowerment. Harper and Quaye (2007) found that leadership and student development helped African American male students become comfortable with their own Blackness, and this study builds upon this premise. The findings that fraternity membership impacted gender identity development and assists in male empowerment parallel those found by McClure (2006a).

### **Image**

Image is another theme that was identified as it related to how the campus community viewed the participants and fraternity showcasing. Being in their fraternity had a positive impact on the participants' image and how others viewed them, especially when they were in leadership positions. Some participants talked about their probate/neophyte presentations, step shows, and strolling. They also talked about the fraternity improved their professionalism and visibility in the community. These findings were similar to those of Singleton (2010), who studied male BGLOs at PWIs. Singleton found that BGLO showcasing had a positive impact on the success of African American males at PWIs.

### **Achievement**

The participants talked about how their fraternity membership pushed them to excel academically, helped them to persevere through adversity, and pursue graduate and terminal degrees. For the participants in this study, membership had a positive impact on their academic outcomes. Some participants learned better study habits and time management. Some participants either brought up their grades or maintained their good grades. They gained a greater sense of academics and scholarship. These findings are

related to literature stating that the presence of BGLOs is positively correlated with the retention/academic success of African American male students at PWIs, peer support through involvement in student organizations plays a role in the academic success of high-achieving African American male students at PWIs, and membership in BGLOs positively impacts the academic outcomes of African American male students at PWIs (Harper, 2006b; McClure, 2006b; Robertson & Mason, 2008).

In essence, the fraternity increased the participants' level of self-efficacy, which is similar to DeFreitas (2012) who found a positive relationship between higher levels of self-efficacy and better academic achievement. Some challenges students of color face are meeting the academic demands of coursework and integrating into the academic life of college (Landry, 2003). The participants talked about facing these barriers, but being a part of their fraternity helped the participants address and withstand these challenges to getting their education. The participants also benefited from being held accountable by their fraternity brothers, which is one of themes Zell (2006) found when he investigated B2B peer groups.

Participants also talked about how membership in their fraternity equips them with tools they can use in college and after they have graduated, which correlates with a finding by Harper & Harris (2006). Another aspect of this achievement is found when the participants talked about how being involved in their fraternities and involvement in student organizations allows them to apply what they have learned in the classroom. This aspect parallels with the finding that membership facilitates positive gains in knowledge application (Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994).

Another aspect of achievement is that fraternity membership led some of the participants to pursue graduate and terminal degrees. Membership opened their eyes to graduate school education. Involvement helped many of them pursue graduate education and foray into their current career. Although previous literature mentioned how membership in a BGLO at a PWI improves the possibility of success after college (McClure, 2006b), no studies allude specifically to membership in a BGLO leading to pursuing graduate and terminal degrees.

### **Giving Back**

The participants saw fraternity membership as a way to give back to the African American community and the campus community. Giving back is a key principle of Black fraternal organizations (Hughey, 2008). One aspect of giving back was mentoring fellow members of their fraternity and mentoring young African American males. Peer support positively impacted the academic and psychosocial outcomes of my participants, which parallels what is found in previous literature (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Grier-Reed et al., 2008; Harper, 2006b; Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2011; Singleton, 2010; Zell, 2011). The participants also talked about mentoring young African American males and how they would gladly recommend their universities to young African American males. Their fraternity gave them the opportunity to support their young counterparts. Some participants suggested that school counselors partner with the Black Greek fraternities to mentor young African American males, which correlates with the work of Moore and Ratchford (2007) in that the students chronicled in that article benefited from being mentored by members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Another aspect of giving back was educating the campus culture about African Americans and African American culture. Fraternity membership helped participants serve their campus community by being cultural emissaries, an example of voluntary race representation. Landry (2003) posited that being a cultural emissary was a barrier that students of color face at PWIs, whereas Harper (2007) found that voluntary race representation positively affected classroom participation. How this study differs is that being a cultural emissary is applied to the overall college experience and not just to classroom participation and being a cultural emissary is not seen as a barrier to college success.

Leadership is another way the participants gave back to their community. Many of the participants were leaders in their chapters, the fraternity at-large, the NPHC, and in other organizations. They also equated BGLO with leadership and said a majority of African American students in leadership positions on their campuses were members of BGLOs. These results parallel Kimbrough (1995) in that he found members of BGLOs were more likely to hold leadership positions than students who were not members. Kimbrough (2003) also found that BGLOs create an outlet for leadership skill development. Henry (2012) found that leadership development was a positive influence of BGLO fraternity membership.

### **Sense of Belonging**

The literature suggests that some of the unique challenges students of color experience are isolation and alienation, establishing a sense of belonging, and creating a suitable niche in the social life of college (Landry, 2003; Mills-Novoa, 1999). The participants talked about feeling invisible and needing to feel a sense of belonging at their

universities. Because of their fraternity experiences, they were able to let the overall campus community know that they were present and gained notoriety because they were Black Greeks. They were able to experience that sense of belonging and become connected with their African American peers and the campus community at-large. This premise closely parallels the work of McClure (2006b) in that he found that membership in a BGLO fraternity at a PWI positively impacted the feelings the participants had toward each other, toward the university and toward Black history. McClure also posited that membership provides relationships with other fraternity members that counteract the alienation African American male student experience at PWIs, which is supported by the stories of my participants. As with McClure's participants, my participants also experienced a greater level of satisfaction with their college experience due to their fraternity membership.

### **Accountability**

Accountability emerged as the members holding each other accountable for their academic achievement, being responsible for the academic and psychosocial well-being of other members, and being responsible for the image of the fraternity. For the participants, accountability had a positive impact on their academic outcomes.

Accountability/responsibility was also found in the literature. Personal growth in the form of cultivating responsibility for others' achievement was found as a positive impact of membership in B2B peer groups for African American male college students (Zell, 2011). Harper (2007) found that collective responsibility (i.e., how individual grades impact the chapter's success, being a role model for other African American students, and responsibility for exuding a positive image of BGLOs on campus) had a positive

impact on the classroom participation of members of BGLOs at a PWI. Henry (2012) found that being held accountable by peers was a positive influence of being a BGLO fraternity, which is supported by the findings of this study.

### **Fraternity Membership**

While most of the participants proffered positive outcomes from fraternity membership, one participant talked about how his chapter was small and the members had to take on several roles to ensure the success of the chapter. Because of these extra roles and the work involved, his grades began to suffer, which resulted from competing priorities. Henry (2012) also found that competing priorities were a negative influence on the college experiences of African American males in BGLOs at a PWI.

### **Student Engagement**

Previous literature discussed how African American students involved themselves in several different organizations on campus like the Black student union, the NAACP, the NSBE, the university Gospel choir, and other minority student organizations (Harper, 2006a; Young, 2005). Membership in BGLOs also provides campus involvement and peer/social support (Harper, 2007; McClure, 2006b; Patton, Flowers, & Bridges, 2011). These findings are supported by the organizations in which the participants are involved. Other organizations with which the participants have affiliated include Student government, honor societies and other academically-related organizations, peer mentoring organizations, service-oriented organizations, orientation, pre-college programs, and athletic teams.

### **Reasons for Pledging**

Henry (2012) investigated the reasons why her participants joined their fraternities and found that they joined because of the support system gained through brotherhood, the fraternal identity and legacy of their fraternity, and connections with older members of BGLOs. Some reasons my participants decided to pledge included being around like-minded individuals, being around other men because of a lack of male role models, being a part of something bigger than themselves, experiencing a sense of belonging, the brotherhood/bond they saw on campus, the friendship, and networking. These reasons parallel Henry's finding that her participants pledged because of the support system they gained from the fraternity. Other reasons the participants mentioned were the fraternity's motto and ideals, their programming, their sense of service to the community, being a change agent for the community, their image on campus, and the legacy of notable members of the fraternity. These reasons are closely related to the identity and legacy of their fraternity. My participants also talked about having family members who were members of their and other fraternities, which influenced them to pledge. They also had mentors who were members of a BGLO. Having a connection to family members and mentors mirrors Henry's finding regarding having personal connections with older members, but goes a step further by considering the legacy perspective. Two reasons that were not found in previous literature were having to prove to oneself that he could endure the pledge process and going to see Spike Lee's movie *School Daze*.

These findings closely mirror what is found in existing relevant literature. The findings also provide knowledge not found in the existing literature. Previous literature does not mention the impact that membership in BGLOs has on the pursuit of graduate

and terminal degrees. Previous literature refers to being a cultural emissary as a deterrent to classroom participation. This study shows that being a cultural emissary is a positive result of membership in BGLO fraternities. The participants mentioned other organizations with which they were affiliated that were not previously mentioned in existing literature. The participants also mentioned other reasons why they pledged like being a legacy, having to prove oneself, and after watching Spike Lee's movie *School Daze*. Like the previous literature, this study has its limitations. The next section discusses the limitations and difficulties the primary author encountered executing this study.

### **Limitations and Difficulties**

#### **Limitations**

Limitations for this study include researcher bias and inexperience, participant bias, and sample size. One bias is the primary researcher's preference for PWIs and Greek life at a PWI. In order to address this bias, he elicited the assistance of one of my peers to help with the data analysis and provide an objective voice throughout the research process. Another bias is his lack of experience with qualitative research. In order to address this bias, he took three doctoral-level courses in qualitative methods and used several sources to develop my research methods, procedures, and data analysis/interpretation. He also has a faculty mentor who is an expert at qualitative and quantitative research methods. Another bias is his preference for Greek life in general. As a result of this bias, his questions were all positive and there was no negative case analysis regarding the participants who had negative experiences in their fraternities.

Participant bias is another limitation of this study. This bias manifested itself in phase one because he is a member of a BGLO as were his participants. Because of their membership in a BGLO, the participants may be compelled to cite only positive experiences with their fraternities. This bias may be more pronounced with members of his fraternity. Another aspect of this bias is that the participants could already be high-achievers. Being high-achievers could account for positive academic outcomes and achieving graduate and terminal degrees. Involvement in student organizations, working in Student Affairs, and/or aspiring to work in Student Affairs is another aspect of this bias. In order to address this bias, the primary author asked the participants to be honest in their answers and made sure to let them know that their authentic stories were valued and confidential. He also made sure there was little to no bias in my questions. The research team reviewed my questions, as well. In the future, he could mask his Greek affiliation. Because of his sampling procedures (i.e., using Facebook and LinkedIn groups devoted to Greek membership and/or Student Affairs), his Greek membership was at the forefront and was made known to his participants.

Another limitation is that the primary author did not account for athletic participation, which may have impacted the findings for two of the participants. Future research should be deliberate in not including participants who were involved in athletics. Even though he wanted to recruit members who crossed at the universities they attended, the primary author had one participant who cross-pledged and another who had to pledge in a city-wide chapter. Future research will be deliberate about ensuring that participants pledged at the universities they attended.

Another limitation that involves both researcher bias and participant bias is the primary author's Greek affiliation. He did not mask his Greek affiliation in order to facilitate getting participants more easily. Because of his Greek affiliation, participants in the study could have tailored their answers to insure a positive impact resulting from BGLO membership. The effect of this bias may have been stronger among members of his fraternity and among those affiliated with his university. While having a research team helped to reduce this bias, future research could benefit from the researcher either masking his/her Greek affiliation or not being affiliated at all.

### **Difficulties**

The primary author faced some difficulties while executing this study. One difficulty was the use of technology. All but two of the interviews were done via Skype. There were times when the signal was weak, which caused interruptions in the video and audio. The audio equipment made some of the answers inaudible and the program used to record the Skype interviews distorted the audio output. In order to overcome these difficulties, he used two different recording devices and engaged in member checking to fill in the gaps produced by technical difficulties. Member checking presented another difficulty because some participants did not respond with any changes to their transcripts.

Another difficulty was entering the field. The primary researcher's goal was to have four representatives from each of the NPHC fraternities and have an equal number of current undergraduate members and graduate members. Some potential participants did not have Skype, which prevented them from participating. Some schools required that he go through their IRB process, which did not fit within his timeline of completion. Some students did not have the time to participate in the study. As a result, the sample

included five members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., five members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., three members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., three members of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., and four members of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. Six participants were still in school and the others had already graduated from college.

Even though this study has limitations and difficulties, the findings are still relevant, add to the existing literature, and have implications for the field. There are several areas of research that can extend this research, as well. The next section discusses the implication of this research and ideas for further study.

### **Implications**

This study has implications for counselors on college campuses. Counselors on college campuses could get involved with the admissions process. Counselors on college campuses could become knowledgeable about BGLOs. They could initiate mentoring programs and build partnerships with undergraduate members of BGLO fraternities to mentor and tutor African American male students. They could be more visible on campus and collaborate on programming with BGLOs or introduce themselves to African American students. They could also establish support groups for African American male students. Counselors on college campuses could serve as advisors for BGLOs or other diversity-related organizations on campus. Counseling center administrators could be deliberate about hiring a diverse counseling center staff. Another implication is for persons with a counseling background to work in various areas of student affairs. If counselors are more visible and become involved with the African American students, they could help demystify the counseling process for African American students and they

may be more compelled to seek out counseling services. Doing so could lower the stigma associated with seeking counseling services experienced by African American students. If African American males have positive experiences with counselors, they may be compelled to foray into counseling in order to give back to the profession and provide the same support for younger African American males they received. My study also has implications for Greek life.

This study revealed that membership in BGLOs has a positive impact on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students and the presence of BGLOs has a positive impact on the campus at-large. It also adds to the existing literature regarding fraternity membership and provides new knowledge regarding this phenomenon. Findings like these can overshadow the negative image of BGLOs portrayed in the media due to hazing events. BGLOs also benefit from these findings in that they show PWIs that these organizations have merit and can assist them in improving the persistence and success of African American male students. BGLOs could be allowed to charter chapters at PWIs without these organizations and support and sustain these organizations to provide a support structure for African American male students. PWIs with BGLOs could use these findings to develop ways to integrate these organizations into the overall campus culture and showcase them, thus showing they are aware of the impact of these organizations on the campus at-large.

Another implication for higher education and BGLOs concerns counselors' and administrators' views of BGLOs. One participant talked about how one of the administrators at his university disliked Black Greeks and she wanted to get rid of them. These findings and findings from future studies like this could inform the fields of

Counseling and Student Affairs of the positive impact that BGLOs have on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. These findings may improve the image of BGLOs and change opinions held by counselors and administrators on at PWIs. With these implications, there are several directions for further research.

### **Future Research**

The primary author would like to extend this research to include a larger sample of undergraduate members and compare the findings to existing NSSE data. He would also like to create a scale that measures fraternity/sorority satisfaction based on data from my qualitative study and from NSSE data. Another direction would be using Latino Critical Race Theory and Grounded Theory to measure the impact that membership in Latino Greek-letter Organizations has on the academic and psychosocial outcomes of Latino male college students. One finding that he wants to explore further is how membership in BGLOs impacts the racial identity development of undergraduate members at PWIs. Using Cross' Theory of Nigrescence and the Cross Racial Identity Scale (Cross, 1971; Cross & Vandiver, 2001), he wants to measure the correlation between membership in BGLOs and the racial identity development of African American males at PWIs. Lastly, several of the participants either work in student affairs or aspire to work in student affairs. He would like to investigate the correlation between Greek affiliation and aspirations to work in student affairs. Two of the participants in this study indicated that their fraternity experiences were negative. He would like to perform a negative case analysis and explore others who have had negative experiences within their fraternities or if membership as had a negative impact on their overall college experiences.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study reveal that membership in BGLOs positively impacts the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American males at PWIs. They also reveal that the presence of BGLOs has a positive impact on the overall campus culture at-large. The role of college student personnel is to provide academic and psychosocial support for African American male students and several strategies were suggested to help PWIs improve the persistence and success of these students. While this study had limitations and difficulties, the results are valuable nonetheless. Unlike the studies by Singleton (2010) and Henry (2012), the primary author was able to have representation from all five of the NPHC fraternities, have a representative sample from various regions of the country, and include members who had already graduated from college.

## Appendix 1. The Interview Protocol

1. What initially drew you to your university?
2. How likely are you to recommend or discourage another African American male to attend your university?
3. What was your most memorable experience while in college?
4. What impact, if any, does the presence of BGLOs have on your university at-large?
5. What impact, if any, do your fraternity experiences have on your overall college experiences?
6. How, if at all, have your experiences in the fraternity affected your desire to remain at your university until you graduate?
7. What does fraternity mean to you?
8. What recommendations, if any, do you have for counselors or school personnel to assist African American male students to attend college?
9. What recommendations, if any, do you have for PWIs to make the campus culture more welcoming and receptive to BGLOs and male students of color?
10. Is there anything else you thought I should have asked or anything you would like to add to your answers?



Table 1 Participant Demographics

Code Name	Fraternity	Crossing Date	Prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Reason for pledging	Alma Mater	Year Graduated
BGLO001	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2013	He had no prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged to become more in touch with his cultural and gender identity	Mid-sized, public liberal arts and sciences university in the Southeast	Spring 2015
BGLO002	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2003	He had very little knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because of the friendship he forged with some of the members	Mid-sized, private research university in the Northeast	Spring 2005
BGLO003	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2009	His knowledge came from his parents who are both Greek-affiliated	Pledged because of his mentors in college were members of his organization and his father is a member	Large, public research university in the Southeast	Spring 2012
BGLO004	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 1999	He had extensive knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because he saw Spike Lee's <i>School Daze</i>	Mid-sized, public research university in the Midwest	Fall 1999
BGLO005	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Fall 2003	He had no real knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because of the contribution to the overall campus culture made by members of BGLOs through their involvement and leadership; the image exuded by members of his fraternity	Large, public research university in the Midwest	Spring 2005
BGLO006	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity Inc.	Spring 2008	He had no prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because of the brotherhood and service to the community	Large, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region	Fall 2010

<b>Code Name</b>	<b>Fraternity</b>	<b>Crossing Date</b>	<b>Prior knowledge of The Divine Nine</b>	<b>Reason for pledging</b>	<b>Alma Mater</b>	<b>Year Graduated</b>
BGLO007	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2013	He had very little knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because he liked the image the fraternity members portrayed on campus	Large, public research university in the South	Still in school
BGLO008	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2004	He had no prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because of the image of his fraternity and the desire to be a change agent for the community	Large, public research university in the Midwest	Spring 2008
BGLO009	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2009	He gained knowledge from family members who were members of his fraternity and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Pledged because of the influence, brotherhood, opportunity, and greatness of his organizations	Mid-sized, public research university in the South	Spring 2012
BGLO010	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2009	He know about The Divine Nine through their service to the community	Pledged because of the networking	Small, public liberal arts university in the Northwest	Spring 2011
BGLO011	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc.	Fall 2010	He only knew of the basic aspects he learned from being a student at his university	Pledged because of the values of his fraternity and the fraternity's image on campus	Same as BGLO007	Spring 2013
BGLO012	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2008	He had extensive knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because he had several family members in his fraternity	Same as BGLO006	Spring 2010
BGLO013	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2012	He gained knowledge from family members who were members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and what he saw in the media	Pledged because of the bond, the brotherhood, and the motto of his organization	Large, public research university in the Midwest	Spring 2015

Code Name	Fraternity	Crossing Date	Prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Reason for pledging	Alma Mater	Year Graduated
BGLO014	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Fall 2007	He gained knowledge from his extensive research	Pledged because of the connection to other likeminded men and the fraternity's emphasis on achievement	Small, private liberal arts university in the Midwest	Spring 2009
BGLO015	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 1995	He gained knowledge from the members of the NPHC on his campus and in his home town and he has worked with each NPHC organization	Pledged because of the brotherhood, to prove to himself that he could endure the pledge process, and because of Spike Lee's <i>School Daze</i>	Large, public research university in the Northeast	Spring 2012
BGLO016	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Fall 2003	He gained knowledge from his uncles who were all members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Pledged to join other African American males at his university and the lifelong commitment to his fraternity	Same as BGLO009	Spring 2006
BGLO017	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2011	He gained knowledge because his father is a member of his fraternity and has family members in Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.	Pledged because of the love for his organization instilled in him by his father	Same as BGLO009	Spring 2012
BGLO018	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2011	He had prior knowledge because of the famous members of his organization and his grandfather was a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Pledged because of the community service, his fraternity's national programs, and his father is a member of his fraternity.	Same as BGLO013	Spring 2014

<b>Code Name</b>	<b>Fraternity</b>	<b>Crossing Date</b>	<b>Prior knowledge of The Divine Nine</b>	<b>Reason for pledging</b>	<b>Alma Mater</b>	<b>Year Graduated</b>
BGLO019	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2013	He did not have much knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because he saw members of his organization excelling while he was growing up	Large, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region	Spring 2014
BGLO020	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	Fall 2013	He did not have much knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because he wanted to be a part of something bigger than himself and to feel a sense of belonging	Same as BGLO019	Fall 2014

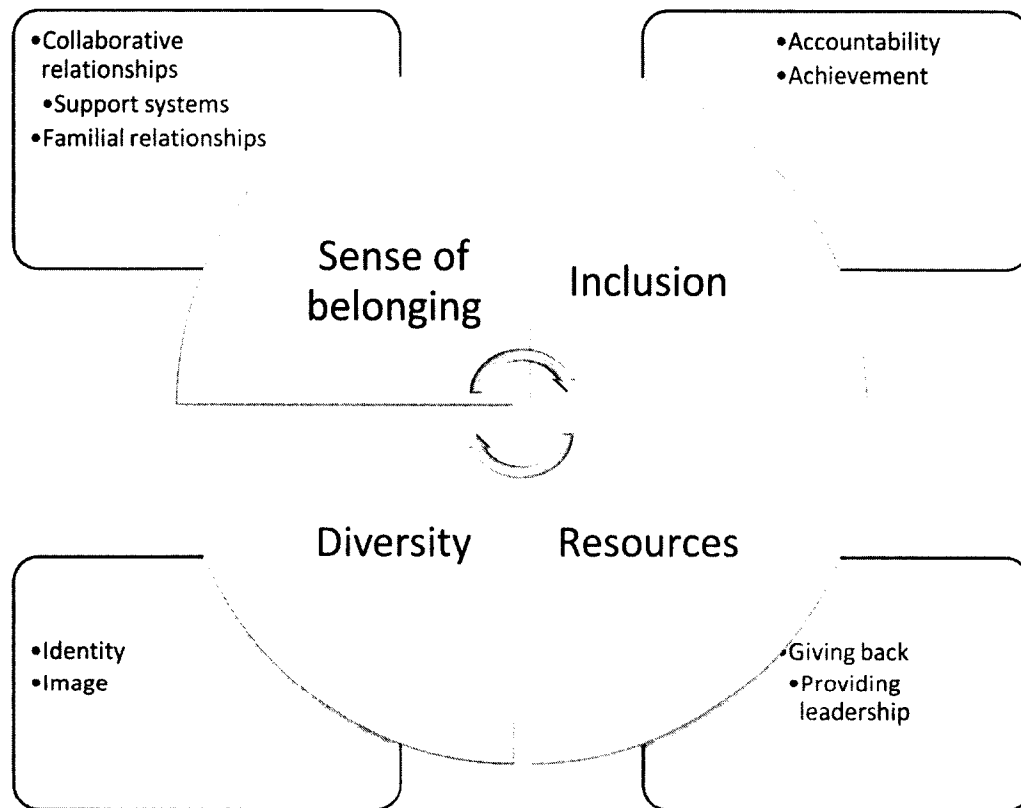
Table 2 Participant Involvement

<b>Code Name</b>	<b>Fraternity</b>	<b>Student Involvement</b>	<b>Leadership Positions</b>
BGLO001	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	Cougar Excursion Freshman Transition Program Charleston 40 Student Tour Guide Association Student Government Association Call Me MISTER Male Multicultural Teacher Scholarship Program Student Ambassadors	Counselor, Upward Bound Summer Component Facilitator, Cougar Excursion 2013 Recruitment Chair, 2014 Cougar Excursion Executive Board Recording Secretary/Social Media Chair of his chapter
BGLO002	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Men's Basketball Team Black Student Union Each One Reach One	Captain, Men's Basketball Team Vice Polemarch, Kappa Alpha Psi
BGLO003	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Black Student Union National Accountant Black Association Greek Week Committee Order of Omega	NPHC President NPHC Treasurer Greek Week Treasurer Keeper of Records of his chapter Historian of his chapter University Transition Opportunities Program Mentor
BGLO004	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Football Team Caribbean Student Association NAACP	
BGLO005	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Organization for Black Unity NAACP Gospel Choir Peer Mentor	Vice President of his chapter Director of Educational Activities of his chapter Often asked to serve on panel discussions and represent the university when minority high school students visited
BGLO006	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	N/A	N/A
BGLO007	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	Minority Pre-Med Club Honors College University Housing STEM Programming Assistant African American Male Initiative	President of his chapter Treasurer of his chapter
BGLO008	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Black Student Union My Brother's Keeper	President of his chapter Director of Intake of his chapter Secretary of his chapter
BGLO009	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Black Graduate Student Association (BSA) Student Government Association Collegiate 100 Black Men of America Minority Advisement Program	President BSA Secretary of his chapter SGA Senator

<b>Code Name</b>	<b>Fraternity</b>	<b>Student Involvement</b>	<b>Leadership Positions</b>
BGLO010	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Registry Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)	President of Black Student Union (3 years) Coordinator for Orientation Team—1 year Orientation Team Member—2 years ASL Club member
BGLO011	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc.	Gamma Iota Sigma – Risk Management & Insurance Organization Actuarial Science Organization NAACP	Chapter Keeper of Finance Chapter Keeper of Records & Seal 2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice District Representative – 7 <sup>th</sup> District of his fraternity
BGLO012	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	N/A	N/A
BGLO013	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	Todd A. Bell National Resource Center NPHC NAACP	Ambassador, Todd A. Bell National Resource Center NPHC President Vice President of his chapter Academic Chair of his chapter
BGLO014	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	NPHC Order of Omega Student Government Association Black Student Union Orientation ALANA Orientation CHOICE – a Peer Health Organization	Student Senate Student Welfare and Human Relations Commissioner (executive board position) Freshman Senator Off-Campus Senator Financial Advisory Board Member Black Student Union – Secretary NPHC Executive Board Member CHOICE – President, Vice President Orientation Leader – Turning Titan (University Wide-Orientation Week and ALANA Orientation (minority student pre-orientation) Vice Polemarch, Keeper of Records and Exchequer, and MOIP Chair of his chapter Member of the MOIP Committee of his fraternity's province
BGLO015	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	100 Black Men of his university Paul Robeson Club College Governing Association	President of his university student body President of his chapter Treasurer of 100 Black Men University Senator
BGLO016	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Black Student Alliance NAACP Minority Advisement Program (MAP)	Secretary, First-Year Experience Counselor

<b>Code Name</b>	<b>Fraternity</b>	<b>Student Involvement</b>	<b>Leadership Positions</b>
BGLO017	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Black Student Alliance Delta Sigma Pi Professional Fraternity D.I.M.E.S. Model Troupe S.I.F.E. Collegiate 100	President of Collegiate 100 Vice President of Collegiate 100 Keeper of Records of his chapter Residence Halls Community Leader
BGLO018	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Student-Alumni Council African-American Heritage Festival NPHC Undergraduate Admissions	Student Coordinator, Diversity Initiatives— Undergraduate Admissions President of his chapter NPHC Vice-President, Programming and Risk Management Orientation Leader
BGLO019	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Ebony Impact Gospel Choir Iota Lambda Sigma Honor Society STEM Club T.R.U.S.T. Engineering Club National Society of Black Engineers Portsmouth Mentoring Society Prince of Peace Church Youth Group	President of his chapter President-STEM Club President-Prince of Peace Church Youth Group
BGLO020	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	To Respect, Unite, Support, and Teach Community Service Organization LeaderShape Institute Monarch2Monarch	Public Relations Chair of his chapter Public Relations Chair of To Respect, Unite, Support, and Teach Community Service Organization Counselor for Freshman Summer Institute (2012 and 2013) Mentor in Learn and Earn Advantage Program, student worker program

Figure 1 The Empathy Wheel



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Appendix A-1. The Interview Protocol (Phase One)

11. What initially drew you to your university?
12. How likely are you to recommend or discourage another African American male to attend your university?
13. What was your most memorable experience while in college?
14. What impact, if any, does the presence of BGLOs have on your university at-large?
15. What impact, if any, do your fraternity experiences have on your overall college experiences?
16. How, if at all, have your experiences in the fraternity affected your desire to remain at your university until you graduate?
17. What does fraternity mean to you?
18. What recommendations, if any, do you have for counselors or school personnel to assist African American male students to attend college?
19. What recommendations, if any, do you have for PWIs to make the campus culture more welcoming and receptive to BGLOs and male students of color?
20. Is there anything else you thought I should have asked or anything you would like to add to your answers?

#### Appendix A-2. The Interview Protocol (Phase Two)

1. What initially drew you to work in higher education?
2. How effective to you believe your university is in affecting the persistence and success of African American male students?
3. What programs does your university have in place to improve the persistence and success of African American male students?
4. What do you perceive as the role for higher education personnel in improving the persistence and success of African American male students?
5. What do you perceive as the role of student organizations in improving the persistence and success of African American male students?
6. What recommendations do you have for universities to improve the persistence and success of African American male students?

## Appendix A-3. Informed Consent Form (Phase One)

**INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT****OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY**

**PROJECT TITLE:** A Grounded Theory of College Experiences and Outcomes of African American Males in Black Greek-Letter Organizations at Predominantly White Institutions (Phase One)

**INTRODUCTION**

The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES.

**RESEARCHERS****RESPONSIBLE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (RPI):**

Danica G. Hays, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, Chair, Department of Counseling and Human Services, Darden College of Education

**CO-INVESTIGATORS:**

David Julius Ford, Jr., MA, LPCA, NCC

Katherine Heimsch, Ed.S, NCC

Matthew Bonner, MS, NCC

**DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY**

Several studies have been conducted looking into the subject of Greek life and college experiences. None of them have explained the possible effects Greek membership may or may not have on the college experiences of African American male students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs).

You are invited to take part in Phase One of a research study exploring membership experiences within Black Greek-lettered Organizations (BGLOs) as it relates to the college experiences of African American male students at Predominantly White Institutions. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you will not be penalized for deciding not to participate or leaving the study before its completion. Any information obtained in the course of this study will be kept confidential. Also, the information and data obtained in the course of this study could be used in a future presentation, publication, or dissertation. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared unless disclosure is required by law. Data will be stored on a password-secured computer in a locked office at Old Dominion University.

The study entails data collection employing one method: an individual interview. The individual interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes each. Any audio and/or video

recordings will be destroyed immediately upon transcription. Only the principal investigator (Hays) and one co-investigator (Ford) will have access to these recordings.

### **RISKS AND BENEFITS**

**RISKS:** As you are talking about your experiences as a member of your organization, you may be at risk for experiencing some emotions. If you feel as though you need to discontinue your participation, please inform the investigator and you may discontinue without penalty to you or your organization.

**BENEFITS:** The results of phase one of this study could serve as a tool to help your organization expand to other Predominantly White Institutions, a recruitment tool for members for your organization, a recruitment tool for the institution, and show how the presence of Black Greek-lettered Organizations impacts the overall campus culture.

### **EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA**

Participants for this study should be 18 years of age or older. Undergraduate participants have to have pledged at the PWI he attends. Participants who are members of graduate or alumni chapters have to have pledged at the PWI he attended.

### **COSTS AND PAYMENTS**

The researchers want your decision about participating in this study to be absolutely voluntary. The only cost associated with participation in this study is your time commitment. The researchers cannot compensate you for participation in this study.

### **NEW INFORMATION**

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

### **WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE**

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study – at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Optional: The researchers reserve the right to withdraw your participation in this study, at any time, if they observe potential problems with your continued participation.

### **COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY**

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm, injury, or illness arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Dr. Danica Hays or Mr. David Ford at (757) 683-3326 or Dr. Ted Remley., Chair of the Darden College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee at (757) 683-3326 Dr.

George Maihafer the current IRB chair at (757) 683-6028 at Old Dominion University, who will be glad to review the matter with you.

### **VOLUNTARY CONSENT**

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Dr. Danica Hays, (757) 683-6692  
David Julius Ford, Jr., (757) 683-3326

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. Ted Remley., Chair of the Darden College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee at (757) 683-3326 or Dr. George Maihafer, the current IRB chair, at 757-683-6028, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research, at 757-683-3460.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

<b>Subject's Printed Name &amp; Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Parent / Legally Authorized Representative's Printed Name &amp; Signature (if applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Witness' Printed Name &amp; Signature (if applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>

### **INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT**

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

<b>Investigator's Printed Name &amp; Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
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## Appendix A-4. Informed Consent Form (Phase Two)

**INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT****OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY**

**PROJECT TITLE:** A Grounded Theory of College Experiences and Outcomes of African American Males in Black Greek-Letter Organizations at Predominantly White Institutions (Phase Two)

**INTRODUCTION**

The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES.

**RESEARCHERS****RESPONSIBLE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (RPI):**

Danica G. Hays, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, Chair, Department of Counseling and Human Services, Darden College of Education

**CO-INVESTIGATORS:**

David Julius Ford, Jr., MA, LPCA, NCC

Katherine Heimsch, Ed.S, NCC

Matthew Bonner, MS, NCC

**DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY**

Several studies have been conducted looking into the subject of Greek life and college experiences. None of them have examined the role college student personnel play in affecting the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students.

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring the role college student personnel play in improving the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you will not be penalized for deciding not to participate or leaving the study before its completion. Any information obtained in the course of this study will be kept confidential. Also, the information and data obtained in the course of this study could be used in a future presentation, publication, or dissertation. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared unless disclosure is required by law. Data will be stored on a password-secured computer in a locked office at Old Dominion University.

The study entails data collection employing one method: an individual interview. The individual interview will last approximately 10-15 minutes each. Any audio and/or video

recordings will be destroyed immediately upon transcription. Only the principal investigator (Hays) and one co-investigator (Ford) will have access to these recordings.

### **RISKS AND BENEFITS**

**RISKS:** As you are talking about your experiences working on a college campus, you may be at risk for experiencing some emotions. If you feel as though you need to discontinue your participation, please inform the investigator and you may discontinue without penalty to you or your university.

**BENEFITS:** The results of phase two of this study could serve as a tool to help predominantly White institutions to develop and implement strategies to improve the persistence and success rates of African American male students. The results will also uncover the role counselors and college student personnel have in improving the persistence and success rates of African American male students.

### **EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA**

Participants for this study should be 18 years of age or older. Participants must be employed as faculty or Student Affairs personnel at a predominantly White institution

### **COSTS AND PAYMENTS**

The researchers want your decision about participating in this study to be absolutely voluntary. The only cost associated with participation in this study is your time commitment. The researchers cannot compensate you for participation in this study.

### **NEW INFORMATION**

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

### **WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE**

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study – at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Optional: The researchers reserve the right to withdraw your participation in this study, at any time, if they observe potential problems with your continued participation.

### **COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY**

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm, injury, or illness arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Dr. Danica Hays or Mr. David Ford at (757) 683-3326 or Dr. Ted Remley., Chair of the Darden College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee at (757) 683-3326 Dr.

George Maihafer the current IRB chair at (757) 683-6028 at Old Dominion University, who will be glad to review the matter with you.

### **VOLUNTARY CONSENT**

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Dr. Danica Hays, (757) 683-6692  
David Julius Ford, Jr., (757) 683-3326

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. Ted Remley., Chair of the Darden College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee at (757) 683-3326 or Dr. George Maihafer, the current IRB chair, at 757-683-6028, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research, at 757-683-3460.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

<b>Subject's Printed Name &amp; Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Parent / Legally Authorized Representative's Printed Name &amp; Signature (if applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Witness' Printed Name &amp; Signature (if applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>

### **INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT**

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

<b>Investigator's Printed Name &amp; Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
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## Appendix A-6 The Demographic Form (Phase Two)

Name
University where you work
Type of university where you work (public, private, size, teaching, research, etc.)
Time working in higher education (include assistantships)
Current position
Previous positions, if any (include assistantships)
Greek affiliation, if any
Involvement in other organizations, if any
Advising experience (academic, career, student organizations)

## Appendix A-7 History of Greek Life

Significance	Additional Information
Phi Beta Kappa founded at the College of William and Mary	First organization to call itself a fraternity
Kappa Alpha Society founded at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	
Kappa Alpha Order founded at Union College	First social fraternal organization
Sigma Phi and Delta Phi founded at Union College	These two organizations joined Kappa Alpha Order to form the Union Triad
Beta Theta Phi founded in Miami, OH	
The Mystical Seven founded at Emory University	This organization was similar to a Greek-letter organization; the Beta Theta Pi Chapter at the University of Georgia claims ties to this organization
Phi Delta Theta founded in Miami, OH	
Sigma Chi founded in Miami, OH	These two organizations along with Beta Theta Pi formed the Miami Triad.
Alpha Kappa Nu founded at Indiana University-Bloomington; the organization lasted 14 months	The Inception Era of Black Fraternalism begins
Sigma Pi Phi Boulé founded May 15	Established as a graduate organization; first elite club for Black men; considered to be the first BGLO
Pi Gamma Omicron founded at The Ohio State University	Pi Gamma Omicron lasted only 14 months
Gamma Phi Fraternity founded on March 1 at Wilberforce University	
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., founded on December 4 at Cornell University	The Foundation Era of Black Fraternalism begins
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., founded January 15 at Howard University	
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., founded January 5 at Indiana University-Bloomington	Was originally founded as Kappa Alpha Nu; incorporated May 15, 1911, making it the first undergraduate fraternal organization incorporated by African Americans as a national body; name was changed to Kappa Alpha Psi April 15, 1915, as a result of a racial slur towards fraternity member Frank Summers.
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., founded November 17 at Howard University	First Black Greek fraternity founded at a HBCU.
Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., founded January 13 at Howard University	
Phi Beta Sigma, Inc., founded on January 14 at Howard University	Phi Beta Sigma and Zeta Phi Beta are the only constitutionally-bound brother and sister BGLOs.
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., founded January 16 at Howard University	
Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., founded November 12 at Butler University	The founding of Sigma Gamma Rho ended The Foundation Era of Black Fraternalism.
Gamma Phi disappeared from any written record at Wilberforce University	Sigma Pi Phi Boulé remains the only Black fraternal organization from The Inception Era to continue in existence.
Exclusionary clauses barring membership of African American males in traditionally White fraternal organizations were eliminated.	
Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., founded September 19 at Morgan State University	First BGLO founded by nontraditional students.

## Appendix A-8 A priori Codebook

Code	Subcategory	Meaning	Example
Knowledge		What the participant knew about the Divine Nine prior to coming to college	1:98-99: Prior to coming college, I didn't have any, any knowledge aside from various stereotypes. 2:98-99: I knew nothing. When I got here, I didn't know what fraternities and sororities were. 2:106-107: The only thing I've seen was "Stomp the Yard" prior to Greek life and before coming. So, didn't know anything at all.
Collegiate experience			
	Academics	The fraternity promotes academic excellence	1:441-442: It's made me want to work harder to hurry up and get out. 2:237-242: You know we are academic organizations first. So, we do have standards. You have to be selected. So, people will want to do the best they can do so they can have the best chance of getting in...I saw those minimum requirements and...I wanted to vastly exceed those...that did give me that extra oomph to put my GPA that semester.
	Involvement	Desire of the participant to get involved with an organization on campus	1:111-112: Um, well initially, my, I had a desire to join a lot of organizations being really involved.
Home			
	Distance from home	The distance the participant wanted to be away from home to attend college	1:52-53: I didn't really want to go to anywhere local. I was hoping to go somewhere else. 2:35: My family lives around here. A lot of my family is down here.
	Your chapter	The individual group of a fraternity at a university	2:324: This is like your chapter. This is your home, you know. 2:344: It is your home, you know. And we have alumni, you know, that have graduated from our chapter and when they come back, you know, you want to have good things to show them. 2:381-383: You know, how's my chapter doing since it is my home. You know, it's my home back when I crossed. So, how's it going now?

Code	Subcategory	Meaning	Example
Family			
	Unity	Sense of togetherness	The data collected from the visual data collection 2:267-272: But, with Greek life, it helps us with the unity thing...So, when you have things like Greek week and things like that, that helps build the unity and help them intermingle. 2:478-479: Like with the NPHC, you know, they do a good job with helping trying to unite people.
	Belonging	Feeling that you are a part of an organization or group	2:398: Family. With that family, you got a close group, you know of people. 2:403-406: they told us if you ever come up...for our Homecoming or anything here...just stay with us, kinda like a family when you're away from home. 2:406-408: My whole family is like four hours away. So, when I'm up here, it's comforting to know you got people who you can trust and you can chill with and kick it.
	Brotherhood	The bond between fraternity members	1:153-154: On of my friends from high school who is one of my line brothers, as well, he uh was telling me about the fraternity. 2:182-184: But, when you go to a school and be comfortable and be friends with a whole organization, just know you can have a home or a place to stay everywhere you go. 2:220-224: That brotherhood, they'll give you a place to sleep. You know if you don't have a dollar in your pocket, they're going to give you the dollar out of their pocket.

Code	Subcategory	Meaning	Example
	Friendly	How welcoming the current fraternity members were	<p>1:154-156: He uh was telling me about the fraternity who had somebody who was heading the table. So, I went over and talked to him. He was very friendly and extremely open.</p> <p>2:121-125: It was friendly to me. One of the brothers that was here on the yard when I first got here...he showed me around campus and introduced me to a lot of different people. You know, so it was real welcoming to me.</p>
	Networking	Being able to connect with other fraternity members, especially in the time of need	<p>1:466-467: You know it doesn't limit you. It allows for more possibilities, allows for you to be able to network, go farther, and do more.</p> <p>2:194-200: And also, with the networking, I didn't know nothing about it before I came out of my high school, but then every time I go back home, I see about thirty fraternity members...they all come up and talk to me and...tell me to take their number in case there's a potential job opportunity</p>
	Something bigger than you	Fraternity membership means being a part of something bigger than the individual	<p>1:462-466: When you're a part of a fraternity, it's more of a national and even in some aspects, a global type thing where it reaches out more than where you just are and it makes you, by being a part of that fraternity, makes you more than where you're just at.</p> <p>1:468-469: It's bigger than just you or than just your school.</p> <p>2:413-415: I also see it as something that you're representing like when you go outside, you're no longer representing yourself. You're representing something bigger than yourself.</p>

Code	Subcategory	Meaning	Example
Giving back	Networking	Being able to connect with other fraternity members, especially in the time of need	<p>1:466-467: You know it doesn't limit you. It allows for more possibilities, allows for you to be able to network, go farther, and do more.</p> <p>2:194-200: And also, with the networking, I didn't know nothing about it before I came out of my high school, but then every time I go back home, I see about thirty fraternity members...they all come up and talk to me and...tell me to take their number in case there's a potential job opportunity</p>
	Service	Being in the fraternity means giving back to the community	<p>2:246-247: The Greeks do good stuff and programs, community service, and throw live parties.</p> <p>2:586-587: You know one of our principles is to uplift and that's what we do.</p>
	Mentoring	Providing guidance	<p>2:543-549: That's the message I can give somebody that's trying to come in. they can think that school isn't for them. I can give them the other side...It's probably the best experience of a lifetime...they'll see what we're doing. They see themselves doing that, also. So, that's a little motivation.</p> <p>2:569-571: I just joined a mentoring program that a brother of mine...started at the local...elementary school.</p>
	Recruitment	Being in a fraternity can be a recruitment tool for others who may not think college is possible	<p>2:537-545: They talk to somebody who is actually on the campus that can come from the same background as them, that can let them know that it is possible...they can think that school isn't for them. I can give them the other side.</p> <p>2:572-574: I can probably show him a living example and make one person wanna go to college.</p>

Code	Subcategory	Meaning	Example
Commitment		Membership is a lifelong commitment	2:391-393: That's an on-going process for life. I have [fraternity name] on my arm. You know, that's for life. 2:644: fraternity... You know, it's for life.
Image		Outward appearance	2:140-143: They just fit me, like their prowess, their swagger... They could be at a party acting up, but at the same time, they're up the next morning in a business suit and tie. 2:499-500: We always have to uphold that image. 2:502-503: You're always forced to maintain that positive image so everything you do has to be good.

Table 1 Phase One Demographic Information

Code Name	Fraternity	Crossing Date	Prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Reason for pledging	Alma Mater	Year Graduated
BGLO001	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2013	He had no prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged to become more in touch with his cultural and gender identity	Mid-sized, public liberal arts and sciences university in the Southeast	Spring 2015
BGLO002	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2003	He had very little knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because of the friendship he forged with some of the members	Mid-sized, private research university in the Northeast	Spring 2005
BGLO003	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2009	His knowledge came from his parents who are both Greek-affiliated	Pledged because of his mentors in college were members of his organization and his father is a member	Large, public research university in the Southeast	Spring 2012
BGLO004	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 1999	He had extensive knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because he saw Spike Lee's <i>School Daze</i>	Mid-sized, public research university in the Midwest	Fall 1999
BGLO005	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Fall 2003	He had no real knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because of the contribution to the overall campus culture made by members of BGLOs through their involvement and leadership; the image exuded by members of his fraternity	Large, public research university in the Midwest	Spring 2005
BGLO006	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity Inc.	Spring 2008	He had no prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because of the brotherhood and service to the community	Large, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region	Fall 2010

Code Name	Fraternity	Crossing Date	Prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Reason for pledging	Alma Mater	Year Graduated
BGLO007	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2013	He had very little knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because he liked the image the fraternity members portrayed on campus	Large, public research university in the South	Still in school
BGLO008	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2004	He had no prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because of the image of his fraternity and the desire to be a change agent for the community	Large, public research university in the Midwest	Spring 2008
BGLO009	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2009	He gained knowledge from family members who were members of his fraternity and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Pledged because of the influence, brotherhood, opportunity, and greatness of his organizations	Mid-sized, public research university in the South	Spring 2012
BGLO010	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2009	He know about The Divine Nine through their service to the community	Pledged because of the networking	Small, public liberal arts university in the Northwest	Spring 2011
BGLO011	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc.	Fall 2010	He only knew of the basic aspects he learned from being a student at his university	Pledged because of the values of his fraternity and the fraternity's image on campus	Same as BGLO007	Spring 2013
BGLO012	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2008	He had extensive knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because he had several family members in his fraternity	Same as BGLO006	Spring 2010

Code Name	Fraternity	Crossing Date	Prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Reason for pledging	Alma Mater	Year Graduated
BGLO013	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2012	He gained knowledge from family members who were members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and what he saw in the media	Pledged because of the bond, the brotherhood, and the motto of his organization	Large, public research university in the Midwest	Spring 2015
BGLO014	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Fall 2007	He gained knowledge from his extensive research	Pledged because of the connection to other likeminded men and the fraternity's emphasis on achievement	Small, private liberal arts university in the Midwest	Spring 2009
BGLO015	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 1995	He gained knowledge from the members of the NPHC on his campus and in his home town and he has worked with each NPHC organization	Pledged because of the brotherhood, to prove to himself that he could endure the pledge process, and because of Spike Lee's <i>School Daze</i>	Large, public research university in the Northeast	Spring 2012
BGLO016	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Fall 2003	He gained knowledge from his uncles who were all members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Pledged to join other African American males at his university and the lifelong commitment to his fraternity	Same as BGLO009	Spring 2006

Code Name	Fraternity	Crossing Date	Prior knowledge of The Divine Nine	Reason for pledging	Alma Mater	Year Graduated
BGLO017	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2011	He gained knowledge because his father is a member of his fraternity and has family members in Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.	Pledged because of the love for his organization instilled in him by his father	Same as BGLO009	Spring 2012
BGLO018	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2011	He had prior knowledge because of the famous members of his organization and his grandfather was a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Pledged because of the community service, his fraternity's national programs, and his father is a member of his fraternity.	Same as BGLO013	Spring 2014
BGLO019	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Spring 2013	He did not have much knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because he saw members of his organization excelling while he was growing up	Large, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region	Spring 2014
BGLO020	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	Fall 2013	He did not have much knowledge of The Divine Nine	Pledged because he wanted to be a part of something bigger than himself and to feel a sense of belonging	Same as BGLO019	Fall 2014

Table 2 Phase Two Demographic Information

Code Name	Cultural Identity	University	Time working in higher education	Current position	Greek affiliation, if any
HESA001	African American female	Mid-sized, public research institution in the Mid-Atlantic region	8 years	Assistant Director of the Center for Multicultural Student Services	Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
HESA002	White female	Large, public research university in the Midwest	2.5 years	Assistant Director for Greek Life	Delta Delta Delta
HESA003	Latino male	Mid-sized, public liberal arts university in the Northeast	11 years	Assistant Director of Campus Activities	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
HESA004	African American male	Large, public research university in the South; same as BGLO007 and BGLO011	14 years	Associate Director of Housing	Delta Lambda Phi
HESA005	African American female	Large, public research university in the Midwest; same as BGLO013 and BGLO018	11 years	Director Sorority and Fraternity Life	Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
HESA006	African American male	Large, public university in the Midwest	2 years	Academic Adviser, Graduate Assistant	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
HESA007	White female	Large, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region; same as BGLO019 and BGLO020	3 years	Coordinator for Special Projects, Fraternity & Sorority Life, National Pan-Hellenic Council Advisor	Alpha Chi Omega
HESA008	African American female	Small, private liberal arts university in the South	9 years	Director of Multicultural Affairs	Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Code Name	Cultural Identity	University	Time working in higher education	Current position	Greek affiliation, if any
HESA009	White male	Large, public teach and research university on the West Coast	6 years	Sorority & Fraternity Life Coordinator	Phi Delta Theta
HESA010	White male	Mid-sized, public research university in the Northwest	25 years	Coordinator of Greek Life	Sigma Phi Epsilon

Table 3 Phase One Student Involvement

Code Name	Fraternity	Student Involvement	Leadership Positions
BGLO001	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	Cougar Excursion Freshman Transition Program Charleston 40 Student Tour Guide Association Student Government Association Call Me MISTER Male Multicultural Teacher Scholarship Program Student Ambassadors	Counselor, Upward Bound Summer Component Facilitator, Cougar Excursion 2013 Recruitment Chair, 2014 Cougar Excursion Executive Board Recording Secretary/Social Media Chair of his chapter
BGLO002	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Men's Basketball Team Black Student Union Each One Reach One	Captain, Men's Basketball Team Vice Polemarch, Kappa Alpha Psi
BGLO003	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Black Student Union National Accountant Black Association Greek Week Committee Order of Omega	NPHC President NPHC Treasurer Greek Week Treasurer Keeper of Records of his chapter Historian of his chapter University Transition Opportunities Program Mentor
BGLO004	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Football Team Caribbean Student Association NAACP	
BGLO005	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Organization for Black Unity NAACP Gospel Choir Peer Mentor	Vice President of his chapter Director of Educational Activities of his chapter Often asked to serve on panel discussions and represent the university when minority high school students came to visit
BGLO006	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	N/A	N/A
BGLO007	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	Minority Pre-Med Club Honors College University Housing STEM Programming Assistant African American Male Initiative	President of his chapter Treasurer of his chapter
BGLO008	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Black Student Union My Brother's Keeper	President of his chapter Director of Intake of his chapter Secretary of his chapter
BGLO009	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Black Graduate Student Association (BSA) Student Government Association Collegiate 100 Black Men of America Minority Advisement Program	President BSA Secretary of his chapter SGA Senator

<b>Code Name</b>	<b>Fraternity</b>	<b>Student Involvement</b>	<b>Leadership Positions</b>
BGLO010	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Registry Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)	President of Black Student Union (3 years) Coordinator for Orientation Team--1 year Orientation Team Member--2 years ASL Club member
BGLO011	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc.	Gamma Iota Sigma – Risk Management & Insurance Organization Actuarial Science Organization NAACP	Chapter Keeper of Finance Chapter Keeper of Records & Seal 2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice District Representative – 7 <sup>th</sup> District of his fraternity
BGLO012	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	N/A	N/A
BGLO013	Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.	Todd A. Bell National Resource Center NPHC NAACP	Ambassador, Todd A. Bell National Resource Center NPHC President Vice President of his chapter Academic Chair of his chapter
BGLO014	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	NPHC Order of Omega Student Government Association Black Student Union Orientation ALANA Orientation CHOICE – a Peer Health Organization	Student Senate Student Welfare and Human Relations Commissioner (executive board position) Freshman Senator Off-Campus Senator Financial Advisory Board Member Black Student Union – Secretary NPHC Executive Board Member CHOICE – President, Vice President Orientation Leader – Turning Titan (University Wide-Orientation Week and ALANA Orientation (minority student pre-orientation) Vice Polemarch, Keeper of Records and Exchequer, and MOIP Chair of his chapter Member of the MOIP Committee of his fraternity's province
BGLO015	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	100 Black Men of his university Paul Robeson Club College Governing Association	President of his university student body President of his chapter Treasurer of 100 Black Men University Senator
BGLO016	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Black Student Alliance NAACP Minority Advisement Program (MAP)	Secretary, First-Year Experience Counselor

Code Name	Fraternity	Student Involvement	Leadership Positions
BGLO017	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Black Student Alliance Delta Sigma Pi Professional Fraternity D.I.M.E.S. Model Troupe S.I.F.E. Collegiate 100	President of Collegiate 100 Vice President of Collegiate 100 Keeper of Records of his chapter Residence Halls Community Leader
BGLO018	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.	Student-Alumni Council African-American Heritage Festival NPHC Undergraduate Admissions	Student Coordinator, Diversity Initiatives--Undergraduate Admissions President of his chapter NPHC Vice-President, Programming and Risk Management Orientation Leader
BGLO019	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Ebony Impact Gospel Choir Iota Lambda Sigma Honor Society STEM Club T.R.U.S.T. Engineering Club National Society of Black Engineers Portsmouth Mentoring Society Prince of Peace Church Youth Group	President of his chapter President-STEM Club President-Prince of Peace Church Youth Group
BGLO020	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	To Respect, Unite, Support, and Teach Community Service Organization LeaderShape Institute Monarch2Monarch	Public Relations Chair of his chapter Public Relations Chair of To Respect, Unite, Support, and Teach Community Service Organization Counselor for Freshman Summer Institute (2012 and 2013) Mentor in Learn and Earn Advantage Program, student worker program

## VITA

David Julius Ford, Jr., obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Wake Forest University in 1998. Following this, he acquired a Master of Arts in Counseling from Wake Forest University in 2011. He is a National Certified Counselor and is under supervision for licensure in North Carolina. He is also an Approved Clinical Supervisor

He is a member of the American Counseling Association, the Association of Counselor Education and Supervision, the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Issues in Counseling, the American College Counseling Association, the North Carolina Counseling Association, and the Licensed Professional Counselor's Association of North Carolina. He has presented at state and national conferences on topics such as resident assistant preparation, multiculturalism, persistence and success of African American male college students, HIV/AIDS, and supervision. While at Old Dominion University, he acquired the National Board for Certified Counselors Minority Fellowship. Before, Mr. Bonner embarking upon a career in counselor education, he worked in residence life for five years