

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF MASCULINITY ON PEER
ACCOUNTABILITY IN FRATERNITIES

by

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ABSTRACT

SHAWN M. KNIGHT. A Phenomenological Study of The Influence of Masculinity on Peer Accountability in Fraternities. (Under the direction of DR. RYAN A. MILLER)

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of the social construct of masculinity on the fraternity members' experiences with accountability. This study focused on the methods fraternities used to hold their members accountable, how the members' behavior changes, and the impact masculinity had on accountability methods. This study is rooted in an understanding of the concept of masculinity and how it is often engrained deeply in the fraternity experience (Harris & Edwards, 2010; Harris & Harper, 2015). This study used document review to understand espoused expectations and accountability process. Additionally, four participants each from two different fraternity chapters participated in semi-structured interviews. This qualitative phenomenological study sought to understand the experience each member had with accountability in their fraternity.

After multiple rounds of coding, five themes were created encompassing the experiences fraternity members had with accountability: *formal accountability only a formality, herd mentality: informal expectations of the group, informal accountability is the real accountability, being a man prioritized, and culture and context set the tone*. The study largely found that masculinity had a strong influence over the accountability experience in the chapter. Additionally, informal accountability was used daily to enforce several informal expectations. Formal accountability and formal expectations, however, did not take priority in fraternities. The expanded understanding of accountability can be used by fraternity members and their advisors to help empower men to mitigate high-risk behavior. Doing so will be critical to ensuring fraternities remain a viable opportunity for undergraduate student involvement.

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To the participants who took time out of their lives to share very personal experiences with me, I will remember each of you and the stories you shared. While much can be said about the fraternity experience, I am confident that if the eight of you represent the future in Greek life, there is much to be excited about and the trajectory of fraternity is strong. I hope the rest of your time continues to be fulfilling and you can make the changes and impact you seek. I am also very

thankful for the gatekeeper of my study, who I'll call Tim for anonymity. Your continued commitment to helping me on your campus and removing many of the barriers that might have made this study more difficult does not go unnoticed and was critical to my success.

DEDICATION

As my fraternity would tell you, “Friendship is the sweetest influence.” I hold onto a hope that, this being true, we can use the influence of friendship to make positive changes in the lives of the people in our chapters that we call our *brothers*.

However, too many young men have died at the hands of their so-called friends and brothers. This dissertation is dedicated to all of these young men. While the list below could never be exhaustive, these are men whose story I feel connected to, as either members of my fraternity or those who I otherwise come in close contact with their families. This dissertation is dedicated to any effort I can make to create a better experience, where your loss is not forgotten, and the hope that no one else be subject to the death of a young, beautiful soul ever again at the hands of fraternity men.

Tucker Hipps

Max Gruever

Tim Piazza

Danny Santulli

Scott Krueger

Danny Daniels

Matt Fritzie

Michael Anderson

Dylan Hernandez

Collin Wiant

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Social fraternities have been a part of universities since 1825 after forming from the evolution of literary and honorary societies (Syrett, 2009; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). Today, fraternities are some of the largest entities for student involvement, taking in new members each year, with over 700,000 members (Pike, 2020; Rhoads, 1995). After new members are recruited, they learn about expectations, both formal and informal, through both a structured education program and informal socialization with existing members (Park et al., 2009; Sanday, 1990; Schutts & Shelley, 2014). Some of the biggest criticisms of the fraternity system stem from the myriad of issues that occur in fraternities, including illegal substance use, hazing, sexual misconduct, and excessive alcohol use (Durkin et al., 2005; Harper et al., 2005; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). The literature overwhelmingly indicates, when compared to non-members, fraternity members are more likely to engage in problematic behaviors (Caudill et al., 2006; Seabrook et al., 2018).

Fraternities, however, often brand themselves as values-based organizations designed to promote the growth and development of young men. Some national fraternities use naming schemes for their educational programs, aimed to evoke a positive perception of men associated with the organization. Examples include the “True Gentlemen,” “Building Balanced Men,” and “Men of Principle” (Beta Theta Pi, 2021; Sigma Alpha Epsilon, 2021; Sigma Phi Epsilon, 2021). Despite these initiatives to promote positive behavior and ideals among the members, serious injuries and deaths continue. For example, in fall 2019, four men died in connection with fraternity events inside a two-month window (Quintana, 2019). This statistic does not include the

countless other injuries, allegations, and investigations ongoing across the country that were never reported.

Unfortunately, these issues are not new to fraternities. Records show at least one person has died in connection with a fraternity event or activity every year for nearly half a century (Nuwer, 2021). Fraternities have systems in place to help train members how to handle some of these challenging situations (Foubert et al., 2006). Ideally, these programs aim to empower members to react to problematic behaviors to mitigate harm. However, inaction plagues these risky situations in fraternities.

When inaction occurs, fraternities have mechanisms they may choose to use to hold members accountable (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004). Responding to problematic behavior, or a lack thereof, can dramatically alter member behavior. Accountability for member behavior can come from many different sources, such as university disciplinary procedures, national fraternity responses, or chapter-specific formal or informal means to address a member's behavior (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004; Paterson, 2013). However, these systems of accountability do not always deter poor decision making nor are they always executed in line with the ideals of the fraternity. This study seeks to understand how participants' experiences with accountability may be impacted by the social construct of masculinity. Such an understanding could enable fraternity members and their support systems to improve the effectiveness of accountability systems.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the longevity of the college fraternity as a part of the university experience, there is much debate about the value of these organizations and the benefits and risks they bring to campus. On one end, many chapters engage in community service and philanthropy and provide leadership opportunities, brotherhood, and networking opportunities to thousands of college men

(Pike, 2020). However, research has shown that fraternity membership is linked to higher risk-taking behaviors, such as drinking and drug use, along with sexual misconduct and hazing (Caudill et al., 2006; Seabrook & Ward, 2019). As these issues have continued to plague chapters across the country, many universities and national governing organizations provide chapters with education on nearly all the aforementioned topics.

In some cases, chapters struggle with, or do not even try, implementing practices that effectively discourage behavior incongruent with the expectations and values of their organization (Franklin et al., 2012; Reilly, 2017). Little is known about what causes these struggles. However, outside of the fraternity system, research has shown men often make choices inconsistent with what they know is right because of a strong desire to adhere to the hegemonic masculine norms they have been socialized to prioritize (Harris & Edwards, 2010). Specifically, men make decisions that do not align with their values, but rather prioritize behavior that lives up to the expectations they believe other men hold for their behavior (Harris & Edwards, 2010). As all-men's groups, fraternities have a large impact on men's identity development. Research has further shown fraternities can even use masculinity productively (Anderson, 2008). As such, this study sought to investigate a problem at the intersection of masculinity and being a fraternity man: doing the right thing.

In an ideal world, fraternity men's behaviors would always align their personal values and those of the organization. In contrast, when challenging situations arise, fraternity men frequently struggle to behave in a manner which aligns with their values (Anderson, 2008). The repeated lack of accountability contributes to the perception that these problematic behaviors are okay (Anderson, 2008). This study aimed to explore the understanding of one possible aspect of this inconsistency between adopted and espoused values and actual behavior. In particular, this

study is grounded in the impact that tenants of dominant, masculine behaviors have on fraternity members' abilities to hold one another accountable for misconduct.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the concept of accountability and its intersection with masculinity within social fraternity chapters. Social fraternities are often members of the Interfraternity Council (IFC), an umbrella organization on campus representing fraternities that are often, predominately white, values based, social organizations (Syrett, 2009). This study focused on IFC fraternities because they represent an overwhelming majority of the fraternity population (Hughey, 2009; Syrett, 2009), are frequent sources of problematic behavior in fraternities, and were subjects of much of the previous research on fraternities.

This study sought to identify mechanisms in place, within social, IFC fraternities, which are designed to hold members accountable for violating expectations. Further, the study also explored members' attitudes of accountability. For example, did members know of the accountability systems that are in and are they perceived to be effective deterrents for misconduct? Finally, the study identified the impact of masculinity on the adherence to, or lack thereof, stated accountability structures.

Research Questions

This study was centered around answering three research questions. The questions align with the study's purpose of expanding the understanding of fraternity accountability.

1. How do fraternity members hold each other accountable for deviating from behavioral expectations?
2. How do the methods fraternity members use to hold each other accountable influence member behavior?

3. To what extent does masculinity play a role in the methods fraternity members are willing to use to hold one another accountable?

Conceptual Framework

This study was grounded in the literature on the social construct of masculinity. Masculinity is an identity which associates certain behaviors as being representative of holding a gender identify of a man (Kimmel & Messner, 2007). While there are multiple meanings of masculinity, there are some consistent themes grounding this study (Franklin, 1987). First, much of the literature base for this study posits that a type of hegemonic, or dominant, masculinity exists, whereby many men aim to exhibit certain behaviors to be considered an ideal type of man in society. For example, Kimmel (2008) discusses how men consider sexual behavior or conquests as a component of their identity as a man. A study on fraternity sexual experiences supported Kimmel's assertion (Seabrook et al., 2018).

Literature on hegemonic masculinity identifies behaviors or traits that are associated with specific environments and formal organizations. In particular, the type of organization under study is the college fraternity, where the environment relates to the lived experiences of young men ages 18-25, immediately prior to and during their matriculation at a university (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Some example hegemonic behaviors associated with fraternities are competitive drinking, hazing, and frequent sexual interactions (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014; Seabrook et al., 2018).

Much of the literature on masculinities of young men emphasizes acceptance in a social space. Harris and Harper (2014) identified masculinity as a primary driver behind behaviors for men who are seeking acceptance within in a social group. Further, models have been developed which center masculinity as a primary reason why men are willing to violate policy and are thus

overrepresented in university conduct systems (Harper et al., 2005). This study was grounded in the strong literature base (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Edwards, 2010; Harris & Harper, 2014; Kimmel, 2008; Kimmel & Messner, 2007) which identifies hegemonic masculine expectations as a driver of young men's behavior.

This literature base on masculinity informed the researcher's approach to data collection and analysis. For example, questions were utilized to further explore how hegemonic masculinity influenced the participant's worldview on manhood. During data analysis, the researchers drew upon the literature base to identify components of masculinity which appeared in the data. The researcher did not expect participants to address masculinity directly. As such, the researcher relied on the literature base during analysis to identify where masculinity appeared in the fraternity accountability process.

Overview of Research Methodology

Qualitative research tradition emphasizes the lived experience of participants (Vagle, 2018). This study was approached from a constructivist lens, where the researcher believes knowledge is constructed through a person's lens and experience and is not fixed. While each fraternity chapter and member are unique groups and individuals, they, together, contribute to the narrative of fraternity membership across the United States. Their individual decisions, experiences, and perspectives help write a narrative on accountability and masculinity within the fraternity system. At the core of this project was uncovering these stories, through the individuals' experiences and the information they conveyed. The information fraternity members shared painted a picture of the reality of what goes on inside a chapter which can then be analyzed against what is codified in documents, processes, or policies.

This project was conducted as a phenomenological study. Phenomenological research is

utilized to gain insight into how an individual experiences a particular situation in their life (Merriam, 2009). In this case, the phenomenon under study was accountability. This study analyzed the accountability structure of two undergraduate chapters of a social fraternity affiliated with the interfraternity council at a single university. While there are some differences between fraternity chapters based on their national organization, the tenets of these values-based organizations are similar throughout the country. To minimize variability between the chapters under study, the selected chapters had minimal demographic variability where possible. The purpose of this selection approach was to minimize the impact of external sources, outside the scope of this study, on the accountability structures and masculinity within a chapter.

The study examined multiple data sources from each participant chapter including existing documents, such as new member education materials, by-laws, constitutions, and other internal chapter documents related to member behavior, expectations, and accountability. Document analysis provides a systematic procedure for reviewing material with the aim of interpreting meaning and gaining further understanding (Bowen, 2009). The document analysis was combined with interview methodology, as is often common in qualitative research (Bowen, 2009). Documents provided the researcher with context and expectations for ideal accountability which provided a framework for any (in)consistencies between the participant's lived experience and the espoused accountability structure.

Following the preliminary document review, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviews are useful in a phenomenological study because they obtain descriptions of the participants' experiences with the phenomena under study (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Four members per chapter were interviewed. The interviews were conducted after document review so the interviewer could identify questions, based on the information identified in the

document review, to understand the dissonance between the espoused practices in the documents and the accountability experience from the members' perspectives. A formal analysis of the documents occurred after interviews had been completed. The interviews provided a baseline of accountability within the chapter and the influence of masculinity on the phenomena.

Significance of Study

Fraternalities have been a staple on university campuses for nearly a century (Syrett, 2009). Recently, fraternities are under scrutiny for behaviors that had previously gone unchecked, such as alcohol and drug use, hazing, and exclusionary or discriminatory practices. In fact, over 80% of media attention fraternities receive is negative (Taylor et al., 2018). At their worst, these behaviors contribute to deaths of college students. In less extreme circumstances, young men find themselves making decisions which are at odds with their values to feel included in the group (Harris & Edwards, 2010).

Fraternity members often describe their brothers as some of the people closest to them, who they care about most. Research has shown accountability built on relationships between fraternity brothers, known as a brotherhood, to be one of the most influential factors of a positive fraternity experience (McCreary & Shutts, 2015). However, there is clearly a gap between the expectations and values fraternities aspire to and the behaviors they espouse. If there were not such a gap, brothers would be more likely to intervene when poor judgement was exhibited. This study aimed to further explain the relationship between accountability within fraternity chapters and societal, hegemonic masculinity. In doing so, the study aimed to enable fraternity members, and those who work closely with them, with the tools to better understand the gap in decision making which causes harm to members.

The results of this study can reach a variety of audiences with varying levels of affiliation and influence on the fraternity system. Fraternities receive support from a variety of sources, outside of their own self-governance structure (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004). This study sought to produce new information about the factors impeding fraternity members' ability to address problematic behavior. Fraternity advisors, campus professionals, and headquarters-based staff may all find the outcomes of this study beneficial as they work to provide direct support to undergraduate chapter leaders. Chapter advisors are often in the position of providing coaching feedback to members (Eberly, 2012). Understanding the challenges that the members are facing when holding each other accountable could serve as a critical tool in the advisor's toolbox.

Delimitations

This study intentionally selected two fraternity chapters at the same institution. This decision was made because displays of masculinity and behavior are often influenced by the context a man is operating within (Kimmel & Messner, 2007). As such, having fraternities from multiple institutions would have limited the researcher's ability to identify findings related to masculinity without greater analysis of the cultural similarities and differences between the institutions. In identifying qualifications for fraternities to participate, it was necessary to mitigate cultural factors that could have occurred between different fraternity chapters. Fraternities were required to be social in nature, members of the IFC, and single gender. Groups with historically cultural or academic backgrounds as requirements of membership were excluded, because of the altered manifestations of masculinity in these groups (Kimmel, 2008).

This study was conducted in the southeastern United States. This is important because values associated with masculinity are often associated to larger cultural values, which can be influenced by the region of the country (Pleck et al., 1993). It was also conducted during a fixed

timeframe and did not analyze how a member's perception of accountability or understanding of masculinity may change. However, a sample of members with various lengths of membership and leadership commitments was taken to account for a variety of views. Finally, it should be noted that this study was conducted at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted fraternity chapter operations and added a new, volatile layer to accountability in COVID-19 regulation compliance from multiple entities.

Assumptions

This study was conducted under key assumptions regarding participant interaction and sampling. The researcher assumed that all documents and resources analyzed were accurate and up to date of the current workings of the organization. Additionally, the researcher assumed all participants provided honest, complete answers without lying about or covering up certain behaviors. The researcher also assumed participants considered any sort of misconduct in their discussion of accountability rather than focusing on high-stakes misconduct and assumed participants had a working knowledge of the operations of their fraternity.

Definitions of Terms

Throughout this study, terms specific to the fraternity community are utilized. Many of these terms can be used interchangeably in literature with different contextual meaning. The terms critical to this study and commonly used are defined below:

Fraternity: a generic term used to represent a group of individuals, most commonly men, who join an organization, primarily for social purposes. Fraternities each have their own operational structure, models, and history and traditions. For the purpose of this study, fraternity is used as an umbrella term to represent the conceptual idea of a fraternity rather than one specific national fraternity or fraternity chapter as described below.

National Fraternity: the umbrella organization that sets values, policies, procedures, structure, and provides support resources for the individual fraternity chapters. National fraternities are often represented by letters from the Greek alphabet. National fraternities establish many chapters at colleges and universities across the country.

Fraternity Chapter or Chapter: an instance of a national fraternity on one specific campus operating as a member of the host university's fraternity community.

Member or Brother: an individual who is currently a registered student who is listed on the chapter's roster as an active member. For this study, a member or brother included those who are still completing the joining requirements but have not been fully admitted to the organization, sometimes referred to as pledges or new members.

Expectations: behaviors, ideals, and actions a member either should or should not engage in; can be set by formal rules, policies, procedures within the organization or through informal learned and observed behaviors.

Accountability: A process by which individuals or organizations are held responsible for violating expectations, as defined above. For the purpose of this study, accountability processes could have been formal in nature, utilizing a set process, rules, or policies as points of reference or they can be informal, whereby little or no structure is utilized to address a situation when a member has violated an expectation.

Masculinity: the socially constructed and performed identity which communicates gender-based expectations for men to others in society. Men who perform masculinities believe they will be rewarded for doing so while those who do not will not be fully accepted by other men (Harris & Harper, 2014). While there is no singular type of masculinity, this study

acknowledged hegemonic, or dominant, behaviors within the context of the fraternity system (Kimmel & Messner, 2007).

Student Conduct: the field of practice within higher education whereby professional staff members at the university interact with students and organizations in response to alleged university policy violations. These staff members are often responsible for or oversee a process responsible for making decision on alleged misconduct and the appropriate follow-up measures to such violations.

Organization of the Study

This study begins with this chapter, explaining the development and progression of past and current fraternity culture at colleges and universities in the United States and the issues raised due to problematic behavior in those fraternities. Understanding accountability is an experience individual members have within their chapter, this phenomenological study sought to understand the experience members had with accountability and masculinity within the context of their fraternity membership. Chapter one also includes important parameters of the study, including the research questions, delimitations, assumptions, key terms, and the significance of the study.

There are four additional chapters in this study. Appropriate appendices and references are found at the end of the document. Chapter two will cover relevant literature relating to the topic under study. A detailed exploration of the background of fraternities will be presented, including the critical components of member expectation setting and the behavioral issues that have plagued fraternities and their membership in the era of the modern social fraternity. A discussion of peer influence and accountability in the fraternity system will be presented. Due to the direct responsibility for student and organization accountability, literature on the student

conduct profession will be analyzed. Finally, there is an in-depth discussion of existing literature on masculinity, with emphasis on young men and men's groups, such as fraternities.

Chapter three will provide in-depth details of the methodology utilized to conduct this research study. Chapter three includes the researcher's positionality statement and relationship to the topic, including the role in the study. The details of the research design and data analysis approach will also be outlined. Chapter four will present a detailed discussion of the results of the research study, including specific cases and details from document analysis and participant interviews. The researcher will also present the results of the thematic analysis of the data across all interviews. The final chapter will discuss the results in the context of the research question and existing knowledge of the topic. This discussion will also include any possible limitations, suggestions for further research, and the implications of the results to the practice of fraternity accountability and masculinity studies.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Since the turn of the century, 97 young men have died from hazing directly attributed to fraternities (Nuwer, 2021). This number only includes cases where hazing was evident and omits any deaths dismissed as accidents or those that did not make national media attention. Hazing is one of many behavioral issues in college fraternities (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). Fraternity chapters have multiple mechanisms at their disposal to prevent misconduct and hold brothers who violate their standards accountable (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004). However, misconduct continues to garner negative national media attention and raises debates around the viability of the fraternity system (Taylor et al., 2018).

Misconduct in the fraternity system has often been attributed to masculine behaviors. Kimmel and Messner (2007) define masculinity as a social identity performed based on society's expectations of manhood. An individual personally refines their masculine identity based on the rewards and consequences they believe will result from the performance, or lack thereof, of certain behaviors. These behaviors are then prioritized by the individual, though they may shift as men change and grow over time (Kimmel & Messner, 2007). This study explored the impact of masculinity as a factor inhibiting peer accountability within fraternity chapters. Table 1 presents the scholarship examined to understand fraternities and associated behavioral issues, accountability of students and organizations by their peers and the university, and what is known about how masculinity impacts the college man's experience. The literature examined in this study, particular that on masculinity, served as the conceptual framework off which the researched based the interpretations utilized during data analysis.

Table 1*Literature Review Recurring Themes*

Category	Sub-Category & Reference
Social Fraternities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background and Overview (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004; Caudill et al., 2006; Gillon et al., 2019; Mathiasen, 2005; Pike, 2020; Rhoads, 1995; Routon & Walker, 2016; Sanday, 1990; Syrett, 2009; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). • Member Expectation Setting (Anderson, 2008; Bandura, 1971; Caudill et al., 2006; Durkin et al., 2005; Harris & Harper, 2014, 2015; Mathiasen, 2005; Park et al., 2009; Phi Gamma Delta, 2020; Rhoads, 1995; Sanday, 1990; Scholly et al., 2005; Schutts & Shelley, 2014; Syrett, 2009; Taylor et al., 2018; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). • Behavioral Issues (Anderson, 2008; Baker-Zwernez et al., 2014; Boeringer et al., 1991; Caudill et al., 2006; Corprew & Mitchell, 2014; Durkin, 2005; Finkel, 2002; Harper et al., 2005; Harris & Harper, 2014; Hesp & Brooks, 2009; Lanier & Farley, 2011; McCabe et al., 2004; Nuwer, 2001; Rhoads, 1995; Sanday, 1990; Sasso, 2015; Seabrook & Ward, 2019; Seabrook et al., 2018; Syrett, 2009; Taylor et al., 2018; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998)
Peer Influence & Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of Fraternity Brothers as Peer Group (Anderson, 2008; Berkowitz, 2011; Braxton & Caboni, 2005; Carter & Kahnweiler, 2000; Caudill et al., 2006; Harper et al., 2005; Harris, 2010; Harris & Edwards, 2010; Harris & Harper, 2014, 2015; Maples et al., 2009; Mathiasen, 2005; Phua, 2011; Sasso, 2015; Schutts & Kelley, 2014; Syrett, 2009; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998) • Accountability within Fraternities (Anderson, 2008; Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004; Durkin et al., 2005; Harris & Harper, 2014; Mathiasen, 2005; McCreary & Schutts, 2015; Sasso, 2015; Seabrook & Ward, 2019; Taylor et al., 2018)
Student Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals, Respondents, and Outcomes (Caudill et al., 2006; Cooper & Schwartz, 2007; Dannells, 1997; Glick & Haug, 2020; Howell, 2005; King, 2012; Ludeman, 2011; Polomsky & Blackhurst, 2000; Stimpson & Jonasik, 2015) • Peer-Based Adjudication (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004; Benjamin & Boettcher, 2017; Caruso, 1977; Chassey, 2009; Dannells, 1997; Derajtys & McDowell, 2014; Harris & Harper, 2014; Ludeman, 2011; Zdziarski & Bartunek, 2020) • Student Organization Misconduct (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004; Braxton & Caboni, 2005; Dannells, 1997; Haas & Street, 2008; Harris & Barone, 2011; Newcomb, 1962; Paterson, 2013; Shupenko & Tuttle, 2020)
Masculinities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Societal Expectation Setting (Berkowitz, 2011; Harper et al., 2005; Harris, 2008, 2010; Harris & Barone, 2010; Harris & Edwards, 2010; Harris & Harper, 2014, 2015; Harris & Struve, 2009; Kimmel, 2008; Rhoads, 1995)

Table 1*Literature Review Recurring Themes (continued)*

-
- Masculinity within Fraternity (Anderson, 2008; Harris, 2008; Harris & Barone, 2011; Harris & Harper, 2014; Harris & Struve, 2009; Kimmel, 2008; Sasso, 2015)
 - Impact of Masculinity on Decision Making (Berkowitz, 2011; Harper et al., 2005; Harris, 2008; Harris & Edwards, 2010; Harris & Harper, 2015; Sasso, 2015)
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Social Fraternities**Background and Overview**

The first fraternity, the honorary society Phi Beta Kappa, was founded in 1776 at the college of William and Mary. Practices established by Phi Beta Kappa, such as ritualistic initiations and secrecy in operations, have proliferated to the fraternities in existence today (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). The first social fraternity did not emerge until 1825, when Kappa Alpha Society was founded at Union College. Fraternities provided men enrolled at the institution a break from the college experience, which was highly regimented and offered students little freedom. In the early days, fraternities conducted their business in secret as they were often banned at universities (Syrett, 2009).

As the landscape of universities changed and shifted away from the rigid focus on religion, medicine, and law, fraternities evolved and expanded their footprint. According to Syrett (2009), in the 1920s, popularity began to become associated with masculine behaviors and fraternity membership. However, the proliferation of fraternity life was hindered over the next 25 years as college campuses lost many students to military service. After the wars concluded and men began returning to campus, fraternities continued to grow. The 1960s saw the largest expansion of fraternity chapters in the 20th century. During this time, there was also a continued evolution towards social behaviors as the 1960s-1990s saw large increases in alcohol use with

little policing on college campuses (Syrett, 2009). During this time period, fraternities, like higher education as a whole, became racially integrated, though cultural fraternities still remain on many campuses across the country.

While much has changed culturally in fraternities since their inception, it is important to place fraternities in context of the segregated nature of the community that persists in many ways today. Fraternities began to take shape on college campuses in the late 19th and early 20th century, long before campuses were racially integrated (Syrett, 2009, Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). As such, the term fraternity is often synonymous with large groups of predominately, if not exclusively, white men. However, there are several historically black fraternities, some of which are members of a group known as the Divine Nine, which are often part of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) on their respective campuses (Gillon et al., 2019). The NPHC is a similar umbrella organization to the IFC, representing interests of similar fraternities and sororities. The NPHC also contains sororities and other culturally based fraternities and sororities. Many of the operational procedures are different between NPHC and IFC fraternities. Additionally, there are other organizations which use the Greek alphabet as identifiers and are fraternities, but have an academic, honorary, or multicultural focus rather than the social nature most commonly thought of for IFC organizations. (Syrett, 2009). As such, the literature reviewed for this study is situated in studies which have focused on IFC fraternities (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004).

Today, fraternities serve as powerful peer groups and make up one of the most prominent student cultures on campus (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). Fraternities still maintain identities as values-based organizations, centered around the rituals developed centuries ago. These values, along with philanthropies, community service, and other benefits, are utilized as tools to

communicate what the organization represents to non-members while uniting members across campuses (Baker-Zwernez, et al., 2004; Mathiasen, 2005). Caudill et al. (2006) and Kimmel (2008) both asserted that the unofficial social benefits of joining a fraternity have become just as, if not more, important to prospective members. The authors go on to state this cultural shift is a result of an embedded fabric of binge drinking culture within the fraternity system.

Fraternities continue to be one of the largest entities for college student involvement. The North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC), which represents 51 national fraternities, recently estimated there were nearly 700,000 active fraternity members across their constituent fraternities, which does not include all active fraternities (Pike, 2020). Research indicated fraternity membership was correlated with more campus engagement, gains in self-reported learning, and connectedness to the institution (Pike, 2020; Routon & Walker, 2016). These findings, combined with the behavior challenges associated with fraternities, have contributed to the debate about whether fraternities are more beneficial or harmful to the campus community (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998).

Fraternities continue to grow by taking in new members, as do all student organizations. After current members have offered invitations to join, called bids, to prospective members, a pledge, or new member, class is formed. During this pledge process new members, often first- or second-year students, adopt new values and are socialized as a member of the fraternity and behave as expected by the current members (Rhoads, 1995). Sanday (1990) argued the pledge process serves to reinforce negative attitudes in new members, particularly around treatment of women. However, Rhoads (1995) found even in a fraternity where pledging was eliminated, these attitudes persisted through other expectation setting mechanisms. In the wake of criticism

of the formal pledge period, many national organizations have continued to eliminate this requirement (Jaschik, 2014).

Member Expectation Setting

Fraternities have long implemented formal processes for recruiting, selecting, and preparing new members to join the organization (Syrett, 2009). The process is referred to as the new member process. The new member process is advertised as the time for students new to the fraternity to learn about its values, traditions, history, and expectations of members (Phi Gamma Delta, 2020). During this process, new members know very little about the fraternity and look to those around them during this time to set the stage for what is expected from a member (Park et al., 2009; Sanday, 1990). Schutts and Shelley (2014) found the pledge process was critical to communicating the espoused values of the fraternity. Further, members who felt there was strong incongruence between their personal values and the espoused values of the fraternity were more likely to leave the organization. Conversely, those who sensed strong congruence with their personal values were more likely to stay and increase their commitment to the organization (Schutts & Shelley, 2014).

Outside of formal programs to educate members, theories offer explanations for how fraternity men learn from one another. Bandura (1971) developed social learning theory to explain how individuals learn behaviors based on the context of what goes on around them. Learning can occur through direct experience, whereby reward (or punishment) results from certain behaviors. Learning also takes place based on direct observation of prominent figures in the social setting. For example, Durkin et al. (2005) studied binge drinking behaviors grounded in social learning theory. Results indicated social learning theory could explain why up to half of the participants engaged in binge drinking behavior. Durkin et al. (2005) did not specifically

study the fraternity experience but rather a behavior that has been a common cause for concern in fraternities (Caudill et al., 2006; Rhoads, 1995; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998).

College students also benchmark their behaviors based on what they perceive their peers to be doing. For example, Scholly et al. (2005) found students perceived their peers to be having more sex than they were. Participants reported this influenced their opinion of the way they should be engaging in sexual relationships with others. Park et al. (2009) found a correlation between increased alcohol use and the behaviors observed by new members during rush, recruitment, and pledgeship. Specifically, the authors noted this was due to no previous frame of reference for peer norms and increased access to alcohol.

Park et al. (2009) also noted pre-college drinking behaviors and expectations were statistically significant, meaning new members brought their own perceptions to their fraternity experience, which influenced their behavior. Fraternities are very visible to students prior to their college experience. Taylor et al. (2018) conducted a comprehensive review of national media coverage of fraternities and found 87% of the coverage was of negative events, including member death. Additionally, men are socialized in all-men's clubs and sports teams prior to coming to campus. These experiences provide a frame of reference for new students when joining similar all-men's groups, such as fraternities (Harris & Harper, 2015).

Initiated members utilize role modeling to set the expectations for their brothers (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014). In a study of productive masculinity in fraternities, participants referenced the positive expectations set for them during their new member process. This, in turn, caused them to role model positive masculinity and behaviors for new members (Harris & Harper, 2014). Members felt role modeling positive behavior also communicated a commitment to the responsibility they had to develop the younger brothers as better people and

good men (Harris & Harper, 2014). Anderson (2008) conducted a similar study where participants discussed the importance of setting the stage for new members because the chapter members knew they were deviating from the typical fraternity behavior expectation. Participants in both studies also discussed the importance of bringing the ‘right’ men into the chapter, individuals who would be open to exhibiting the behaviors the chapter considered important (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014; Mathiasen, 2005).

Research has also shown the significance of new members observing the negative behaviors role modeled by their peers. A study on the influence of peer behaviors on alcohol consumption found the first semester of membership, the new member semester, was the most critical predictor of future binge drinking behavior. More specifically, if members were encouraged to drink, observed binge drinking, and had access to alcohol, they were twice as likely to binge drink later in membership (Park et al., 2009). While binge drinking is largely considered problematic (Caudill et al., 2006), Durkin et al. (2005) found members who saw this behavior more frequently interpreted it as positive and increased their alcohol consumption.

Behavioral Issues in Fraternities

Behavioral issues in fraternities, such as substance abuse, hazing, and sexual misconduct, occur frequently (Harper et al., 2005; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). These behavioral issues often become the subject of negative media coverage and scrutiny (Taylor et al., 2018). Excessive alcohol consumption is one of the most studied issues within fraternities. Caudill et al. (2006) conducted a national survey and found 86% of fraternity members were classified as binge drinkers based on self-reported drinking patterns. Alcohol has been identified as a key component to the acculturation of new fraternity members, playing a very large role in the informal new member process (Sasso, 2015). Fraternities often rationalize binge drinking as a

fraternity behavior. However, it is unclear if this increased drinking is a result or cause of the rationalization (Durkin et al., 2005).

Alcohol is not the only substance used more regularly by fraternity men. McCabe et al. (2004) conducted a longitudinal national study of men's drug use from the time they entered the university to graduation. McCabe found the rate of illicit drug use increased among all participants, but the rate and quantity of the increase was higher for men who joined fraternities. Lanier and Farley (2011) identified similar patterns in their study of demographic factors of drug users, noting that being a man and in a fraternity were both associated with an increase in poly-drug use.

Fraternities have long carried a reputation as groups of men who mistreat women (Harris & Harper, 2014; Rhoads, 1995; Sanday, 1990). Rhoads (1995) found three primary categories to describe fraternity men's attitudes toward women: "promotion of hostile representation, position of women as passive, and issues related to gender perceptions" (p. 314). More recent literature has shown there has been a decrease in the proliferation of these attitudes, but they are still very much present (Seabrook & Ward, 2019). Corprew and Mitchell (2014) found fraternity members also had higher scores on the sexually aggressive attitudes scale, meaning they held attitudes toward women that predisposed them to behave aggressively in sexual situations.

Fraternity membership has also been found to offer credibility in accusations of sexual assault. Both members and non-members of fraternities were less likely to hold a fraternity member culpable for sexual misconduct than a non-member, where the only variable between situations was fraternity membership status (Boeringer et al., 1991; Seabrook & Ward, 2019). However, fraternity men do not seem to have awareness of their propensity towards sexual misconduct. Members self-reported that their attitudes about sexual misconduct were the same as

non-members. However, the results of the instrument administered to participants revealed fraternity men do have more apathy towards sexual misconduct and a higher propensity to engage in sexually aggressive behaviors (Boeringer et al., 1991). Over the last 30 years, the literature on fraternities shows a positive shift away from problematic behaviors, compared to the largely negative narratives previously described.

Literature on fraternities and marginalized populations provides very conflicting experiences (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014; Hesp & Brooks, 2009). Overall, there is a widely held belief that fraternities are not inclusive, based on the history of racism in fraternity life (Gillon et al., 2019), and are geared towards white, heterosexual, cis-gender, Christian, upper-middle class, undergraduate men (Anderson, 2008; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998), which is historically accurate (Syrett, 2009). In one study participants reported personal, direct interaction was one of the only ways to break this stereotype (Harris & Harper, 2014; Hesp & Brooks, 2009). In some studies fraternity men reported not tolerating discriminatory behaviors, practices, or comments. When asked why this was the case, members most often cited their interpretation of the values of the fraternity was that acting in a discriminatory manner was fundamentally against what they stood for (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014).

Hazing is commonly justified as a rite of passage that fraternity men should experience to join the organization while also forming close bonds, proving loyalty, and overcoming adversity (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004). It is also important to note many hazing behaviors are found to involve alcohol and drugs, making it somewhat complex to separate hazing and substance use in the literature (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). Hazing is the cause of some of the most dangerous, highly publicized behaviors causing harm to college students

(Finkel, 2002; Taylor et al., 2018). Despite this increased attention to hazing, deaths associated with hazing have occurred on college campuses every year for decades (Nuwer, 2001).

There is an extensive body of research analyzing the impact of fraternity membership on students' likelihood to engage in these problematic behaviors. For example, Seabrook et al. (2018) found, compared to non-members, fraternity members were more likely to endorse, accept, and uphold masculine behavior norms that objectified women, more strongly endorsed rape myths, and utilized deceptive behaviors to engage in sexual relationships. Caudill et al. (2006) found much higher instances of binge drinking among fraternity men compared to the standards for non-member peers. In general, there are consistent themes of exacerbated problematic behavior in fraternity chapters. The peer group established in a fraternity has been found to be the primary influence of member behavior, including these problematic behaviors.

Peer Influence & Accountability

Influences of Fraternity Brothers as Peer Group

Joining a fraternity, like many other student organizations, expands a student's friend group and social circle. Due to the time and financial commitment required to join a fraternity, there is a belief by most new members that the existing members will become their primary peer group (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). Social interactions are a major component of expectation setting in peer groups. Braxton and Caboni (2005) asserted group members communicate these expectations through day-to-day interactions with newer social group members. Mathiasen (2005) found participants had transitioned their primary peer reference group from an external entity (church, family, hometown community) to the fraternity because the participants felt it was now the place where they would be associating with other students the most. This shift of reference groups can also be explained by pre-college socialization as young men have largely

been socialized to use men's peer groups as reference groups, such as high school sports (Harris & Harper, 2015).

While each fraternity has a shared set of principles and values that unite chapters across the country (Syrett, 2009), individual chapter culture at the university has the most direct influence over the member experience. As Anderson (2008) noted, the members of the chapter acknowledged how different their culture was from their peers at other institutions. As chapters established their culture, it became difficult for members to challenge the culture within the fraternity because they feared repercussions for challenging the culture set by their peers (Harris, 2010; Harris & Edwards, 2010). Carter and Kahnweiler (2000) found fraternity men did not consider the norms of non-fraternity peers because their reference group was so fraternity centric. As an example, Sasso (2015) documented that members who used alcohol as a part of their new member process believed their new peer group held the use of alcohol to be critical to the chapter and no longer saw alcohol use as problematic. Just as fraternity men can serve as a negative peer influence, peer groups have also been shown to be more effective in correcting behaviors. For example, Maples et al. (2009) found chapter-level dynamics and culture could be leveraged more effectively to discourage problematic behavior than standardized prevention programming or educational efforts led by fraternity staff, the university, or external facilitators.

Some studies have found positive outcomes of the fraternity as a peer-reference group amongst members. For example, Mathiasen (2005) found members promoted positive moral development as a peer group because they informally role-modeled positive behaviors. One participant stated moral development was not directly addressed within the chapter but is an overriding theme when taking in new members and implementing the fraternity's formal new member education. Similarly, in chapters where the expectation of peers was to engage in

productive masculinity, members reported they felt an obligation to their brothers to make them better men and people by holding them to higher standards for the treatment of others, regardless of difference (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014).

Strong reliance on the fraternity as a peer group can also have an influence on problematic behaviors as well. In a large-scale study of fraternity member drinking behaviors, Caudill et al. (2006) found chapter-level factors could account for as much as 22% of the variance in binge-drinking behavior. Carter and Kahnweiler (2000) similarly found men were likely to drink more because the fraternities had small groups of substance-adverse members, which made members who wished to abstain from substance use uncomfortable doing so. Berkowitz (2011) asserted much of human social behavior is established based on the most extreme behaviors in any group. As such, the most extreme behaviors of a small sub-group of fraternity men can have a strong influence on the behavior of the newer members. A study of sub-cultures within a chapter revealed members engaged in drinking and tobacco use behavior in line with their peer sub-group within the chapter. That is, fraternity men who were heavy drinkers or smokers spent more time with fellow heavy drinkers and smokers. Further, those who were below average for their sub-group on alcohol or tobacco use, increased their use to align more with the other members of the sub-group (Phua, 2011). Schutts and Kelley (2014) supported identifying small sub-groups, similar to those identified by Phua (2011), as ways to address unethical acts or problematic behavior so as to build an ethos more central to the organizations core with less fear of judgement or negative repercussions. Phua's suggestion is just one of many ways fraternities implement accountability systems for behavioral concerns.

Accountability within Fraternities

Accountability in fraternity chapters is not standardized and can take on different forms depending on the behavior, chapter, or other factors (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004). Researchers found members believe it is a part of their role in the chapter to hold their brothers to higher standards. These men cited the shared values of the fraternity and stated they felt very committed to these values (Harris & Harper, 2014). Durkin et al. (2005) also suggested peer groups would be integral to accountability as these peer groups were most influential in the drinking behaviors observed in one study. Participants interviewed by Anderson (2008) reported a hierarchy of issues related to accountability. Specifically, participants stated most chapters focused heavily on behaviors that jeopardized a chapter's recognition with the university or national fraternity, such as alcohol abuse, hazing, drug use, and distribution. As such, participants felt there was a lack of commitment to attitudes that might be incongruent with a chapter's creed but were not considered serious transgressions. Regardless of the seriousness of the offense, fraternity men did acknowledge holding peers accountable within the chapter would help overcome a largely negative perception others had of fraternity men (Harris & Harper, 2014).

Accountability is engrained in the fabric of what makes a strong brotherhood. McCreary and Shutts (2015) identified accountability as one of the four tenets fraternity members closely linked to the strength of the brotherhood within their chapters. Specifically, fraternity men have described informal accountability, or simple confrontations of behavior by peers, as the primary method of accountability used in their chapters (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014; McCreary & Shutts, 2015). Fraternity men in leadership roles identified several strategies for disrupting unacceptable behaviors. The participants in Harris and Harper (2014) utilized the fraternity's values to identify member behavior misalignment. Leaders often relied on calling out

brothers in front of the entire group when one person said something problematic. Participants believed this informal strategy was effective because brothers did not want to be perceived as violating the chapter's agreed standards (Harris & Harper, 2014). These actions align with two of the six accountability approaches identified by Baker-Zwernez et al. (2004). These two methods are informal justice and individual accountability, which both involve identifying a problematic behavior quickly and addressing it with little structure.

Baker-Zwernez et al. (2004) also identified formalized methods for accountability within fraternities including internal standards or judicial boards, fraternity investigations from the headquarters, and university-run student conduct investigations. Participants often referenced a standards board or another formal process within the chapter, but rarely directly addressed non-members working with the chapter to address accountability issues (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014). McCreary and Schutts (2015) found, at times, brotherhood based on accountability can have negative effects. Members with extremely high accountability scores were more likely to defend one another even in the face of serious behaviors that likely warranted some form of accountability. The men in both the Anderson (2008) and in Harris and Harper (2014) considered judicial boards and other formal processes to be the most serious forms of accountability the chapter could implement. Participants stated these proceedings were necessary if either a brother was subject to removal from the chapter or if the chapter leadership felt it was important to send a strong message about the seriousness of the allegation. However, some men did acknowledge the judicial board could vary in effectiveness depending on their own views of the incident (Harris & Harper, 2014).

Baker-Zwernez et al. (2004) identified challenges with accountability within fraternity chapters. First, there are multiple entities that can be involved in any one instance of misconduct,

which can cause confusion amongst members. Additionally, as Taylor et al. (2018) noted, incidents of misconduct in fraternities are amplified in the media. In situations with extensive media coverage, the chapter may become more focused on their perception and minimizing culpability rather than addressing behavior (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004). Seabrook and Ward (2019) also noted fraternity men were perceived by peer undergraduate students to be less culpable for sexual misconduct compared to non-fraternity members. The authors also suggested these findings show fraternity membership are inherently granted credibility and thus perceived to be less likely to violate policy. Another issue chapters face is the challenge in deviating from chapter culture. Chapters have significant agency over establishing their culture. Accountability can be seen as deviating from the culture and is not usually well received (Anderson, 2008; Mathiasen, 2005; Sasso, 2015). Whether or not a fraternity has a strong culture of accountability, members are students and could also be subject to a formal student conduct process if their behavior violates university policy in addition to fraternity expectations.

Student Conduct

Goals, Respondents, and Outcomes

Student conduct as a profession has evolved as the relationship between the university and the student has also changed (Dannells, 1997). Student conduct in the modern university is often a balance of risk and liability mitigation, legal compliance, and student growth, learning and development (Glick & Haug, 2020). Student conduct processes are designed to center student learning and development while balancing the university's interests and compliance requirements. Stimpson and Jonasik (2015) stated "How a conduct system is administered has a dramatic influence on how much is learned by students who interact with that system" (p. 61).

Most students involved in the conduct process are men in the first and second years of their enrollment, an identical demographic to new members of fraternities (Dannells, 1997). While little research directly analyzes the reason for specific demographic overrepresentation in the conduct process, much of the recent student conduct literature indicates a consistent overrepresentation of men as respondents to student conduct allegations (Cooper & Schwartz, 2007; Howell, 2005; King, 2012; Stimpson & Jonasik, 2015). Harper et al. (2005) developed a widely used model associated with tenets of masculinity to explain the overrepresentation of men in the conduct system. Ludeman (2011) also identified several possible reasons for men's overrepresentation in the conduct system rooted in gender role conflict. These considerations include hegemonic masculinity, difficulty dealing with emotions, and drug and alcohol use due to gender role conflict (Ludeman, 2011). Caudill et al. (2006) found fraternity members who had previously been disciplined for alcohol-related behaviors were *more* likely to consume more alcohol than individuals who were not disciplined.

Literature on student learning as an outcome the conduct process focuses on the student experience with a formal adjudication process facilitated by an administrative staff member (Howell, 2005; King, 2012; Stimpson & Jonasik, 2015). In many studies, students reported feeling a major power differential between themselves and the conduct administrator. Students further associated this power differential with the experience they had during the process (King, 2012; Ludeman, 2011). It is unclear if the goals of the student conduct process are always formally met. For example, Howell (2005) found most students would engage in the minor portion of their offense again and would only avoid the more serious behavior. An example given repeatedly was drinking alcohol but avoiding driving, fighting, or otherwise engaging in more risky behavior while drunk (Howell, 2005). Students were asked what advice they would

give a peer going through the conduct process. Howell (2005) found strong themes of “act remorseful” and “tell the judicial officer what he or she wants to hear” (p. 388) and posited this is likely a direct result of students not feeling the process was serious or educational.

Similarly, King (2012) found students assigned little value to the educational sanctions assigned after a finding of responsibility in the conduct process. King further noted most sanctions centered what the university perceived to be best for the case rather than involving a larger community or student peer group as a part of the learning process. Polomsky and Blackhurst (2000) also found students largely perceived their behavior was worth the risk based on the perceived benefits and suggested that educational sanctions did not seem to alter this perception of certain low-risk behaviors. Students who violated the code of conduct were found to have lower scores on the post-conventional moral development schema, meaning they were less likely to understand their behaviors as a function of a greater social contract (Cooper & Schwartz, 2007). While most student conduct cases are adjudicated with administrators, literature provides evidence of additional learning for respondents and students who serve in a peer-centered adjudication model.

Peer-Based Adjudication

Student conduct adjudication processes often include an option for a peer hearing board with student peers comprising some or all of the decision-making body (Dannells, 1997). Undergraduate students serve in formal roles to hear allegations of misconduct as part of an appointed, selected, and trained judicial or student conduct board (Caruso, 1977). The groups are most often organized and managed by a student conduct office (Dannells, 1997). However, research has shown that certain sub-groups on campuses such as fraternities, residence halls, and sports teams may have their own peer accountability board for behaviors that violate

expectations (Harris & Harper, 2014; Zdziarski & Bartunek, 2020). Ludeman (2011) advocates for the use of peer-conduct adjudication to create a more neutral power dynamic. Similarly, Derajtys and McDowell (2014) found peer-based restorative circles, which are more informal methods of adjudication, enhanced board effectiveness by reducing recidivism, created an increased sense of place in the university, and more directly addressed harm done to another person or group.

Participating in peer-based adjudication has also shown benefits to the students who serve as the adjudicators. Benjamin and Boettcher (2017) found several benefits to student board members, including increased awareness of their own behaviors, the impact students' behaviors have on the greater university community, and a greater understanding of the university's expectations and standards for behavior. Chassey (2009) similarly found student board members reported increased levels of critical thinking directly associated with experience gained while serving on the conduct board. Participants also reported feeling more comfortable analyzing complex information and learning how to take the perspective of others. This new perspective increased their capacity to understand why accountability was important for students (Chassey, 2009).

Fraternities also utilize peer-based adjudication for alleged violations of their standards for members. For example, Harris and Harper (2014) interviewed fraternity men who spoke about referring members to a judicial board, made up of other chapter members, if they were accused of alleged violations of organizational expectations. These boards often lack training and may not serve as a replacement for university accountability. Board members might also be pressured by outside actors to render certain decision. Examples of outside actors include the

fraternity national staff, local alumni or volunteers, or university officials (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004).

Student Organization Misconduct

A subset of the student conduct profession involves addressing behavior attributed to student organizations, such as fraternities, club sports, or the band (Haas & Street, 2008). Most misconduct occurring within a student organization is subject to multiple layers of adjudication. Fraternities and other all-men's groups are the student organizations most commonly subject to the student conduct process (Harris & Barone, 2011). The primary difference between an organization's and a student's conduct process is when an organization is subject to disciplinary action, the entire membership will likely be impacted by sanctions assigned for a finding of responsibility (Dannells, 1997). Fraternities may also be subject to multiple, simultaneous conduct processes administered by different entities. Given this dynamic, organizations may be subject to different policies or processes for adjudication (Paterson, 2013). Paterson (2013) advocates for creating policies to minimize excessive staff involvement and for collaboration across the various entities investigating a case (Haas & Street, 2008; Paterson, 2013).

One of the most complex components of organizational misconduct adjudication is discerning whether the alleged misconduct is attributable to the organization, an individual in the organization, or both. Many institutions weigh charging individual members or the student organization. Student conduct administrators consider a variety of factors when determining if the organization should be charged including if the behavior had the formal endorsement of most of the organization and/or its leaders, if the organization or multiple members paid for any sort of contribution to the misconduct (such as purchasing drugs), the location of the misconduct, and if the decisions made by individuals were made under the guise of an organizational activity, such

as a party (Shupenko & Tuttle, 2020). When the organization is charged with a violation the president most commonly serves as the organizational representative, empowered to make decisions on behalf of the group. Like individual student conduct, student organization misconduct is also designed to dive deep into the organization's values and the incongruence that likely took place which resulted in the alleged violations. When adjudicating organization misconduct, the investigator considers if the alleged violation is likely a culmination of long-term problematic behavior. For example, if an organization had allegedly violated the hazing policy by forcing alcohol consumption, it is highly likely that lower-level hazing started years ago in the organization and there are other problems with alcohol use (Haas & Street, 2008; Shupenko & Tuttle, 2020).

Student organization conduct processes and sanctions can be used to correct problematic decision making by uncovering the root problems within the organization. A student conduct professional will primarily focus on the incidents that are alleged to have resulted in the referral but may also uncover deeper cultural issues within the chapter (Haas & Street, 2008). Examples might include hegemonic masculinity, substance use and abuse, or values misalignment (Kimmel, 2008; Syrett, 2009). These issues can then be addressed as part of educational sanctioning. As such, many conduct officers advocate not removing organizations for long periods of time through suspension or permanent removal as the opportunity to implement educational development programs is lost (Haas & Street, 2008; Shupenko & Tuttle, 2020). Haas and Street (2008) advocate for the proactive education of student organization leaders on conduct procedures. While many of the expectations of students and organizations are similar, most student organization leaders and members do not have a strong understanding of the way university administrators review conduct to determine organizational culpability.

Historically, IFC fraternities have excluded marginalized populations, leading to the establishment of culturally based fraternities (Gillon et al., 2019). Fraternity members in IFC fraternities were found to be less concerned than non-affiliated students about problematic behaviors, such as substance use, personal attacks, and acts of racism or homophobia. This raises concerns about the effectiveness of organizational misconduct, particularly if the chapter does not perceive the behavior as problematic (Braxton & Caboni, 2005). As Newcomb (1962) discussed, this can be attributed to the importance members of peer-groups placed on acceptance into the group. Fraternities also amplify the expectations of masculinity set by society. To understand how behavior manifests itself in these groups, it is important to consider what fraternity men believe about masculinity during their membership.

Masculinities

Societal Expectation Setting

There is a strong literature base supporting masculinity as a socially constructed identity rooted in behaviors that are expected of the ideal man by society, conveyed to young men and boys throughout their upbringing (Harris, 2008, 2010; Harris & Harper, 2014, 2015; Kimmel, 2008). Men in Harris's study (2008) reported specific traits of masculinity were engrained in them during their upbringing and carried over into their experiences as college men. Examples of the traits associated with masculinity were being muscular, aggressive, and athletic. A few men in Harris (2008) acknowledged, as they aged, there was a realization these traits might not be as central to a masculine identity as they previously thought. College men feel a pressure to meet the social expectation of masculinity that are set as a part of their social fabric, even before enrolling in college (Harris & Edwards, 2010; Harris & Harper, 2015). These pressures were

associated with a belief that men who embodied characteristics of hegemonic masculinity were defined as desirable and rewarded with a coveted high social status (Harris & Struve, 2009).

Many behaviors associated with college men's experiences have been linked with hegemonic masculinity and the socialization of men prior to their matriculation (Harris & Harper, 2015). For example, in a model describing men's overrepresentation in the student conduct process, Harper et al. (2005) named pre-college socialization and gender role expectations to be two critical factors contributing to decisions to violate university policy. The behaviors that caused referrals to student conduct also had strong connections to traditionally masculine behaviors, such as excessive alcohol use and violence (Harper et al. 2005). Men interviewed in Harris and Struve's (2009) study reported context and environment as components which allowed them to feel they could deviate from traditional masculine behaviors. Specifically, one participant reported the diversity and culture of the institution allowed them to perform masculinity in non-hegemonic ways such as establishing emotional, deep friendships with men and non-romantic relationships with women.

Men's gender role conflict and social construction of masculinities have been linked to specific behaviors exhibited by college men (Harris et al., 2005). For example, objectification of women occurred consistently in hypermasculine environments (Harris, 2008; Harris & Barone, 2010; Rhoads, 1995). Men reported the quantity of sexual relationships they had with women would directly contribute to a positive reputation among other men. Much of the reported language used to discuss these relationships was also categorized as sexist and misogynistic (Harris, 2008). Harris and Edwards (2010) also found general conversations and relationships between men were built around sports, talking about sexual performances with women, binge drinking, and video games. College men overestimate other men's negative masculine behaviors

such as their promiscuity, the frequency of use of alcohol and drugs, and acceptance of homophobia (Berkowitz, 2011). Conversely, men also underestimated how many of their peers were uncomfortable with problematic hegemonic masculine behaviors, such as objectification of women, academic apathy, and a lack of interest in a socially just world (Berkowitz, 2011).

Kimmel (2008) also posited boys seek to join the ranks of those they perceive as true men in the military and in sports teams and are willing to prove themselves to do so, often through hazing activities.

Masculinity within Fraternities

As all-men's social groups, fraternities often have strong cultures of hegemonic masculinity (Kimmel, 2008). In some instances, hegemonic masculinities led to productive behaviors. Harris and Harper (2014) conducted a study to understand how masculinity influenced fraternity men who engaged in productive behaviors, such as disrupting discrimination, confronting chapter brothers, and cultivating non-romantic relationships with women. These behaviors were coined "productive masculinities" (Harris & Harper, 2014, p. 706). One condition that enabled the participants to be "good guys" (Harris & Harper, 2014, p. 716) was a critical mass of brothers with similar ideologies. The critical mass allowed men in the chapter to identify being good as a dominant characteristic and expectation of the group. Men then behaved in ways consistent with the expectations of most of the group (Harris & Harper, 2014). Participants also spoke to a desire to connect with fraternity men from other chapters and institutions who held beliefs about improving the stereotypically negative fraternity behavior standard (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014).

Participants also reported an increased sense of agency to confront problematic behaviors after being elected or appointed to chapter leadership roles and with seniority in the fraternity.

Leadership roles provided participants a sense of ownership over the well-being of the chapter and its members, even if actions the leader took were not popular (Harris & Harper; 2014). In Anderson's (2008) ethnographic study, chapter members prioritized productive behaviors tied to masculinity to accept members into the group. For example, if brothers did not believe a new member would accept non-heterosexual people, respect women, and promote and build emotional intimacy between brothers, the potential new member would not be offered the opportunity to join the chapter (Anderson, 2008). One key takeaway from both studies is the dominant narrative around productive masculinity had to be present for the chapters to succeed at challenging or removing problematic behavior. No chapter reported success in doing so when only a small coalition of members felt strongly about eradicating problematic behaviors (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014).

There is a significant body of literature which addresses masculinity appearing in fraternities in negative ways, often associated with many of the behavior issues previously discussed. Kimmel (2008), in his landmark book *Guyland*, addressed the problematic intersections of masculinity and fraternity membership. Kimmel believed many problematic behaviors in fraternities were associated with masculinity and stated, "its chronic insecurity, its desperate need for validation, and the sometimes-sadistic cruelty with which that validation is withheld and then conferred" (p. 97). Fraternities are an example of hypermasculine environments where there is consistent policing of behaviors associated with gendered expectations. This policing reinforces hegemonic masculinity, often leading members to go along with behaviors they inherently feel uncomfortable participating in, just to get along and live up to the expectations they perceive other men have of them (Harris & Barone, 2011;

Kimmel, 2008). Further, participating in these dominant masculine behaviors was seen as giving fraternity men social status and advantages on campus (Harris & Struve, 2009).

Alcohol use is a more specific behavioral example with direct ties to the expression of masculinity. Sasso (2015) found consistent references to competition as a component of masculine behavior between fraternities. Frequency and quantity of alcohol used was a keystone of competitions. Fraternities sought to be the chapter known to have the best parties (where alcohol was present) and be the best at drinking competitions. Harris's (2008) prior study of college men's definition of masculinity also found alcohol consumption and competitive use of alcohol served as a tool to define the masculinity of an individual. Not only was alcohol consumption ability used to measure masculinity (Anderson, 2008; Harris, 2008), but it was also used to ridicule men who did not consume alcohol in a manner as their peers expected (Sasso, 2015). Sasso (2015) found hegemonic, masculine consumption of alcohol was a key component identified as part of the fraternity experience.

Impact of Masculinity on Decision Making

Harper et al. (2005) stated men behave in violation of university policy because they prioritize asserting their masculinity over avoiding judicial violations. Sasso (2015) did not find direct negative outcomes associated with masculine behaviors, but rather linked them to what members reported as success for the fraternity. The underlying driver of these behaviors was a strong desire to be seen as the best fraternity (Sasso, 2015). These findings were consistent with Harris and Edwards's (2010), which also included masculine success defined by the most hook-ups. External expectations of hegemonic masculinity were a driving factor for the decisions men made. Men continued to make destructive decisions to uphold their manhood. In both studies conducted by Harris and Edwards (2010), participants specifically named behaviors exhibited to

avoid criticism of their perceived sexual orientations, emphasizing the importance of appearing heterosexual.

One of the most notable findings by Harris and Edwards (2010) was men knew they were not expressing themselves in the best way to be men. The participants wanted to stop performing masculinity in this way but did not find anyone who supported them in behaving like the men they aspired to be. Men reported making decisions that were incongruent with their values or desires, such as drinking to excess, breaking the rules, and not caring about their academic performance, to prove manhood by living up to the expectations they felt other men held (Harris, 2008; Harris & Edwards, 2010; Harris & Harper, 2015). Harris and Harper (2010) stated “some of these men reportedly felt ‘phony’ and ‘disingenuous’ after having compromised certain values that were important to them” (p. 53). Berkowitz (2011) posited that, when it came to decisions about behavior or ethics, men ultimately valued how manly other men perceived them to be.

Informing the Current Study

The literature reviewed was used to inform the structure of the current study through a series of different steps. First, the understanding of the behavioral issues in fraternities and the way new members are onboarded helped set the stage for questions regarding the behavior(s) that fraternity men engage in and how they were socialized to accept or reject certain problematic behaviors. This understanding of expectations leads into the accountability structure within the chapter. The literature on masculinity and its impact on decision making informed questions during the interviews in order to dive more deeply into masculinity as a possible source for altering the behavior, either positively or negatively, of fraternity members. Additionally, the researcher utilized the current literature as a knowledge base when making

interpretations, as is common when utilizing interpretive phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2009).

Summary

This study aimed to understand the barriers associated with masculinity and the ability to hold brothers accountable. Fraternities are multi-dimensional organizations with rich history and traditions. The longevity, cost, and high-stakes behavioral issues have all continued to increase scrutiny of fraternity chapters. However, the literature indicates there may be many factors influencing behavioral issues, even before men come to campus much less join their fraternity chapters. Masculinity has been engrained in boys as they develop into young men long before coming to campus. This socialization influences their decision making as they work to assert a masculine identity as judged by their peers. In the process of this assertion of masculinity, mistakes and violations of fraternity expectations often occur when one is prioritizing hegemonic masculinity over the expectations. In response to these violations of expectations, fraternity members should hold each other accountable. However, this might not always happen because those charged with accountability, too, prioritize the masculine behaviors their brothers have espoused. The pressure of maintain a masculine identify influences those on both sides of the accountability process—the accused and the decision makers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Social fraternities have been a long-standing component of university culture and, today, are one of the largest entities for student involvement (Pike, 2020; Syrett, 2009; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). Fraternities often brand themselves as values-based organizations with a focus on developing young men; however, fraternities have continuously struggled with member misconduct. Research has shown fraternities are more prone to increased alcohol consumption, illegal drug use, hazing, and sexual misconduct (Caudill et al., 2006; Durkin et al., 2005; Harper et al., 2005; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). Additionally, news articles highlighting serious injuries or deaths of fraternity members are becoming common place, with over 80% of news articles on fraternities being negative (Taylor et al., 2018).

One of the hallmarks of the fraternity organizational structure is self-governance (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004). Fraternity chapters elect and appoint their own leadership and determine the course of their chapter internally, through a democratic process. These responsibilities come with the requirements for fraternities to also handle situations involving their members when misconduct occurs. However, fraternities have struggled with implementing effective practices to discourage member misconduct, both proactively and reactively (Foubert et al., 2006; Franklin et al., 2012; Reilly, 2017).

Much of the misconduct occurring in fraternities can be attributed to hegemonic, or dominant, masculinity. Previous research on fraternity men has shown that fraternities often reward and encourage behaviors associated with hegemonic masculinity, which manifests in risky behaviors (Kimmel, 2008; Harris & Edwards, 2010). Further, college men often engage in behaviors they know to be wrong or incongruent with their values system because of the

perceived benefits for performing in a socially prescribed, acceptable, masculine manner (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014). However, little is known about how masculinity may come into play when fraternity members respond to misconduct by their peers within the context of the chapter. As such, the research questions for this study sought to explore the participants' experiences with accountability and how masculinity plays a role in those experiences.

Research Questions

This study centered around answering three research questions that aligned with the study's purpose of expanding the understanding of a participant's experience with accountability in their fraternity. The research questions for this study were:

1. How do fraternity members hold each other accountable for deviating from behavioral expectations?
2. How do the methods fraternity members use to hold each other accountable influence member behavior?
3. To what extent does masculinity play a role in the methods fraternity members are willing to use to hold one another accountable?

Research Approach

Qualitative inquiry was best suited for this research because this study focused on the individual and group experience with a phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Qualitative inquiry also yields data that focuses on a naturally occurring event in its standard setting. Qualitative data analysis takes this context into account rather than removing it and treating the phenomena as isolated (Miles et al., 2014). Additionally, qualitative inquiry is well aligned with the researcher's belief of how knowledge is constructed in society, emphasizing the individual's construction of knowledge.

Epistemology

A researcher's epistemological position, also known as a research paradigm (Mertens, 2020), guides the way that a researcher views the world, and the way knowledge is constructed in the world. Maxwell (2013) posited research paradigms both guide high-level, abstract philosophical positions, and influence specific research traditions which can be applied. The constructivist paradigm, also referred to as constructivism, emphasizes socially created and constructed knowledge (Charmaz, 2014; Mertens, 2020). More specifically, truth, facts, and phenomena are informed by the individual lived experience rather than being defined by some objective outside source (Patton, 2015).

As a qualitative researcher, the researcher approaches inquiry most aligned with the constructivist paradigm. The researcher believes each person in society builds their own understanding and knowledge of the world around them based on the interactions and experiences they have. These interactions and experiences are further influenced by the context a person exists in. The context for this study was situated in a fraternity chapter. An individual's interpretation of their experiences will further cause them to assign importance and priority to this knowledge. Within the context of this study, a constructivist framework led to the decision to apply a phenomenological research design.

Research Design

Phenomenological research is a specific research design associated with the constructivist framework (Mertens, 2020). This study was designed to understand how fraternity men experience the phenomena of accountability within the context of their respective chapters. Patton (2015) stated phenomenology focuses on the way people understand experiences and translate them into knowledge. Given the constructivist approach to the study, phenomenology

was an appropriate method to understand the participants' knowledge of accountability in their fraternity as it has been constructed by their experiences.

Within phenomenological research, there are many branches one might chose to undertake. This study emphasized the lived experience of the participants with accountability but also needed to leverage the researcher's understanding of masculinity in college fraternities and among college men. Given the active role of the researcher as a part of a two-stage interpretive process, interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is the most appropriate branch of phenomenology for this study (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

IPA is focused on understanding the participant's point of view. IPA also leverages the researcher as an interpreter of the participant's experience with the phenomena. While IPA remains centered on a person's lived experience, including their emotions about or relationship with the phenomena, IPA acknowledges these emotions and relationships are complicated and may not be fully articulated by participants during the data collection process (Smith et al., 2009, Smith & Osborn, 2007). In the case of this study, the researcher was concerned that participants would not draw direct connections to masculinity within their chapter because masculinity is a construct that often impacts men's lives but is not fully realized by young men (Kimmel, 2008). The use of both the participant and researcher as sense-makers in this study helped mitigate this concern (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Researcher Role

This research project was conducted individually. There was only one person responsible for all aspects of the study. The researcher identified and selected the site, participant chapters, and individuals for study. After doing so, the researcher was responsible for collecting and analyzing documents, scheduling, and conducting interviews, and analyzing all the data

gathered. After completing data analysis, the researcher was also responsible for writing the findings of the study. The researcher did employ a transcription service to mitigate the time that would have been required to hand-transcribe the participant interviews.

Positionality

My relationship with fraternities and this topic has a long history, which has evolved over the course of my adult life. I am a white, middle-class male who grew up in a small, rural town in southeastern Michigan. I fit nearly all the expected demographics of most fraternity men (Syrett, 2009), except for one: my masculinity. While I did not, during my upbringing, identify as gay, or even have awareness of my own sexual orientation, I knew that I did not always embody the hegemonic masculine characteristics of being hyper-sexual, athletic, strong, or physically large. Upon starting my undergraduate experience, I strongly considered affiliating with a fraternity, but ultimately did not because of, what I now know as, imposter syndrome. I did not feel like I would measure up to the expectations of the men in the fraternity and would be cast as an outsider. As I have further reflected on my understanding of this situation, it became clear to me, in this situation and many in my young adulthood, that my lack of hegemonically masculine traits and the desire to appear more masculine strongly influenced my decision making.

During the latter part of my time as an undergraduate, I came out as gay, and continued to grow to understand my sexual orientation intrinsically and as a part of greater society. At this point, I was able to more clearly understand how I had come to know how the world around me perceived my masculinity, which I had closely tied to my sexuality. When I enrolled in graduate school, I served in a professional capacity supporting queer students, which allowed me to become much more comfortable with my identity as both a man and a queer person and broaden

my understanding how masculinity functions as an identity in our society. Through a series of unique opportunities, I joined a fraternity as a founding member at my university during my graduate work. Upon graduation, I spent five years serving as a student conduct professional, volunteer fraternity advisor, and educational program facilitator, among other roles in higher education. To this day, I continue to volunteer both locally and nationally for a fraternity.

These roles and experiences have given me, what I have coined, an outsider-insider status. While I am insider within my fraternity as a member, my identity as a graduate-affiliate, older (compared to my brothers), and as a gay member made me clearly different from those around me, and thus influenced my experience. However, I am close enough to fraternities and masculinity to have a thorough understanding of the innerworkings of chapters and campuses. As a conduct professional, I have also become keenly aware of the behavioral concerns that both young men and fraternities raise on college campuses. My time investigating and interviewing members has given me a unique insight into the problem under study and the need for a greater understanding of accountability within chapters.

While most of the above experiences have helped build a base of this topic from multiple angles, I am keenly aware of the need to consider other perspectives outside of mine. As my experience in a fraternity did not involve a traditional undergraduate membership, my perspective on some of the negative experiences of a fraternity may be more critical than members who are weighing them against a more positive traditional experience. Additionally, my professional and volunteer roles have made me more acutely aware of the problems that can surface within a fraternity. However, I believe it was critical to approach this research with a fair, open-minded perspective on the experiences of current members. I placed particular emphasis on

this as I have anecdotally observed changing social views on masculinity as an inherently positive trait in our society as a part of increased dialogue on social justice issues.

As part of my site selection, I intended to identify an institution and fraternity chapters where I would not have inherent power, such as an institution I have not worked at professionally or a fraternity I am not a member of or volunteer for. In doing so, I hoped to eliminate possible barriers to gathering honest, truthful information. I also hoped to build relationships with the fraternity chapter and participants to further rapport going into the study. This is particularly critical with fraternity men because many fraternities have socialized their members to believe that secrecy is critical (McCreary & Shutts, 2015). I acknowledge that my position as a former student conduct professional could have been a disadvantage if the participants believed my motives are not in the best interest of their fraternity.

Given my current and prior personal and professional role, I utilized bracketing several times during the study to minimize bias. After each interview, I wrote memos to process any bias or assumptions being made after the interviews. I also conducted bracketing after analysis of each interview. Given the interpretative nature of the study, it was critical to ensure that interpretation was not influenced by bias.

Protection of Human Subject & Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research may create a tension between the goal of obtaining knowledge and the ethical considerations for participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). To minimize these concerns, the researcher engaged in a series of actions designed to mitigate ethical concerns and risks to human subjects. First, the researchers received an institutional review board (IRB) approval for this study. This critical step in the process ensured the researcher had taken all proper steps to ensure utmost protection and risk mitigation for the participants in the project

(Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Each participant was asked to authorize consent to participate and be audio and video recorded through a secure, digital webform made available to them via QR code in advance of their interview to ensure ample time for review, questions, and, if necessary, the opportunity to withdraw from the study. The researcher was able to conduct all interviews in person, eliminating the need for a video recording. The audio recording was retained during the data analysis portion of this study and will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Participants were not compensated for their time. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the host institution, fraternity chapters, and individual member identities. The individual participants had the opportunity to select their pseudonym, though none chose to do so, and review their transcript to ensure they do not feel their identities will be compromised. The researcher did not encounter any conflicts of interest. To ensure this remained true, the researcher did not select a fraternity chapter from the same national fraternity the researcher is a member of.

Data security was critical to maintaining participants' confidence in their ability to be candid with the researcher, particularly when studying men who are members of organizations that often prioritize secrecy. Any transcripts, recordings, or other identifying information was stored digitally in a two-factor authenticated, password protected, cloud-based storage drive. Only the researcher had the password and access to the password-protected two-factor authentication device. Any physical paperwork containing confidential information was kept in a secured file cabinet in the researcher's private home office, not accessible to others. Should any data breach occurred, the researcher would have promptly informed the participant(s) impacted of the security concern. However, there were no data security breaches during this study.

The primary risk to participants in this study stemmed from the possible discomfort in addressing questions that could have evoked participants' emotions or discomfort with situations that involved questionable behavior by the participant or those whom they were very close with. The researcher directly addressed this concern at the onset of the interview with the participants through a disclaimer. The disclaimer addressed the researcher's role, and lack thereof, in reporting behavioral concerns and clearly outline what the researcher would and would not have done with information. As an educator, the researcher felt it would be critical to disclose information if there is a risk of loss of life, to the participant or otherwise, disclosed during the interview. This information, along with a resource sheet (Appendix E) for campus and community resources on topics impacting college students, such as mental health, sexual misconduct, or hazing, was shared with participants at the conclusion of the interview.

The individuals participating and chapters under study did not stand to reap immediate benefit from the study. However, the information the participants shared could have contribute to a greater understanding of dangerous behavior in fraternities and its root causes. This information could benefit future fraternity members and others impacted by these dangerous behaviors in the future. It could also enable fraternity men and others impacted by hegemonic masculinity to better confront situations where something problematic is occurring.

Sampling

For this study, any university campus with an IFC fraternity community could have been eligible site for study. On that campus, any IFC fraternity chapter could have been one of the sub-sites selected for study. IFC fraternities were studied because they represent an overwhelming majority of the fraternity population (Syrett, 2009) and are often sources of behavioral problems (Taylor et al., 2018). Additionally, cultural and academic fraternities do not

have the same membership composition that accentuates hegemonic masculinity (Harris & Harper, 2014; Hughey, 2009). Any individual who was a member of an IFC fraternity chapter, at the time of the study, at the selected as a sub-site could have served as a participant. In order to narrow down the scope the of the study, the researcher identified demographics best suited to learning more about hegemonic masculinity in the fraternity accountability experience.

This research study was conducted at a public institution, with an enrollment of approximately 18,000 undergraduate students, in the southeastern United States. The southeast is largely considered one of the most conservative parts of the United States. Many ideals comprising hegemonic masculinity are conservative in nature (Kimmel, 2008). Therefore, this study took place in the southeast in an attempt to focus on areas where masculinity has the most significant influence. Additionally, large public schools in the southeast often have substantial fraternity communities. For example, at the University of South Carolina, University of Alabama, and Auburn University, at least 22% of undergraduate men on each campus are affiliated with fraternities (U.S. News & World Report, 2020). There were two primary benefits of choosing a school with such large fraternity communities. First, there was an ample number of chapters, and members within those chapters, for the researcher to select from. However, and perhaps more importantly, fraternity membership clearly was a significant part of the student experience at the institution. Because this study sought to explore accountability within the context of fraternity membership, chapters with members who prioritized their fraternity experience over other aspects of their college experience, on campuses with strong fraternity culture, were likely to yield the richest data.

An additional component of the site selection was selecting the two chapters from the same institution for participation in the study. Two chapters were selected so the researcher

could discern cultural differences between two chapters as fraternities have strong agency to set their own culture (Anderson, 2008; Syrett, 2009). These chapters served as sites in that they were locations where members participate in their fraternity experience. Additionally, the chapter membership was given a criterion for participation when selecting individual participants, as discussed below. Given the multi-tiered support fraternities are provided, there were a few different gatekeepers for the researcher to consider.

First, the researcher approached the campus-based fraternity advisor(s) to inquire about conducting the study and identifying fraternity chapters that could be utilized for the study. The researcher only requested that chapters with extreme operational issues, such as threat of imminent closure or very small (under 15) memberships were excluded. Then, the researcher and the gatekeeper worked together to contact the recommended fraternity presidents. The gatekeeper felt it was important to provide an initial overview of the study to the chapter leadership on behalf of the researcher. The gatekeeper contacted eight chapters and two expressed an interest in the study. After the overview was conducted, the gatekeeper connected the researcher to the fraternity's president.

The researcher and the president had a digital meeting via Zoom to discuss the requirements of the study. The chapter presidents were asked to confirm their interest in participation after that interview via email. Due to low interest in the study, the first two chapters that agreed to participate were selected. Luckily, these chapters had similar demographics in line with the initial approach to chapter selection. This process took approximately four months due to transitions with officers. The researcher did consider finding a second institution for the study but did not have to do so as two chapters were recruited prior to starting data collection.

Both the site institution and selected chapters remain confidential; pseudonym chapter letters have been used throughout the study. This step was necessary given the culture of secrecy that can be established within fraternities and the fear that might have influenced the participant's authenticity if they feared repercussions for their behavior or that of their chapter. Identifying participants, chapters, or the institution might have also caused a chilling effect, whereby participants were not interested in sharing specific details due to possible personal repercussions.

The participants within each chapter were identified through a purposive sampling technique. Smith and Osborn (2007) recommend purposive sampling for IPA as purposive sampling focuses on finding participants in a more defined group who will have a significant relationship with the research question. Once site chapters were selected, all members were provided a questionnaire after a brief presentation by the researcher at a chapter meeting. Chapter presidents were also solicited to follow up with their members to encourage signing up for the study via group messages and other fraternity communication channels. Sign-ups were collected via an online webform using a standard questionnaire and the consent form. The questionnaire (Appendix A) identified key demographic information for the participant pool, such as their role in the fraternity, length of membership, and age. The researcher chose not to verify any details of those signing up for the study with the gatekeeper or chapter president to preserve anonymity. The researcher felt this decision outweighed the unlikely possibility that non-members gained access to the private forms.

The researcher intended to utilize this information to select a diverse pool of four participants per chapter for in-depth, individual interviews. However, only the minimum four members from one chapter and five from the second each indicated an interest in participation

via the survey. However, one of the five opted not to respond to a request for an interview after multiple email communications. As such, all those who signed up from each chapter and responded were selected to participate in the study. This number of participants allowed the researcher to gather a variety of experiences across fraternity membership, while gathering enough detail to develop rich descriptions of each participant's individual experience with the phenomena.

Due to trouble recruiting members from one chapter, the researcher shifted to a snowball sampling technique by leveraging the relationships of the gatekeeper and those who have already agreed to participate or had awareness of the study. This shift in recruitment approach yielded the required number of participants from each chapter.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected in sequential order from two data sources. First, a thorough document review took place for a chapter before any of the chapter's members were interviewed. After the document review was complete, the researcher conducted semi-structured, individual interviews with the chapter members selected for the sample. The use of multiple data sources is recommended (Vagle, 2018) to provide substantial understanding of the operations within each fraternity, including identifying the idealistic expectations compared to the member experience. While the interviews served as the primary data source, documents provided supplementary research data, including additional information for the knowledge base (Bowen, 2009).

Documents were the first of two data sources collected. In fraternities, documents often represent codified policies, procedures, expectations, and ideal operating practices set in place by a multitude of individuals. These documents can be generated by an individual chapter, the

national fraternity office, governing board, the university, and/or the legal system. Documents were gathered from publicly available sources and from leadership of the fraternity chapters. The researcher worked closely with fraternity leadership to ensure the security of any confidential documents. Examples of documents included new member education manuals, fraternity by-laws or articles of incorporation, national risk-management, or behavior policies. The researcher did a thorough review of the documents but did not complete analysis until after interviews were conducted. However, information obtained through the initial read through was noted on the interview protocol so the researcher could address discrepancies between espoused accountability systems and processes and what members discussed during the interviews.

After completing the preliminary review of the documents and making notes of key accountability factors, the researcher interviewed four members of each of the chapters under study. Members were contacted via email and asked to use a Doodle bookings link to reserve a 90-minute time slot on one of several predetermined interview days. The interview was anticipated to take between 60-90 minutes each. Each interview was conducted in-person on campus at the institution under study. Interviews were in person and were audio recorded using Zoom web conference software. No video recording was conducted.

The researcher utilized Zoom, even though the interviews were in person, due to its auto-transcription feature to generate preliminary interview transcripts. However, the researcher found the transcription feature in Zoom to have a high error rate and leveraged a third-party transcription service. The researcher reviewed the results from the transcription service for accuracy. The researcher reviewed the third-party transcript and made any changes necessary to align with the audio recording. The transcription generation process allowed the researcher to re-engage with the data collected during the interview, creating additional opportunities for the

interviewer to solicit meaning from the interview data (Vagle, 2018). This transcription process occurred within 30 days of each interview.

Instrumentation

Data for this study was collected from both interviews and document review. Interviews provided specific, individual understanding of accountability (the phenomena) for each member in the context of their fraternity experience. Interviews are a common method for gathering data in phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994). Including document review helped the researcher establish a baseline understanding of ideal accountability as documented by the chapter. Document review and analysis provides a systemic method for analyzing documentary data to further understanding. A systematic framework allows the researcher to gain insight and meaning through interpretation of the documents as artifacts (Bowen, 2009).

Document review took place prior to interviewing any members from the chapter associated with the documents being reviewed. Documents were kept in separate catalogs for each chapter. The preliminary review focused on information gathering and any coding or deep analysis of the documents occurred after all interviews were completed. The researcher utilized a matrix to record key information about each document and to prompt the collection of key data points relevant to the document and its association with the phenomena. The matrix can be found in Appendix B. The matrices from this document review process were also referenced during the full analysis of the documents.

Phenomenological research is, at its core, concerned with the participant's experience with the phenomenon (Vagle, 2018). A semi-structured interview can provide the space for a participant to discuss themes from their everyday lived experience (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This interview style presents a series of guiding questions in sequence to be covered but

maintains flexibility to change as important topics surface and need to be further explored (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The researcher utilized a protocol to guide the interviews with the flexibility Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) have advocated for.

An interview protocol (Appendix C) was developed by the researcher to set a consistent framework for gathering data through the interview. This interview protocol was refined after being tested in two interviews as a part of a pilot study. The participants in the pilot study were debriefed on question flow and clarity and their feedback informed modifications to verbiage and sentence structure in the final interview protocol. The interviews were semi-structured, using open-ended questions. While research traditions support both unstructured and semi-structured interviews as suitable for phenomenological research (Vagle, 2018), scholars of IPA have posited that semi-structured interviews are most consistent with the goals of IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The questions in the interview protocol aligned to the research questions under study. The researcher did not share specific questions with the participants in advance of the study, hoping this mitigated prepared or canned responses. However, in a reminder email sent to participants two days in advance of their interview, participants were informed of some of the high-level topics to be discussed to prompt them to begin thinking about accountability (Appendix D). Sharing these topics was designed to mitigate a lack of understanding or preparedness given that each participant was only interviewed one time. There was no formal instrument for notetaking during the interview as the interviews were audio recorded, allowing the researcher to maintain focus and attention to the participant (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Analysis was not conducted on any interviews until all interviews had been completed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred at multiple phases throughout this study, dependent on the data and the objective of the step of analysis. As Vagle (2018) offered, analyzing phenomenological data can be overwhelming given the volume of data. Therefore, a thorough, methodical approach to data analysis is outlined in this section. The first component of data analysis leveraged the notes recorded in the various iterations of the document review matrices (Appendix B), conducted prior to interviews. This review phase did not consist of a full, systematic analysis of the data. Rather, this step gave the research a cursory familiarity with the documents and their content. The information obtained during the review phase was utilized in preparing for interviews so the researcher could ask questions about any discrepancies between what chapters have memorialized in writing, procedure, and policy and how they were engaging in accountability in their day-to-day operations.

Documents, while static in nature, can still yield rich, detailed qualitative data which contributes to a greater understanding of the phenomena (Bowen, 2009). Prior to formally analyzing each document, the researcher reviewed the codes from the matrix and associated memos. Then, a formal analysis, using descriptive coding, occurred for all gathered documents. Descriptive coding suits document review because it calls for an inventory of topics which are covered by the artifact (Saldaña, 2021), in this case a document. During this process, the researcher continued to generate additional reflective and analytical memos. The codes generated from the document analysis were maintained separately from the first cycle codes from the interviews. The two were later merged as part of a transitional process described below.

Phenomenological interviews are known for their deep, intensive examination of the topic (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The interviews that were conducted with participants yielded

lengthy, detailed, extensive transcripts, thus creating a large amount of raw data. A structured analysis plan helped the researcher make meaning of large amounts of data (Flick, 2014). The first step in the data analysis process was to generate transcripts. The researcher utilized a transcription service for generation of initial transcripts, as previously described. After receiving the transcripts back, the researcher read each transcript, without any coding steps, alongside listening to the recording to re-acquaint himself with the data and make minor corrections to auto-transcription errors (Miles et al., 2014). Prior to beginning analysis, the researcher contacted all participants via email to conduct member checks of the transcripts. Two participants responded confirming the accuracy of the transcripts while the other six did not respond by the stated deadline. Member checks offer the participant the chance to ensure the transcript is accurate and correctly captures what they were communicating during the interview, reducing the chance that the researcher could misinterpret the data (Miles et al., 2014).

Having received no feedback from member checks, the researcher then moved into the coding phase of the interview analysis. The transcripts were reviewed multiple times to allow the researcher to capture the essence of the participants responses. As is common in IPA, the researcher took reflective notes on a clean copy of the transcripts, making notes of initial ideas which surfaced during the first reading (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Phenomenology focuses on capturing the participants perspective and view, which aligns with the use of inductive coding, whereby the code book is built as the data is analyzed (Saldaña, 2021). Further, phenomenological tradition focuses on a person's essence or emotion with the phenomena (Vagle, 2018), which influenced the coding approach the researcher utilized.

There are numerous coding approaches one can use in qualitative research to review data, each with their own attention to the data in a unique way (Saldaña, 2021). To begin the interview

analysis, after completing the initial read-through and development of initial ideas, the researcher used In Vivo codes, focusing on exact excerpts from the participants' transcripts. Each transcript was coded using In Vivo coding as the first step in the coding process. Each transcript yielded approximately 400 In Vivo codes, generating over 3200 total In Vivo codes. In Vivo coding is appropriate for phenomenological research because it directly focuses on the participants' words and honors their voice. In Vivo coding is also commonly aligned with research questions which focus on the constructivist epistemology (Saldaña, 2021), the paradigm used for this study.

After completing the initial In Vivo coding of a single unit (interview), the researcher moved immediately into a more detailed, interpretive coding process. Interpretive coding involves the researcher making notes or exploratory comments to begin to make meaning from excerpts in the transcript (Smith et al., 2009). This process took place with each case before returning to start with another unit of data at the beginning of the In Vivo process. Moving through both first-cycle coding steps is ideal in IPA so the analyst recalls their interpretations when making coding decision (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). During the second coding of the initial transcripts and In Vivo codes, the researcher began to develop interpretive codes based on the experiences and situations most important to the participant.

During the interpretive coding process, each In Vivo code was interpreted for underlying meaning. The In Vivo codes were sorted into various codes based on the component of the fraternity experience each participant discussed. The interpretive coding process generated over 40 different groupings, what the researcher referred to as categories. Each of the over 3200 codes were placed into a single category based on the topic area, in line with the question posed during the interview.

Upon completion of both rounds of first cycle coding, the researcher moved to second cycle coding with an emphasis on developing emergent themes and looking at connections across cases from the interview data. Prior to starting this process, the researcher used a code mapping process to sort the code lists from the various iterations of first cycle coding. The code mapping process allowed the researcher to reorganize data into meaningful themes or categories prior to undergoing a second cycle process (Saldaña, 2021). The second cycle coding yielded what became the five themes for this study. Pattern coding was used for the second cycle coding. Pattern coding is useful when there are large amounts of data and the researcher is seeking to distil the data down into a more succinct code book (Miles et al., 2014).

The researcher conducted pattern coding deductively, developing a list of pattern codes that were applied to the transcripts based on the information that emerged from the first cycle coding. At this point, the researcher returned to the In Vivo codes and the interpretive comments to appropriately assign them to pattern codes. After all transcripts were pattern coded, a code-frequency matrix was developed, which shows how often each pattern code had been applied.

During the final phases of analysis, the researcher compared the themes from the interview process, generated from the pattern coding, and the themes that emerged from document review. The goal of comparing the themes from these data sources was to enable the researcher to make interpretations from what the espoused, documented accountability processes are and what is occurring in practice in the chapter. For example, if a chapter is violating the expectations set forth in their bylaws or other published documentation and simultaneous values masculine behaviors which would call for such violations, the researcher wanted to be able to make note of this emerging theme.

Throughout the coding process, the researcher utilized a manual coding system, allowing the research to physically engage with printed copies of the data. As a reader, the researcher has always been drawn to manipulating words on the physical page. Codes were recorded directly on copies of the transcripts and then transferred into a codebook maintained using a digital repository. The researcher also utilized analytical and reflective memos to document initial reactions, thoughts, concerns, or wonderings which arose during the coding process. These memos were reviewed and considered data as part of the study (Saldaña, 2021). This strategy is particularly useful for an IPA approach as the researcher is also making meaning of the data and interprets meaning from portions of the data (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Data Quality

As a tenant of qualitative research, establishing credibility of data is a key component of quality research. External critics of qualitative research have often pointed to the subjective nature of qualitative research as a criticism to its validity and credibility (Miles et al., 2014). As such, the researcher utilized multiple strategies to ensure data quality and credibility is maintained, thus ensuring trustworthiness. In phenomenological research, it is important to consider credibility of the data as skeptics have called into question the applicability of researcher rooted in an individual's experience (Vagle, 2018). To mitigate these concerns, the researcher utilized member checking, peer debriefs, and systematic reflection. The researcher also conducted a pilot study to refine the methodology for this study. These strategies are appropriate for phenomenological research because the focus of the study is on the participant voice and there is not a goal of being able to validate these experiences with outside data (Vagle, 2018).

Member checking occurred in two phases. First, participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts, prior to coding. Each participant was given a 14-day window to review their transcript and provide any feedback on the transcription, should they have felt the need to clarify any answers or correct any errors that occurred during transcription. Only two participants responded to this outreach, indicating their approval of the transcripts. No requests were made for changes. The other six participants did not respond before the conclusion of the 14-day window. The researcher also hoped this process would build credibility with the participants, so they did not feel what is said in the interview was set in stone. A second round of member checks also occurred near the conclusion of data analysis, this time focused on the emerging codes and themes. The researcher wrote a summary report of initial themes and findings associated with each interview in conjunction with a summary of overall study themes. This information was shared back with participants with prompts for direct feedback. The researcher used these prompts to focus the member checks with hopes of increasing participation in this critical quality strategy. Sharing this information was designed to ensure there is no misinterpretation of the information garnered from the interviews. Member checks can be one of the most important ways to rule out any misunderstanding of an individual's perspectives (Maxwell, 2013). Unfortunately, no participants responded to the prompts for feedback and no adjustments were made to the interviews.

The researcher engaged in peer debriefs with members of the dissertation committee and experts on collegiate fraternities. Peer debriefs involve engaging in dialogue with those close to, but not a part of, the research study or the topic (Lietz et al., 2006). The researcher engaged in debriefs at multiple points throughout the data collection and analysis process. First, the

researcher debriefed the data collection process. The researcher also engaged in a debrief after data analysis is complete, before writing findings.

During the data analysis process, the researcher engaged in several strategies designed to capture critical data to the reflective process. During the initial read through of the transcripts, the researcher used memos to record initial reactions, thoughts, or concerns which came up. This process is also referred to as bracketing. In phenomenological research, bracketing is the process where a researcher makes notes of their past knowledge so they can be fully present in existing data (Vagle, 2018). Bracketing also helps bring awareness to the bias the researcher may be experiencing so they can appropriately acknowledge and respond to it during the analysis process. Detailed memoing also produces an audit trail. An audit trail allows the researcher to justify the analysis process and decisions (Lietz et al., 2006), which is particularly important in IPA, where the researcher is making some interpretation decisions about the participants' experiences.

Finally, the researcher also conducted a pilot study focused on the interview data collection and analysis plan. The interview protocol was initially developed as a part of an assignment in the doctoral program and was utilized with two participants who fit many of the demographics required to participate under the current protocol. Additionally, the participants in the pilot study were asked to provide feedback on the questions after the conclusion of the interview which was considered during refinement of the current interview protocol. The refinement process aims to create an interview process which solicits as much rich, valuable data as possible (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Based on this feedback, the researcher revised some terminology in the interview protocol to align more closely with terms participants used during pilot interviews. The pilot study participants also suggested it would have been helpful for them

to have a general idea of what the topics of conversation would be. The researcher also felt this could be a productive step prior to the interview and created a pre-interview prompt email (Appendix E). During one interview, a participant was clearly uncomfortable sharing information with the researcher. This has caused the researcher to review plans to build rapport prior to the interview.

Limitations

Limitations listed in this section address potential concerns beyond the researcher's scope of influence, resulting from methodological choices or other research design components. First, this study relied on the fraternity chapters selected and the associated member experiences to try and understand accountability and its intersection with masculinity. The researcher hoped to mitigate this concern by utilizing two fraternity chapters. Given there were only two chapters volunteering for the study, the researcher could not consider the behavioral record of the chapter when selecting a participant chapter. Had there been a surplus of chapters, the researcher could have considered this factor and yielded findings based on behavioral record in the chapter.

Another limitation of this study can be linked to the participant recruitment process. The plan relied on students self-indicating their interest in the study after being identified by a peer during purposive sampling. Participating in extra-curricular activities, such as a fraternity, can be counter intuitive to the hegemonic masculinity characteristic of devoting time to anything above the minimum (Kimmel, 2008). As such, the participants for the study were less likely to conform to hegemonic ideals. However, individuals who were less involved would have been ideal participants as they were likely to be more influenced by masculinity as an element of their decision making.

Summary

This chapter presents the details of the methodological considerations for this study. First, the researcher's role and position within the study are situated. As an interpretive phenomenological approach, the researcher's positionality is key given the more active role they take in the interpretation of the data (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Next, details and rationale were provided for how the researcher to identified chapters and participants to study and interview as a part of this research project. Given the large amount of data generated from this study, a thorough data collection and analysis discussion is presented. Finally, the researcher acknowledges limitations which were present in this research design.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the impact masculinity has on a fraternity chapter's accountability process. Two different undergraduate fraternity chapters were studied as a part of this research. Data was gathered from documents produced by both fraternities. Additionally, four members of each chapter participated in an in-depth interview. Each interview was analyzed multiple times and themes were established to answer the research questions posed in this study. As a reminder, the three research questions for this study were:

1. How do fraternity members hold each other accountable for deviating from behavioral expectations?
2. How do the methods fraternity members use to hold each other accountable influence member behavior?
3. To what extent does masculinity play a role in the methods fraternity members are willing to use to hold one another accountable?

This chapter provides a summary of the data collection procedures, the organizations participating in the study, the participants interviewed, and findings organized by themes, aligned with each research question. The five themes discussed in this chapter are: formal expectations only a formality, herd mentality: informal expectations of the group, informal accountability is the real accountability, being a man is prioritized, and culture and context set the tone.

Procedure Summary

In line with phenomenological research, data gathered through document review and participant interviews were analyzed in multiple cycles to understand the fraternity members'

essence of the lived experience with accountability. Prior to conducting interviews, documents were analyzed to gather an understanding of the espoused values of the chapters (Saladaña, 2021). Utilizing a standard matrix, documents were analyzed for expectations and values of the chapters. Multiple rounds of data analysis were conducted after transcribing the interviews.

Prior to conducting analysis, each interview was read, independent of any coding, to reacquaint the researcher with the data (Vagle, 2018). In the first round of data analysis, In Vivo coding was conducted, to extract exact excerpts from the participants. In Vivo coding allowed the researcher to capture the language used to describe the participant's relationship with the phenomena. The interviews were coded a second time, as a part of the first cycle, to interpret the meaning from participants. The second round of coding used pattern coding to identify patterns across each of the developed categories. Using these patterns, the five themes discussed in this chapter emerged from the data.

Organization Summaries

The first step in selecting participants for this study was to select two IFC fraternity chapters at the institution of study. The researcher worked with the campus fraternity advisor to contact chapter leaders to gather potential participant organizations. After identifying the two organization for the study, the researcher presented at a chapter meeting to recruit participants. Interviewing members of two chapters ensured the findings accounted for possible cultural differences created within the chapter's membership. The chapter leadership assisted in locating documents related to accountability and expectations of each chapter for the researcher to review. Additionally, the chapter leaders provided context for the demographics of their chapter on the campus. A brief summary of fraternity chapter's demographic details and history on campus is presented below.

Beta Gamma Chapter

The Beta Gamma chapter has had a presence on campus for 53 years, one of the longest running chapters at the institution without an interruption in their charter. The chapter leadership took pride in their tenure, mentioning it is a key part of how they carry themselves compared to other chapters. At the time of the study, the chapter had around 125 members and recruited an average of 30-35 new members each year. Many of the members of the chapter are students from out of state, particularly states in the northeast. Participants identified regionality as a part of their chapter's identity. They also shared that there is a clear distinction in the IFC community between chapters with a northern culture and those with a southern culture. Many of the members joined Beta Gamma because they desired to be in a chapter with other out of state students.

Eta Sigma Chapter

The Eta Sigma chapter has been on campus for only 20 years, a short amount of time according to the members. Chapter leadership identified Eta Sigma as a relatively new chapter with opportunity to shape their identity on campus. In particular, the leadership mentioned a recent shift in culture of the chapter away from being highly social, with heavy drug use, to being better members of the campus and IFC community. As such, they felt this shift gave them an opportunity to reestablish their identity. At the time of the study, the chapter had just over 100 members. Like the Beta Gamma chapter, many of the chapter members were from the northeast United States and the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Eta Sigma members also identified their hometowns as a part of their chapter's culture and echoed the sentiment about regionality being a clear distinction in the IFC community. However, the chapter leaders stated Eta Sigma had members from all over the United States.

Participant Summaries

There were eight participants across the two chapters, four from each chapter, who participated in interviews for this study. Participants opted into the study after a brief presentation about the study objectives. There were nine chapter members who expressed interest. Eight interviews were interviewed as the ninth did not respond to a request for an interview. The participants ranged in age and tenure in their chapter, from as young as 19 to as old as 21. Participants reported being in their chapter for as few as two semesters to as many as six. All eight participants had some level of involvement in their chapter's leadership. Seven of the eight participants were in their sophomore or junior year at the university. There were significant demographic differences between the participants from the Beta Gamma chapter and the Eta Sigma chapter. Beta Gamma members interviewed were all younger, had less time in the fraternity, and served as committee leaders. Eta Sigma members comprised the older participants, with all but one being 21 and most having two full years in their fraternity. Additionally, all Eta Sigma members interviewed were actively serving or had previously served as executive board members of their chapter. Only four to five members of chapter serve as an executive board member per year, thus they have a more unique perspective than most members.

Demographic data points were gathered via the enrollment survey where participants were asked to self-report basic demographic data while indicating their willingness to be interviewed for the study. All eight participants identified as cisgender, heterosexual, white men. This is important to note as gender identity, sexual orientation, and race all have correlation with what a culture identifies as masculine behavior. Holding these identities also put all eight participants in the majority within their chapter. Prior research indicates racial identity and components of masculinity are intertwined. However, because all participants identified as white,

it was not possible to ascertain how racial demographics impacted masculinity in the context of this study. The table below illustrates the demographics reported by each participant.

Table 2

Summary of Member Demographics (as self-identified by members)

Participant pseudonym	Class year	Chapter affiliation	Age	Semesters in fraternity	Position category
Christopher	Sophomore	Beta Gamma	19	3	Committee leadership
Jacob	Sophomore	Beta Gamma	20	4	Committee leadership
Jordan	Sophomore	Beta Gamma	19	4	Committee leadership
Sam	Freshman	Beta Gamma	19	2	Committee leadership
Tanner	Junior	Eta Sigma	21	3	Executive board
Anthony	Junior	Eta Sigma	21	6	Executive board
Ian	Junior	Eta Sigma	21	6	Executive board
Don	Sophomore	Eta Sigma	20	4	Executive board

Beta Gamma Chapter Members

Four members of Beta Gamma participated in interviews for this study. All four members held various committee roles within the chapter. However, the average time of membership and age of the members was lower than the members of the Eta Sigma chapter. None of the roles the Beta Sigma members held directly positioned them to hold peers accountable for their behavior within the chapter. The Beta Gamma members presented an experience more typical of a majority of the chapter, given that only a small number serve as executive board members each year.

Christopher

Christopher was a full-time undergraduate student in his sophomore year majoring in marketing. He was in his third semester in the chapter at the time of his interview and joined during the spring semester as a spring admit, meaning he joined during his first semester at the university. Christopher had taken on a prominent committee leadership position, serving as the recruitment chair. Christopher was originally from a large city in the northeastern United States,

though he had previous association with the university from family members. He mentioned his region of origin as being particularly salient, because most the members his chapter are not from the southeast, stating “I’m coming from the north. And a lot of those people, and in my organization, they were from a similar area.” Christopher expressed interest in joining a fraternity as a method for meeting new people. Specifically, he referenced having the opportunity to be exposed to fraternities on visits to the institution prior to enrollment.

Jacob

Jacob was a full-time undergraduate student in his sophomore year majoring in chemical engineering. He was in his fourth semester in the chapter at the time of the interview, having joined during the fall recruitment of his first semester at the university. Jacob served as the chapter’s academic and scholarship chair. Jacob was also from the northeast United States but had connection to campus because a family member had gone to Southeastern University. Jacob’s father was a member of Beta Gamma and his mother and sibling had also been in a sorority and fraternity as well, meaning Jacob had previous exposure to the idea of fraternity membership prior to starting college.

Jordan

Jordan was a full-time undergraduate student in his sophomore year, studying biochemistry on a pre-medical school path. Unlike the other Beta Gamma members interviewed, Jordan’s hometown was in the southeastern United States. While Jordan was from the same region as most of the student population, he felt this was a salient identity because it was different from most of the other Beta Gamma members. Jordan was hesitant to rush he was concerned how being in a fraternity might impact his relationship with this partner. However, Jordan ultimately decided to join a fraternity during his first semester at Southeastern University.

Jordan did not have prior exposure to fraternities but held a negative perception of fraternities. He stated “Previously, nobody in my family had ever been in Greek life, so the only influence they had was people telling me that they were just dumb business majors who wanted to party.” However, during rush, Jordan felt comfortable with the activities and connections that occurred during the rush process. He identified his connection to the older members as the primary reason he joined Beta Gamma. Jacob and Jordan joined at the same time, meaning their new member process occurred together.

Sam

Sam was a full-time undergraduate in his freshman year from California. He was in his second semester in the chapter, having joined during the previous fall semester. Sam was the youngest participant interviewed for the study, the only one still in their first year at Southeastern University. Sam mentioned wanting to come to SU to have access to a “typical football experience.” Sam was motivated to join a fraternity because he was far away from home and wanted to meet people. Sam also specifically mentioned meeting a friend who was also going through the fraternity recruitment process. Sam joined Beta Gamma because he made connections with some of the members who are in Jacob and Jordan’s new member class. Despite being in his first year, he had taken on a committee leadership role at the beginning of the semester.

Eta Sigma Chapter Members

Four members of Eta Sigma volunteered to participate in this study. Unlike Beta Gamma, the Eta Sigma members were all older, with three being 21 or older. Additionally, all four members held executive board roles in the chapter either at the time of the interview or in the semester immediately preceding the interview. Seniority gave Eta Sigma members a different

positional perspective as members charged with significant knowledge of chapter operations and a more formal role in the accountability structure of the chapter.

Tanner

Tanner was a full-time undergraduate transfer student in his junior year. Tanner transferred to Southeastern University in the spring 2022 semester and joined Eta Sigma during the same semester. Tanner is from the northeast United States, like many of the participants from this study. Prior to coming to SU, Tanner was a collegiate athlete but wanted to focus more on his academics. Knowing he would not play sports at SU, Tanner thought joining a fraternity would replace the team mentality, which was important to him as a long-time athlete. Tanner took interest in Eta Sigma because they have a national association with a non-profit organization that Tanner had previously volunteered for. Tanner also noted that he was able to connect with the other members of Eta Sigma because they were also from the northeast. Ultimately, Tanner joined Eta Sigma because he had good connections with the members. This was a priority for him based on his past playing sports, stating “I just needed my guys.” At the time of his interview, Tanner was serving in an executive leadership role in the chapter.

Anthony

Anthony was a full-time undergraduate student, from New Jersey, in his junior year at the time of the interview. Anthony was interested in joining a fraternity because he had been exposed to fraternities when visiting his brother, who was a fraternity member, at another university. Anthony saw the opportunity to make friends and connections and pursued joining Eta Sigma during the first semester of his first year at Southeastern University. Anthony’s recruitment process was unique as it took place via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Anthony joined Eta Sigma because he believed it was less “cliquey” than other chapters; that is brothers had a closer relationship across all the various new member classes.

Anthony was studying criminal justice and had a desire to work in law enforcement after graduation. As such, Anthony took it upon himself to hold roles in Eta Sigma that aligned with his interests, such as serving as the chapter’s risk manager and overseeing the judicial board. Anthony was the participant best positioned, in the entire study, to have a role that required he ensured formal accountability occurred based on the formal expectations and process.

Ian

Ian was a full-time undergraduate in his junior year from Maryland. Ian was interested in joining a fraternity because he wanted to surround himself with like-minded people and make friends when first coming to SU. Ian also was friends with other undergraduates who were planning to join Eta Sigma and he felt this would be a good opportunity to join a chapter where he would know some of the members. Ian also joined during the COVID-19 recruitment process, meeting members via Zoom prior to starting on campus later in the fall semester. Ian did not get involved in leadership roles during his first couple of years in the chapter. However, Ian took interest and ran for president of the chapter and served in that role the year prior to being interviewed for the study. During the study, Ian described his current involvement as significantly scaled down and stated he had been serving more as a “mini advisor” to the current chapter leadership.

Don

Don was a full-time sophomore undergraduate from Virginia during the time of his interview. Don had previous exposure to fraternities because his father was a member of another fraternity during college. However, Don mentioned that his father’s experience was not as

significant because he did not keep in touch with his brothers. Don shared that his primary motivation to join a fraternity was to meet other people given that he was an out-of-state student who had only two friends from his hometown who came to Southeastern University. He joined Eta Sigma because he related to the members during the recruitment process. Don became involved in chapter leadership by serving as the recruitment chairman and was serving as the chapter president at the time of the interview. Don touched on how his role gave him significant responsibility for the chapter and ensuring accountability, amongst other things, was a priority for the members.

Themes

This section focuses on the themes created from the eight interviews and the documents analyzed for each chapter. The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of masculinity on accountability processes within fraternity chapters. The five themes are presented with a discussion of each subtheme. The themes were identified after completing multiple rounds of coding of the interviews. The analysis of the documents served to identify consistencies or incongruences between the documented practices of the chapter and what participants reported was happening in practice.

Findings

During data analysis, five themes emerged that conveyed the experiences that fraternity members had with accountability, behavior, and masculinity during their fraternity experience. Members described both theoretical and policy driven ideals and expectations while also sharing a variety of stories that highlighted either congruence, or more often incongruence, with the stated expectations. Additionally, the participants frequently highlighted the impact of

masculinity on their experiences with accountability and fraternity membership, even without being directly asked.

The five themes each have sub-themes which emerged during the data analysis. The five themes are: formal expectations are only a formality, herd mentality: informal expectations of the group, informal accountability is the real accountability, being a man prioritized, and culture and context set the tone. While these themes and subthemes will be presented individually, the sentiments the participants expressed intertwined significantly. Additionally, the participants were unaware, during the interviews, how they were emphasizing masculinity in the fraternity experience. The researcher has interpreted these tenants of masculinity in the presentation of the findings. The table below provides a full list of each theme, sub theme, and a brief description of what each entail.

Table 3

Summary of Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes	Description
Formal Expectations only a Formality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown Amongst Members • Behavioral Incongruence with Expectations • Ignoring Violations 	Formal expectations only as a formality highlights the lack of awareness members had about these expectations. It also captures how there is often incongruence between what is espoused in writing versus what is happening in practice, by ignoring violations or condoning behaviors that are in direct conflict with formal expectations of the chapter and its members.
Herd Mentality: Informal Expectations of the Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Came Before Us • Assimilation to the Culture • Go Along to Get Along 	This theme captures how being part of the group is driven by the members' expectations of one another. Experiences were driven by fitting in, understanding what their predecessors valued, and quickly figuring out how to behave in a way that allowed members to be part of the "in" crowd.
Informal Accountability is the Real Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on Peer Perceptions • Happens all the Time 	When there was an issue, participants overwhelmingly valued informal accountability and emphasized the effectiveness of being told by a peer that they were let down. Participants lacked the ability to share stories of formal

Table 3*Summary of Themes and Subthemes (continued)*

		accountability but had frequent experiences with informal accountability during their time in the chapter.
Being a Man Prioritized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status for “the Man” • It’s All About “Girls” • Guys Being Guys 	Masculinity was a thread identified by all participants. From prioritizing sex with women, sports, drinking, being social, working out, and being “successful,” masculinity was pervasive throughout the day-to-day experiences of the members. Participants also shared experiences where individuals or the entire chapter culture benefited or changed to prioritize typical behaviors of a male college student.
Culture and Context Set the Tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is in the Room? • Hierarchy on Campus 	Chapter members talked about the context of their chapter at the institution, within Greek life, and their membership. Participants had varied experiences between the two chapters but also had shared experiences set by their campus and identified how campus culture changed the way things were done.

Formal Expectations only a Formality

Formal expectations only a formality captures the participants’ experiences with the formal expectations placed on fraternity members. It also considers what is codified in policy and documentation provided for document review. A comparison of the documents and chapter members’ experiences with accountability is presented. As illustrated by the subthemes below, formal accountability was the least known, used, or preferred approach to accountability.

Unknown Amongst Members. Each participant was asked to describe how they came to learn the formal expectations of their respective chapters. Most of the participants identified the new member process as the time when formal expectations are taught to brothers. The new member process contains many different elements of learning what it means to be a part of the chapter. Learning the formal expectations and accountability process is just one small component of the process. Christopher described his experience learning the formal expectations:

Yeah, it's ... through the new member process. We got a gist of what it would look like ... we were educated on just all of the strict rules of being an organization, but I got the feel for how strict each rule was after I was initiated.

Christopher's experience explained how members are first introduced to formal expectations, but over time, learn to prioritize certain things over others. Anthony, whose primary role is the chapter's judicial process, stated Eta Sigma brothers regularly discuss expectations as part of their chapter meetings. However, none of the other three participants from his chapter highlighted these discussions, calling into question the impact these discussions served in helping members learn the rules.

The Eta Sigma members also highlighted a second opportunity to learn the formal expectations based on the roles that they held. Because two of the members interviewed served in the presidency and one as the judicial board chair, their respective roles required that they have knowledge of the key operational elements of their chapter. Tanner explained how he became more aware of expectations as he assumed a leadership position: "But I would say I learned probably the formal rules from stepping into an executive position. I'll admit I didn't read the bylaws when I got 'em [sic] sent." The Eta Sigma brothers also confirmed members rarely took much away from their new member process as given the participants had to re-learn the rules when they took on their roles. Tanner directly associated being in a leadership role -- often limited to four or five members per year out of the over 100 in the chapter -- as the way he came to learn the formal expectations. Tanner's example showed an ineffectiveness to Anthony's perspective about Eta Sigma's goal of educating new members on the formal expectations.

In one case, a participant could not name one of his chapter's formal expectations, something his peers did not struggle to do. When asked to describe the formal expectations for

his chapter, Sam stated “I wouldn't really say that there's a large written rule book per se, but it's just more, I guess, traditionally expectation [sic]. A lot of us look up to the older guys, and we just do as they expect.” Not only could Sam not describe a formal expectation, but he also showed a lack of awareness that there might be documents describing such expectations. However, the chapter provided several documents regarding fraternity behavior as part of this study.

During document review, it was clear that the formal expectations were documented with great detail and clarity. However, the documents were all several dozen pages long and written in a very legal manner. As Tanner mentioned, he did not read these documents until he came into a leadership role. Similarly, Beta Gamma members, who did not hold executive leadership positions within the chapter, made no mention of the formal documents.

Another factor identified as a part of this sub-theme was that most formal expectations come from outside the SU chapter of each fraternity studied. For example, each document reviewed was a national publication which governed operations of all chapters of each respective fraternity chapter in the United States. Only two participants knew the process to amend some of these requirements. Jacob explained, “that's why it's kind of fluctuated a little bit. But it all depends on what we do in the chapter.” Only three participants discussed the option to make these formal changes and indicated the chapter primarily adhered to what came from external sources.

External sources “heavily” influence the chapter’s rules, according to Anthony, but most members do not realize the “behind the scenes” impacts of the external sources. Anthony’s description emphasized this theme: most chapter member do not have any idea how many rules exist. Anthony, unlike his chapter brothers, had a unique understanding of campus expectations

given his role as the chapter risk manager. He described, in detail, expectations involving alcohol that were in place because of the campus IFC policy.

IFC has the rule of no alcohol above 14% ... a lot of times brothers will come, and they will bring a handle of something and they'll be 21 years old...but they don't know that IFC rules don't allow us to do that.

Anthony's quote directly illustrates that "they," chapter brothers, do not know the formal expectations and he frequently encounters situations where he was enforcing them as one of the few members who possessed a complete understanding.

Behavioral Incongruence with Expectations. A second way members demonstrated the formal expectations are only a formality was by behaving incongruently with the stated expectations. The most discussed example was drinking underage. For example, every participant knew it was illegal to drink under 21. It was an expectation from multiple sources, including in the documents reviewed for this study, but it still occurred frequently.

Underage drinking was an area of behavior incongruence identified by all participants in the study. Jacob acknowledged Beta Gamma has a national expectation of members not to drink alcohol: "Obviously there's, Beta Gamma, nationally is a dry fraternity. And I'm not going to say we don't drink." Jordan also noted Beta Gamma's status as a dry fraternity nationally. Sam and Christopher also confirmed drinking occurred in the chapter. Eta Sigma was not a nationally dry organization, but all four members stated underage drinking occurs within the chapter, despite being against the law and fraternity policy.

Incongruence was often chalked up to being part of the college culture; partying, going to the bars, and being something college men do. Some participants minimized these behaviors by

identifying mechanisms in place to mitigate potential harm. Anthony described Eta Sigma's philosophy about underage drinking:

As long as people aren't acting out, we do...watch-style policing...[they're] not really causing an issue...we'll kind of just look the other way. So, if you see a younger guy downtown, if they're drinking responsibly and they're not causing any problems and nothing along those lines, it's...all right.

He went on to describe being out at the bar as "enjoying their Saturday night," and stated they would "look the other way, which...we're not supposed to do." Ian, Tanner, and Don also confirmed underage drinking was a common occurrence in the chapter.

Another area where incongruence occurred was the way fraternity members interacted with women. One of the few formal expectations members knew about was they were not supposed to mistreat women. While the specifics were not well defined, members used words like "respect" and "not be creepy" when discussing the expectations. Don discussed a few key points: "That could be offensive things, inappropriate things that are way too forward. ... It's trying to kiss a girl if she doesn't want to." Don's sentiment aligned with many of the other participants about how they should treat women.

However, a few members shared examples of situations where they did not talk about women in a respectful way, particularly when talking about sexual interactions. Don described some of the banter about women as "locker room talk," not something they would want others to hear. Jacob also confirmed hooking up with women was a priority for members in Beta Gamma. So, while both chapters had stated values of treating women respectfully, it was a regular occurrence for members to behave in a way that objectified women.

According to some participants, incongruence even appeared in the chapter as members did not align with their chapter's published values. In some cases, participants did not draw attention to this fact. But, through their examples of the members' behaviors, it was clear members were not held accountable for incongruence with the chapter's values. Chapter values were addressed repeatedly in the documents reviewed. Jordan identified moral rectitude as a value in Beta Gamma and stated there are many times when members did not display moral rectitude through their actions.

Incongruence with values appeared subtly within a member's experiences. Tanner talked about how members "have different values of what's wrong and what's right" despite being in an organization with shared values. Christopher shared an example about academics. While one of the values of Beta Gamma was to be academically sound, members who were "extremely, extremely smart" ended up being "outliers" rather than being included or valued for their contribution. This example underscored the subtlety of how incongruence with the espoused values appeared as part of the member's experience.

Ignoring Violations. Unlike incongruence, which focused on allowing or encouraging prohibited behaviors, ignoring violations was more subtle. Ignoring a violation was often rationalized for a variety of reasons. This theme was woven throughout anecdotes about peer behaviors. It also came up when discussing awareness of systems designed to respond to violations of formal expectations. In both the Eta Sigma and Beta Gamma chapters, participants named judicial boards as the primary way to respond to formal violations. Throughout the interviews, ignoring violations seemed connected to both the participants' and the chapter's perception of formal accountability.

Only participants in leadership roles had a clear understanding of how the formal accountability process worked. Anthony, who oversaw Eta Sigma's accountability process, gave the most robust explanation of the composition and basic operation of their chapter's judicial board:

So that's made up of a senior, a junior, sophomore and freshman, and then one wildcard, which it can be someone in any grade. And that's just our hearing board. When something goes wrong and we have to deal with something, we hear through the process, we hear both or multiple sides of the story, then we deliberate and come up with a sanction that should be on that [behavior].

While Anthony explained how the judicial board operates, he did not explain further, with specific examples, what is meant by "something goes wrong" and "have [sic] to deal" with something. Eta Sigma members all spoke about the existence of the judicial board and seemed more inclined to say it would be used. However, they acknowledged some members may not know if a judicial board hearing was held because chapter leadership would not disclose the details of the situation. When asked why outcomes of judicial board hearings would not be shared, Anthony responded, "Just the privacy of the individuals involved. So, it's just one of those things where not everyone wants their business being aired out." This calls into question how a lack of awareness of the judicial board process to the chapter might impact members' behaviors and further perpetuate a narrative that violations are going ignored.

Violations were also ignored by reducing behaviors that should have been confronted through a formal mechanism, according to stated policies and expectations, to a simple informal situation. For example, when talking about fights between members, Anthony said, "We will hold them accountable, but we won't really put a judicial board hearing for it." While more will

be discussed on the members' experiences with informal accountability, it is important to see how they would choose informal accountability as a mechanism for ignoring or rerouting a violation away from the formal process. Members shared several stories about situations when behaviors were ignored outright or diverted to an informal process.

Members of both chapters told stories of situations that amounted to ignoring violations. Jordan talked about a situation where members of his chapter destroyed another chapter's property in retaliation for destruction of Beta Gamma property. While Beta Gamma agreed to repay the money used to replace the damaged bar, nothing was done to the offenders. In fact, Jordan described a positive mentality that chapter had toward the destruction: "but it was kind of just like everybody was like, yeah, that'll show 'em." Don attributed a lack of accountability in Eta Sigma to a lack of consensus amongst chapter members about what should be done. Specifically, he heard things he found problematic, such as "using a slur or making a joke." However, Don often did not address the comments because the chapter may not agree with his perspective.

There was a clear reason why members would ignore violations in lieu of the formal accountability process. Several members spoke about their belief that the judicial board was not effective in addressing member behavior. This was their reason why the judicial board was not frequently used to hold members accountable. Tanner stated that the chapter has "run into the problem where the guys getting the consequence don't really care." When this happens, it undermines the effectiveness of the judicial board and often led to it not being used.

The last commonly stated reason why violations were ignored was because, in the members' view, a particular situation was not serious enough to hold someone accountable. Often the decision was rationalized as giving someone a "second chance" or a "stupid mistake."

Both Anthony and Don shared a story about a situation involving Ian. From Anthony's interview:

But he was drinking a little bit too much. Now he is getting too drunk now. Luckily, he didn't do anything that was bad. He never got in a fight. He never was screaming curse words or got arrested or anything along those lines.

Because Ian had a leadership role in the chapter and did not cause trouble, the brothers wanted to give him a second chance and did not formally address his misbehavior.

Ultimately, members experience with formal accountability is that it is flawed. They believed it only made sense to respond to violations when the problems rose to a level the chapter deemed worthy of a formal accountability process. Their personal values took priority rather than acting consistently and in-line with the stated practices.

Herd Mentality: Informal Expectations of the Group

This theme captures how being part of the group is driven by the members' expectations of one another. Expectations were driven by a desire to fit in, understanding what their predecessors valued, and quickly determining how to behave in a way that allowed members to be part of the "in crowd." The informal expectations were reinforced daily, both overtly and covertly. In almost every aspect of the fraternity experience, the informal expectations for members were created to maintain the stability of the herd.

What Came Before Us. Participants from both chapters linked the informal expectations of the group to their predecessors in the organization. A majority of participants described how, during their new member process, they observed the behavior of the chapter's more senior members. For example, Sam stated, "A lot of us look up to the older guys, and we just do as they expect." Christopher echoed this sentiment, not only for his chapter but the entire fraternity and

sorority system. “I feel like with Greek life specifically, so much of it is based on tradition and the older people [get] so much more respect than the younger people.” Learning from the older members, both formally and informally, was a core element of how the chapters functioned.

Younger members also heard, from the more senior members, what the classes before them did. This cascaded down from the more senior members of the herd to the younger members which preserved the informal expectations for years after they were set. Christopher talked about how older members always outweighed the younger members “but when it comes to a tradition, it always comes with seniors having the majority.”

Additionally, as discussed further in this chapter, the more senior members of the chapter were seen as having status, which created an expectation, or even fear, amongst younger members that they should not do things differently because the other members of the chapter preferred the status quo. Don talked about one of the first experiences he had in the chapter planning an event with a sorority. He sent a text message to the sorority and the older members did not approve. “Then it came back ... I was getting blown up from the older guys and I was like, oh my gosh. They were like, why would you ever send this?” He talked about what he learned from the experience:

So, I'm glad that it was still at the idea from the beginning that it was clearly against the status quo, of what we had done in the past, but it was a wakeup call, but it was like things have been done in a way before me for a reason. So, I should've initiated it with a bigger following than just trying to speak for everyone.

One of Don's first experiences conditioned him to squash his individuality and always consult the herd before straying away.

Expectations cascading down was more salient for members of Beta Gamma, as all four interviewed were early in their college experience. It was easier for the Beta Gamma participants to recall their new member experience and the process of learning the informal expectations. The Beta Gamma members linked the chapter's pride to the precedent set by senior members and alumni, even acknowledging that they are were of the longest standing chapters on campus. Christopher specifically addressed that "we're a chapter that's never been kicked off campus." This created a feeling that the chapter must be doing something right with what they expected of each other.

The Eta Sigma members also addressed seniority in their chapter. Tanner talked about the priority seniors hold in the chapter. "But we are also big on senior priority kind of stuff. The older guys are talking, we need to listen. Cause they've been around; they know what they're talking about". Similarly, Anthony talked about how, as younger guys moved into more senior roles in the chapter, they leveraged their influence to impress different values upon younger members.

In Eta Sigma, the more senior members saw how the informal expectations had developed. The participants felt they were now empowered to set expectations for younger members since they were in leadership roles. Eta Sigma members identified some problematic informal expectations set by alumni and how they had changed. The members recognized change took specific action and commitment by brothers, over several years, because new members were looking to those just before them to identify behaviors to emulate.

While not as prevalent, the idea of what came before us also surfaced as a part of the chapter's national affiliation with their fraternity. Participants spoke to the influence their national organization had on the chapter. In most cases the impact was on formal expectations,

but a few informal expectations also came from the national organization. For example, Jordan talked about attending a national leadership conference and learning things about the fraternity at the event: “It was kind of to get ideas on different aspects that we could look into our own fraternity.” He specifically addressed the informal connections he made with other members of Beta Gamma chapters across the country, most of which were grounded in the informal elements of the fraternity. Similarly, Anthony, Ian, and Don had experiences with the national fraternity from their attendance at national trainings for their leadership positions. Ian talked about his experience going to the officer training academy. “I really appreciated like, seeing what other chapters are doing, and how we can bring that back to our chapter.” While these conferences were facilitated by professional staff at the fraternity’s central office, several participants still recalled how the influence of hearing what other chapters had done in the past. They emphasized the idea that what came before them, even outside their chapter, influenced the chapter’s behaviors today.

Assimilation to the Culture. Assimilation to the culture had a variety of meanings, clearly divided by the two chapters that were interviewed. In Eta Sigma, assimilating to the culture was expected, but did not mean you had to assimilate to one viewpoint. The Eta Sigma members talked more about the flexibility that existed within their chapter’s culture, but new members were still expected to assimilate. The expectations tended to be more positive but there was still recourse if someone did not assimilate.

In Eta Sigma, assimilation to the culture was used during the new member process to promote connection and openness amongst brothers. During the new member period, older brothers would share personal stories and hardships from their lives which set an example that it was okay to be vulnerable. The meetings were referred to as campfires. Multiple Eta Sigma

participants linked campfires to a culture that preserved some individual identity within the chapter.

Both Ian and Anthony talked about this part of Eta Sigma's new member process. Ian described it as:

It's one of those things where guys, they'll be a question presented and they'll share, and this is when they're totally sober. ... And that's when you really find out about people and you kind of just lay it out on the table. You really let your guard down. So, we try to do that from an earlier start, so people do feel comfortable about going to each other about these things. Obviously, people aren't sharing their deepest, deepest thing right away, but it gets to that point where you can build that trust up. So, I think that's a kind of something we implement early on that's good.

Anthony also described his perspective on the campfire and the importance of bringing together the chapter toward a positive culture:

We go around the campfire and everyone shares, but as we progress, it gets more and more serious throughout the night and throughout the weeks, and it starts to be questions of how's your mental health or what's the worst thing that ever happened to you? Or why aren't you the person that you want to be? Or something along those lines. And the brothers usually will go first and you'll see tears running down guys' eyes, not even always the guys talking, but the guys listening, and that's one of those things where people open up and people share, which is something that just as a stereotype of fraternity men aren't supposed to do that we do right off the bat, and it was one of my favorite things ever because you immediately see, you're not alone in the things you're going through

Ian and Anthony spoke to the campfire's importance in helping new members understand the culture of their chapter to be supportive of their brothers and true to who they are, no matter the challenges that are being presented.

Beta Gamma members experienced much more pressure to assimilate in all aspects of their lives in the chapter. Three of the four participants spoke heavily about how alike everyone is in their chapter. They also observed members change over time. The more brothers spent time together, the more alike they became and changed their behavior, both positively and negatively, according to Jordan. In some cases, this created competition over who best performed certain expectations.

To understand how powerful the expectation to assimilate was, it is important to acknowledge the participants' time spent with their fraternity brothers. Each participant was asked how many hours a week they spend with the fraternity. They were also asked how much of their daily life was spent with fraternity members. Every participant spent over 75% of their time with their fraternity members. Jacob said he spent "almost all the time" in a week around fraternity members. Jordan said he was "around fraternity stuff constantly" and that it "felt hard to ... disconnect from it" because it was everywhere in his life. Christopher said he spends "every single second with [his fraternity brothers] all the time." The amount of time the members spent together created an insular experience where every aspect of their lives was visible to, and influenced by, their fraternity brothers.

Because of the significant amount of time around one another, fraternity members changed their behavior to assimilate to the perceived norm. Jordan talked about his first few weeks in the chapter observing specific changes:

Well, the first thing that I noticed was that everybody was saying words that I'd never heard before. ... Everybody kind of started using the same language...I had just joined the fraternity. And I was kind of like, "what in the world is going on? What [are] these people are saying?" So that was my first exposure to it. And then I started noticing everybody had the same Reebok shoes on.... I go to the gym six days a week...I have my certain splits, and then people would start changing their workouts to my workouts. And then there's a big group of us that would be doing the exact same workouts. And everybody did different stuff before, but everybody just kind of conformed to the same. And then the bar thing, there's literally one bar that everybody goes to, and they hang out. And that's like 'our bar.' Which is whatever. So, it just seems like...they don't want to stand out, or if it's just that everybody feels like they want to follow what their friends are doing, but there's a lot of conformation.

Jordan's detailed description shows how assimilation to the norm permeates daily life in the chapter. He saw the impact of groupthink on his brothers and chapter culture. It was one of the first aspects he noticed after joining the fraternity. Jacob shared a similar sentiment, stating he was not the same person today he was a year ago. In Jacob's opinion, some people would assimilate "both for the good and the bad" including "making stupid decisions." Jordan and Jacob's experience show how powerful the pressure to assimilate was in Beta Gamma.

As another example, Christopher talked about how he saw his friends do things that he did not feel were authentic to their true selves, stating "a lot of my friends, they're trying to play that part. I know that's not what they like...but that's not expressing themselves. They're trying to fit in." Christopher's anecdote described how people dressed as what was considered "southern" to assimilate to the SU student body's culture. Christopher recalled a conversation

with a close friend and fraternity brother when they realized this behavior was causing them to “buy into the group mindset.” Christopher perceived this pressure was unique to fraternities, stating people in “other groups and other organizations...are more open to be vulnerable because it’s more of an open environment.” Christopher connected assimilation to being in an all-male environment:

You get different competitions within a group of a hundred guys and it's just hard to act yourself when you're actively just being judged by a bunch of guys. But they're all a part of one group. And if you're not acting like the way the whole group is acting, then you're definitely an outlier.

Conversely, Eta Sigma members felt like many of their chapter members had these similarities but did not attribute them to the chapter’s culture and felt that the chapter had a more inclusive culture than most other fraternities on campus. Ian specifically referenced brothers wearing different kinds of outfits as evidence of the brother’s ability to retain their self-expression in Eta Sigma.

Assimilation to the culture was not limited to the context of the chapter. Participants described the entire student population as having a largely homogenous identity. There was significant pressure to fit the mold of a SU student. Christopher stated he believed SU was “very materialistic.” He went on to further share an example which illustrated the standard “mold” of a person on campus and their priorities:

I hate to say it, but the sorority girls here, they're all trying to be the same person. They're all trying to fit the same mold, whether it's blonde, blue eyes, big butt, big boobs. If you have that, I feel like they think they're on some pedestal, and it goes the same way for guys. If you're, there's a different mold for guys too, but I feel like less who you are and

more what you look like at this school. And I feel like that goes for the school more than it goes for just Greek life in general. I feel like this school specifically..., you could be the least interesting person in the world, but if you look good then you're cool aspect.

Christopher went on, knowing the researcher had been in a fraternity, to ask during the interview if the researcher felt that this was a pressure all students experienced. It was clear he was grappling with this and seeking validation that this was not something unique to his experience. While the school played into the factor, it seemed that the fraternity experience amplified the pressure participants felt to assimilate to a single culture and blend in with the heard.

Go Along to Get Along. Going along to get along represents an idea shared by participants: being an outlier leads to a negative experience in the chapter or subjects a brother to undue ridicule or ostracization. There were multiple different ways members either went along themselves or knew of a situation where someone did not and their relationship with their brothers changed.

Finding members that are willing to go along to get along started as early as the recruitment process. While recruitment was not a focus of this study, it came up during half of the interviews. Recruitment is a critical function in all fraternity chapters as it serves to replace members who have graduated from the university. When talking about recruiting new members, participants spoke to finding potential new members that would be “good fits” with the current members. For example, Tanner stated, “We look for things like someone who's interested in a lot of the things we are...there's a good group of us like sports, like going out on the water, like going boating...you look for similarities.” This sentiment was shared by Anthony, who held the recruitment chair position. He stated that one of his priorities was “trying to get guys that are

going to be the best fit for us.” Recruitment focused on finding future friends primarily while the fraternity values took a back seat.

Other participants spoke about how their similarities to the existing members were a draw to join the chapter in the first place. Christopher, recalling what made him join Beta Gamma, stated, “They were people that were similar to my friends back home.” Another motivator for joining a particular chapter was a pre-established relationship with the members. Ian recalled “I started seeing the same familiar faces. I... have a solidified friend group already. This is what I want to do. And so going into it, I just kind of knew that I had a friend group.” Similarly, Sam stated the brothers of Beta Gamma “were the guys I was most comfortable with.” Ian also acknowledged that, during the new member process, people were “surrounding themselves with like-minded guys.” While chapters also sought to find members that assimilated to the culture, this was a draw to the participants as well as all had multiple bids to pick from and expressed some level of comfort with their chapter brothers.

In some cases, participants spoke about looking for individuals who were willing to contribute to the chapter’s growth and success. Tanner talked about Eta Sigma’s priority of finding “someone who wants to take action and be a leader.” Personally, Tanner wanted to find new members who would also “hold a leadership role in the future.” Anthony also shared this sentiment, stating he wanted to focus on “getting new members involved.” However, this did not replace the desire to find men that would still fit in with the chapter’s culture. Recruiting men that would go along to get along avoided disruption in the heard. In recruiting like-minded men, members sought to eliminate the possibility of disagreements in the chapter. Many of the elements that members looked at to find like-minded men were rooted in traditional masculine ideologies and behaviors.

Centering masculinity during recruitment occurred in three different ways. First, the events held to interest potential new members were traditionally masculine and often similar across all chapters. For example, Beta Sigma would hold informal pre-recruitment events, such as fishing or golfing. Jordan recalled the events as key parts of what piqued his interest in the chapter: “Hundreds of people there playing basketball out in the fields, just shooting clay pigeons and stuff, which was stuff that we used to do back home... Just stood out to me.” While the participants did not directly acknowledge the tie to masculinity, the reasons they chose these events was because they were what the current members, the metaphorical herd, liked to do.

Second, in talking with potential new members, the current members would ask questions that centered the chapter’s preferences and masculinity. In some cases, the brothers were formally taught what they should ask and be looking for in potential new members. Tanner talked about how there is “a set of questions that we’ll teach the younger guys.” These questions focus on “their interests, what they want to do with their life.” This behavior stripped away the individual members ability to bring in potential new members who might not go along to get along.

Finally, in both chapters, a majority consensus was required to give out an invitation to membership, what is known as a bid, to a potential new member. Tanner talked about how there was voting to make decisions on who to give a bid to. Again, this voting system served as a formal mechanism to eliminate the possibility that people who were different would not enter the herd.

In some cases, participants made decisions about what to do with their time because they knew it mitigated the potential for ridicule. For example, Jordan told a story about being at a bar

with two different friend groups. One group was leaving, and the chapter brothers were staying. He was presented with a choice:

I kind of had two options. I follow the [other group of friends], or I could go over here to the fraternity bar, and I just, I decided to go to the fraternity bar just because I didn't want everybody to be like, 'oh, where were you last night? Why were you hanging out with those guys instead of us?' So, it was just something that I didn't necessarily want to deal with, if that makes sense.

Jacob and Christopher recalled similar experiences in Beta Gamma when they decided to do something with the fraternity to avoid an unfavorable outcome.

Another way that members would go along to get along was to stifle thoughts that might have caused them to stand out or provoke change in the chapter. When members encountered experiences where they wished to make some changes, they acknowledged the barriers to change and most frequently decided not to do or say anything. This was more common in Beta Gamma as the participants did not hold executive board roles. In illustrating these barriers, Christopher spoke about a situation when he knew he wanted to make change.

And I know there's a lot of things that I personally don't like about the way that we run things as a fraternity, but I'm not in a position to make every change is what I'm trying to say. I think that there's a lot of things that I have opinions on. Everything everyone has, every single person has opinion on everything that we do. And I feel like you can only pick and choose what you really want to be motivated for because no one, even the president is in the position to make an opinion on everything.

Jacob echoed this sentiment in his interview, stating "Yeah and [lack of accountability] is something I've kind of always wanted to change. I mean, it's kind of in a fraternity it's tough to

change that because well it's individual's opinions.” In both cases, Jacob and Christopher ultimately erred on the side of self-preservation and did not say anything about the things that bothered them, because it was easier to stick with the group.

Informal Accountability is the Real Accountability

Unlike formal accountability, informal accountability was very present in the experiences of all the participants. As illustrated above, with myriad of informal expectations set to maintain the herd, a frequent, dispersed informal accountability was needed. Many times, informal accountability was preferred or accepted for an incident covered under formal policies. This theme captures the experience participants had with informal accountability and the priority it was given within the chapter.

Emphasis on Peer Perceptions. Peer perceptions, both in and out of the fraternity and sorority community, were a significant driver of informal accountability. Over half of the participants spoke about the importance of perceptions and reputation as one of the determinants of what led to informal accountability. Reputation was particularly important to today's college student because of the speed information travels. Participants spoke about social media and smart phones as tools to share information quickly. Because of the proliferation of social media, participants believed one mistake could draw the attention of most students— even outside SU's campus – in as little as a few hours. Don said, “perception's huge.” He went on to talk about how he would be shocked by how quickly something could “spread” and linked that to “how quickly kids send texts and all that stuff.” Ian echoed the gravity of the media, stating “one little slip up is end all, be all.” Significant attention was paid to the narrative written about the chapter.

There was also, upfront, informal expectations set that members would be held accountable for if they risked the chapter's reputation. Tanner said that Eta Sigma “emphasize[s]

when you're wearing our letters, or you're out in public, you're representing more than just yourself." He also talked about how he would intervene with brothers who he would see doing something that could disgrace the chapter when they were in public. Anthony shared a similar sentiment and said being ostracized "without a doubt" played a "role not only in our chapter, but every chapter across SU and every organization in the world in general." Anthony emphasized the power of peers and friends to make someone realize their behavior is wrong.

Multiple participants identified peer perception as something they believed would be the most significant motivator for a chapter member to change their behavior, even over mechanisms of formal accountability. Tanner spoke adamantly about how important peer perceptions were when it came to accountability: "So, me personally, I think the worst thing is knowing that you've let your brothers down, that people are disappointed." Tanner continued, stating that any formal consequence, such as a fine or probation, would never mean as much as "the respect from your peers" and the "buddies that you see daily, people you see on campus who might lose respect for you." Tanner thought a negative peer perception was "insurmountable" compared to any formal consequence.

Other participants reinforced Tanner's perspective about the importance of peer perception. Christopher talked about how he did not want to be "subject to ridicule" from his peers. However, he added the caveat that it would also depend on if the behavior was something he was proud of or not. Christopher also said brothers were very concerned about being targeted in a group. The accounts from most of the participants stressed how important peer perception was, often linked to the friendships they established and wanted to maintain.

Additionally, the amount of time spent with chapter brothers contributed to the significance members gave peer perceptions. The members who devoted more time to the

chapter were more concerned about doing things that could affect the way they were perceived. Christopher, who spent “every second” with his chapter brothers, talked about how it would be difficult to “[be] unique in a fraternity” without being ostracized. Ian, who had become more involved on campus and had a diverse background of activities he was involved in, had a different perspective. Ian found it less critical to worry about the perceptions his peers had of his decisions, particularly when it came to pressure to participate. Ian also spoke about how being an older member gave him permission to step back from the chapter.

Chapter members used peer perceptions to socially police each other’s behaviors which ensured they conformed to informal expectations. Jordan spoke about when he first joined Beta Gamma and was cognizant of his accent, being from Tennessee.

I used to have a little bit of a country accent being from East Tennessee...The only people that I interacted with for the first four weeks of school were guys in my fraternity. And they were the people that I guess were becoming my friends. And outside of those people, I didn't really have many friends. And so, I think it was just the comfort of having a place to fit in.

Perhaps the most interesting components of this story was that SU was in the south, but Jordan felt he had to lose his accent to better fit in with his peers, many of whom were from states in the northeastern United States. He would often hear from the members of his chapter “Jordan, you got a little twang.” While there was no explicit expectation that he be from the north, the informal accountability, or “giving shit” as Jordan referred to it, drove him to change something as core to his identity as the way he spoke.

Participants often weighed how their peers viewed a specific behavior before confronting it, even if it was something they personally did not think aligned with the values of the chapter.

Jacob spoke about how this unfolded for new members. “The new members see things happening and think ‘if they can do it, why can’t I?’” Jacob wanted to confront the situation, but as a sophomore, he knew there would be backlash for calling out another member on their behavior, since everyone was doing it. Tanner also shared that he would hold back if the members would “not [be] happy with me. Maybe being upset that I addressed it.” Even holding a formal position in the chapter did not negate Tanner’s concerns for his peers’ perceptions.

Multiple participants limited how often they were willing to deviate from the group. Christopher also spoke about the need to pick “which hill to die on.” Christopher believed a person could only have so many times when they could be the person who deviated from the herd mentality before it negatively impacted their experience in the chapter. Jacob shared the same sentiment and attributed it to people being “too cautious to say something because others in the chapter “have made it clear that they don’t want to hear it.” This experience with informal accountability was more prevalent for the Beta Gamma chapter members, again, because they felt they did not have positional power that the Eta Sigma members spoke about during their interviews.

Making substantial changes happened more recently in Eta Sigma which made it a part of their culture. The Eta Sigma members did not identify as many barriers to informal accountability and were less concerned about their peers’ perceptions. It was clear they felt more enabled to hold peers accountable because of the confidence and positional power that came with being in a leadership role. Anthony, who spent several semesters overseeing chapter conduct, spoke to how comfortable he was confronting situations and making changes. When asked if anything would hold him back, Anthony confidently stated “Nope.” And went on to explain:

I mean, I would hold people accountable before I had a position to begin with anyway, but I would definitely say that now, especially being in charge, having been on the judicial board, having been risk manager and now being in charge of the judicial board, obviously my position definitely affects that.

Ian also worked to “build trust” with his chapter brothers and was not concerned about how they would perceive his approach to accountability. This contrasted with the Beta Gamma members, who were much more standoffish.

While internal peer perception had a significant influence on informal accountability, external peer perception also played a key role. Chapters constructed their internal, informal expectations to align with the perceptions held by those outside the chapter. Chapters considered not only members of other fraternities and sororities but included the entire SU student population. For example, Anthony talked about the importance of the student body’s perception of fraternities as there have been negative incidents in the past: “But we’ve seen things happen where student body presidents and vice presidents have gone against Greek life in general, or for Greek life in general.” Anthony explained how negative perceptions could lead to more restrictions for the chapter. Tanner discussed how non-fraternity peers’ perceptions also impacted the reputation of a chapter. As such, their chapter focused on putting out positive images on social media and hosting social events to maintain status on campus. There was an underlying theme that how the campus views a chapter is critical to their success, which impacted the hierarchy that will be discussed later.

Happens all the Time. Unlike formal accountability, informal accountability happened daily in both chapters. Participants shared myriad of specific and general situations when informal accountability had or would occur. They also discussed the different methods used for

informal accountability. There were two overarching sub-themes participants spoke about when discussing the frequent use of informal accountability. First, it was an easily accessible and less punitive method of accountability. Second, it was used to uphold informal expectations. Because there were numerous informal expectations, informal accountability occurred regularly. Every participant identified a situation when they had attention directed on them through an informal accountability method.

Easy and Less Punitive. Informal accountability was something all participants had access to. Informal accountability was enacted quickly, through a text, group message, a quick comment at a chapter meeting, or during the situation; all mechanisms that were readily available with little barriers to entry. Jacob confirmed group chats were used for “giving people crap,” which served to hold them to very informal expectations. Similarly, Christopher recalled an experience when a brother missed an event to spend time with his girlfriend:

Every single day in our group chat, someone mentions it cause it's like, ‘oh, you don't like us, you don't want to hang out with us.’ And realistically it was just like their one-year anniversary, and he just couldn't miss it. And it's like, that's such an informal thing, but it really impacted a lot of people in our chapter. ‘Oh, you have different priorities than our brotherhood event?’

Christopher was one of several participants who had an experience with informal accountability via a digital medium, most often a text message thread.

The advent of social media and phones was noted by many participants as a reason informal accountability was so frequent in the chapter. Multiple participants discussed a level of connectedness via social media and group chats which enabled constant dialogue between members. The dialogue in the chats was often about member behavior. Tanner, Ian, Don,

Christopher, and Jacob all touched on this topic. While group chats served a purpose, most participants stated they were usually for very minor infractions. While no participant directly acknowledged the impact group chats had, it was clear, through their statements, they served to enforce some of the lowest level, day-to-day expectations and had significant impact given the high visibility.

The role a person held in the chapter contributed to their awareness of informal accountability. In particular, this seemed to be the case for the Eta Sigma members since they hold leadership positions and frequently found themselves in situations where it was necessary to approach a peer to stop problematic behavior. Anthony mentioned, in his role in Eta Sigma, he was often one of the first people notified of a problematic situation occurring in the chapter. Ian and Don had similar perspectives as they were both presidents during their time in Eta Sigma.

Informal accountability happened frequently in social situations, especially those involving alcohol. Nearly every participant told a story about how they had or would confront a brother if they were doing something problematic involving drinking or while drunk. Examples ranged from being obnoxious or annoying to over drinking, or even being inappropriate with women while drunk. Usually, the goal was to quickly stop the behavior and make sure they prevented it from rising to a level which warranted formal accountability.

Informal accountability happened frequently because it was also viewed as less punitive. Every member was responsible for informal accountability and, sometimes, equated informal accountability to brotherhood, or the relationship formed between members. Conversely, participants saw formal accountability as punitive and described it using language such as “punishment,” “trial,” and “sanction.” Tanner only recalled one judicial board hearing during his time in Eta Sigma. Similarly, Jacob said the judicial board was not regularly used and usually a

chapter officer issued a “simple fine.” Interestingly, most participants considered a fine to be part of formal accountability, but Beta Gamma removed the formal hearing or adjudication process for, what Jacob described as, “minor consequences.” Doing so created a perspective amongst the chapter that a judicial hearing would only take place if a serious infraction occurred.

A frequently mentioned form of informal accountability was “pulling a guy aside.” Every participant talked about how they would or had pulled a chapter brother aside. Pulling a guy aside was the idea that a person who saw something problematic would directly, in the moment, confront the offender to tell them what they were doing was wrong. Ian stated that brothers might “pull [each other] aside” and say “you can’t be doing this.” Don used nearly the same language, saying he would “pull ‘em aside. Hey guys, can’t do this.” Clearly, this quick intervention had become a normal behavior in Eta Sigma. Sam, who was the youngest member interviewed, knew other brothers had been “pulled aside” and someone might tell a brother “that’s not cool.” Sam was largely unaware of accountability in the chapter, but quickly learned how to pull a brother aside.

Whether or not a person was willing to pull someone aside depended on a few key factors. First, the person confronting the situation had to recognize the behavior as problematic. Additionally, they usually had a relationship with the person being confronted. The relationship enabled the participants to feel comfortable confronting the situation. Tanner talked about the importance of “building a connection” which made him “more comfortable saying something to someone.” Ian shared a similar sentiment to Tanner’s, emphasizing the importance of “building that trust of the bat” with members.

Only one participant, Anthony, stated he would not hold back from confronting a brother, regardless of the situation. However, he held a formal role in the chapter for addressing

misconduct and attributed comfort handling conflict to his upbringing in law enforcement family. Participants also mentioned age, status, or the person's personality as factors which influenced whether or not they confronted a brother. For example, Jacob said he would feel most comfortable with "kids my age" or "kids in my pledge class" but would be "a little more timid with some of the older guys just cuz [sic] they've got that age and stuff." Jordan said small, private settings were key because, in larger settings, there was more risk of "standing out from the herd," especially if his perspective was different from the majority of the chapter. These factors were considered because the chapter had prioritized elements of masculinity, as discussed in the next section.

The final way informal accountability happened on a regular basis was at the chapter's regularly scheduled weekly meetings. In Eta Sigma, for example, brothers were given a chance to bring up anything they thought the chapter should address. Multiple Eta Sigma brothers told stories about how this time would be used by a brother to call out another brother on his behavior. Often time, Eta Sigma would consider these opportunities to address situations in lieu of a formal judicial board because they gave everyone a chance to weigh in on the issue.

A common example, according to Don, was for a brother to bring up an issue another brother was having at a chapter meeting. Ian echoed a similar sentiment, stating it would come up because of a person hearing about a rumor. He said a brother would "stand up at chapter and put someone in the spotlight of 'Oh shit, I can't be doing this anymore.'" Chapter meetings may also be used by a brother who knew they had done something wrong to acknowledge his behavior and issue an informal apology. Anthony described this as a way to mitigate elevating a situation to a formal concern. "We had a guy apologize to the chapter, and that changed things in the way we approached it." In this case, the member was not held formally accountable because

he took responsibility to the chapter, underscoring the value that members place on the informal process.

Reinforces Informal Expectations. While many of the informal expectations were identified above as a part of the herd mentality, participants talked about what would happen to keep them in line if they tried to stray from the pack. Participants shared several different anecdotes about situations when they participated in informal accountability. They also explained what they thought would happen or saw happen if a chapter member violated an informal expectation. Ian, when asked what might happen if somebody violated an informal expectation, stated someone might get “called out in front of the chapter” or sent “a picture or text message in a group [chat].”

While it was positive to see how members approached problematic behaviors, it should be noted in most cases, informal accountability was used to reinforce informal expectations and substitute for formal accountability. For example, when it came to drinking alcohol, many of the members were not old enough to be legally drinking. The legal drinking age was a known formal expectation in both chapters. However, no formal action was taken because drinking was encouraged, regardless of age. As such, highly problematic drinking behavior was more frequently reduced to an informal expectation because drinking itself was not considered a problem. Rather the focus was how the person conducted themselves while drinking. Anthony described this as “watch-style policing” stating “we will look the other way” unless someone “is way too intoxicated or causing an issue.” In this case, it seemed informal accountability would be used for things the chapter had deemed problematic rather than adherence to formal expectations.

As addressed above, the day-to-day behavior of the members also came with informal expectations, such as how much someone should work out, what clothes they wore, or what activities they did. Informal accountability for these expectations was even more subtle. For example, Jacob spoke about how members of Beta Gamma would encourage each other to regularly go the gym. "It's going to be your buddy coming up and saying to you 'hey, you going to the gym.'" Jacob directly dismissed the possibility that this could be considered accountability, stating a lack of going to the gym "would not be dealt with." Jordan had a similar experience regarding dressing up for a party. He said, "you got to dress up for the party, else it's like 'Oh, what are you doing?'" Like Jacob, Jordan dismissed this as accountability and believed it was part of the "community" and "herd mentality" involved in the chapter. These examples were a more proactive form of informal accountability rather than confronting them after the fact.

Confronting a violation after it occurred also happened occasionally. For example, Christopher talked about what might happen if a brother were to wear an outfit that the chapter did not consider acceptable. He said the brother would "get shit for it" but he, personally, did not "care because I think it's cool, I think it's funny." Christopher acknowledged others might not consider this type of informal accountability to be as lighthearted. In a similar description, Jordan believed the chapter culture should embrace differences and not use informal accountability as a method to change their peers' behaviors. He felt uniqueness "dissipates" within the chapter because of a lack of support for individuality. However, as underscored in this theme, members would more often align with expectations of their brothers, especially for insignificant behaviors like dress.

Chapter members were also regularly held accountable for the way they spent their time. Members recalled many experiences when they, or others in the chapter, were chastised for

wanting to spend time with people outside their chapter or not go out to bars and parties. In most cases, this was most common with friends outside the chapter. For example, Jordan recalled an experience when he had friends who were on a club sports team he was also a member of. He would frequently have to make decisions about going to a bar with his teammates or his chapter brothers. In one specific instance, Jordan decided “to go to the fraternity bar” because he “didn’t want to deal with that,” referencing the push back from his chapter brothers for not going out with them.

In a similar experience, Christopher talked about his idea to study abroad for a semester, away from SU.

I remember one time a few weeks ago I had mentioned that I wanted to study abroad, and I mentioned that I wanted to do it by myself and go off on my own experience and experience something on my own and without SU people... There's been at least 10 to 20 comments about that since I made that comment. It's just like, 'Oh, when are you doing your own personal journey? When are you going off on your own adventure?' People take things personally and I definitely shouldn't have made it seem like I just wanted to go alone. I should've worded it differently, but people definitely were hurt by what I've said. And people would've really just honestly been insulted by the fact that I just didn't want to spend that time with them, and they've treated me differently. Whereas I feel like they felt more included in my plans before than they did recently.

In Christopher’s narrative, there was a progression about how he was held accountable for planning to distance himself from the group and spend time alone. He then had a realization, after being held accountable informally, he somehow owed his chapter the right to be included in his plan.

Even family was not allowed to be prioritized above the chapter. Christopher shared about experiences when his mother visited and how the chapter brothers did not seem open to that being a reason to take time away from the chapter.

It's almost like it's just kind of peculiar when people do things outside of the whole. And I feel like I've been subject to that a few times, whether it's just when my friend visits or even when my mom comes to town, it's like, 'oh, bring your mom to everything.' I don't want to spend my time with you, I have a dinner with my mom, myself. You know what I mean? It's like it's hard to be on your own sometimes, I feel like.

Christopher believed it was quite unrealistic for his chapter brothers to expect that he would want to, or should, bring his mother to chapter functions in lieu of wanting some private time.

Fraternity members were also limited from spending time with their partner or platonic women friends. Jordan believed trying to hang out with women would usually result in an immediate response from some of the chapter brothers. He specifically recalled a situation when a member was chastised for spending time with his girlfriend instead of coming to a social function. Informal accountability took place frequently and served as a mechanism to cause a quick change in behavior and regularly reinforce what chapter members thought was acceptable. Sam even believed that a couple of brothers had removed themselves from the chapter because they had started dating. Eta Sigma brothers did not share this perspective, as many of the brothers in the chapter had girlfriends, according to Ian, so it was more of the norm.

Being a Man Prioritized

Throughout most of the interviews, participants, either directly or indirectly, highlighted how hegemonic masculinity was still the dominant cultural norm within fraternities. Some participants believed societal trends were shifting the definition of what it means to be a man.

However, there were numerous situations when participants had experiences which reinforced dominant masculinity as something that would make their fraternity experience the best it could be.

Status for “the Man.” Status covers an underlying theme, usually when it comes to accountability, where some members have an unofficial elevated social status within their chapter. Unlike formal positions or roles, this status was not measurable, elected, or codified in any way. Rather, a person could be seen to have status by realizing unofficial benefits those without status did not receive. For example, brothers with status had their perspectives taken more seriously, were less subject to accountability (especially informally), and guided the direction of the chapter. Members were asked to describe what qualities a brother with status would have. Almost every demographic characteristic identified aligned with those often considered traditionally masculine.

In acknowledging the existence of informal status, Jacob spoke about how it appeared in the chapter.

Obviously, there's a lot of statuses in the fraternity, certain people have more popularity, and they get away with more things...He's popular enough and he's got enough status where it's okay for him. And so that kind of thing happens a good bit, honestly. And certain people are held less accountable because of that because they've got that status. Jacob said status is never formally communicated, but just understood passively. In addition to what he described above, Jacob also attributed status to “dynamics between pledge classes” and “who you’re friends with.” Jacob asserted he was “a hundred percent” certain brothers who do not have status want to get it, to the point there was “sometimes aggression between certain

individuals.” Christopher referred to this as a “hierarchy” within the chapter and believed there was competition between those lower on the hierarchy who wanted to move up.

In some cases, participants recalled prioritizing status as coming from their time before enrolling at SU, having seen a similar pattern emerge in high school. Ian recalled his experience, stating “that’s how high school worked,” when it came to men getting status for being with the most attractive women. As such, the predisposition to favor masculinity was not solely based on the fraternity experience. However, chapters were not taking any action to actively disrupt the power given the more masculine brothers.

As mentioned above, almost all the characteristics of a member with status were associated with hegemonic, often negative, behaviors of masculinity. Jordan referred to this status as the well-known concept of being “cool.” Specifically, he talked about being accepted and well-liked by women. Jacob was asked to specifically what members were competing over to gain status and he mentioned “being outspoken,” “chirping,” “giving out the most shit,” “how many girls [they’ve had sex with],” “who’s going to the gym,” and “who looks the best.” Jacob referred to these as “college male tendencies” and agreed this was a type of dominance hierarchy that came out in the chapter.

There were mixed perceptions from participants about status being informally conferred upon certain brothers. In a few cases, participants thought status could help give validity to their leadership roles in the chapter. Brothers with status were identified as potential leaders, either formally or informally, within the chapter structure. For example, Tanner was one year older than most of his pledge brothers, and believed his age made him a natural fit to be the pledge class president. However, participants went on to express caution that this was only useful if the

chapter was placing value on things that were not superficial in nature, such as hard work, academic success, and devotion to the chapter.

More frequently, especially in Beta Gamma, status was conferred as a result of performing traditional masculinity. For example, like Jacob, Christopher, stated a member had status if they were “good looking.” People who had status felt their opinions were more important than their peers and opted to be the most outspoken at chapter meetings. Jacob talked about how chapter leadership would listen to these members more. Jacob believed chapter leaders looked to brothers with status as representatives of the chapter’s reputation to the student body. If brothers with status thought the chapter was doing “cool” things, so would everyone at SU.

Status could also be conferred based on characteristics that would be perceived, socially, as desirable. Specifically, Sam talked about how members of the chapter sought to be fit which he, in part, attributed to external influences in addition to competition within the chapter. However, at no point did a participant mention status being conferred upon a member as a result of alignment with the fraternities’ values or by showing strong commitment to the chapter.

As discussed previously, status also appeared subtly throughout the interviews. Participants also acknowledged the older members of the chapter and alumni as sources of informal expectations. For example, Don, Anthony, and Ian all acknowledged the importance of respecting the older brothers’ opinions. This also underscores that men within chapter assign status or value to the opinions of older men, simply because they had put in time in the chapter. In both chapters, seniors were then able to “get lazy” and “check out” because they held leadership roles as sophomores and juniors.

As a result of attempts to gain informal status, chapter members often felt there was a sense of competition that surfaced within the chapter. The competitions were about physical strength, who was the best looking, who drank the most, or had sex the most. Christopher talked about a competition for “who’s going to be the biggest and strongest and...most jacked” because they will be cool. He also believed this created a lot of self-criticisms and a desire to be the “most appealing and most attractive.” However, Christopher, like Jacob, dismissed this as something that happens “for the rest of your life.”

While competition took place, some participants did not view this negatively. Ian believed the competition was healthy, in some regard, for example “always trying to get the best GPA.” However, most of the competitions placed priority on masculine characteristics. Being seen as winning these competitions resulted in direct benefits to the winners, despite not being part of any formal structure within the chapter.

It’s All About “Girls”. Relationships with women were one of the top priorities of both chapters and top of mind for members. The relationships with women impacted the chapters in multiple ways. Women were given immense power in determining how a chapter was viewed on campus. Thus, all chapter brothers needed to make sure they were respecting women they wanted to have relationships with. Additionally, relationships with women impacted several components of the participant’s experiences with accountability in their chapters. It should be noted that every person talked about women did so in a heteronormative manner.

All but one participant spoke directly to formal expectations that called for members not to mistreat women. More specifically, these expectations centered around sexual misconduct. When asked what formal expectations exist in the chapter, many of the participants first addressed sexual misconduct. Jacob referred to concerns about the mistreatment of women as “a

very serious thing” while Sam also stated, “having the most respect for girls is a huge thing that is pretty stressed.” Tanner, Don, Ian, and Anthony all stressed the importance of not being “weird with girls”. Anthony also believed it was obvious that “sexual assault, rape” and “things like that are completely unacceptable.” Christopher and Jordan also mentioned the importance treating women well, believing this was one of the formal expectations of the chapter.

The importance of the expectations with women was tied to societal attention to the topic, specifically around negative media attention and stereotypes of fraternity men. For example, Jacob talked about how “nowadays with everything having a camera,” it has become more important to treat women respectfully. Rather than an inherent cultural change to how women were valued, an emphasis was placed on the new visibility into the fraternity member’s behavior. Ian also talked about how the women’s rights movement was causing things to be in a “changing phase” on this topic. Don specifically mentioned the importance of how mistreating a woman could get back to her sorority and “look poorly on the chapter.” While the participants all underscored the importance of interactions with women, there seemed to be significant attention to the men looking bad rather than respect for women.

In addition to avoiding being identified as a person or group of people that mistreat women, the chapters set their schedules and priorities to be the most appealing to women. For example, Don shared an experience when he was planning a party for the chapter and talking to a sorority about the party. After putting a creative spin on it, he was scolded by older chapter members for risking their reputation with the sorority. After sending a mass text message to a group of sorority women, Don recalled the feedback he got:

All the girls are going to think 'this is so weird. You've already had a bunch of girls send this to us. And then it blew up in my face. And after the fact I found out that the girls also thought it was funny and it was a party was a hit.

Don also commented that the significant pressure made him not want to do this role again, but since it worked out with the women, he felt empowered to stay in the role.

Women's opinions drove many of the decisions the chapter made. Jordan shared a similar experience to Don's when his chapter changed party themes based on input from women:

So, we were discussing possibly having a jungle theme party, and [the girls were] like, 'Oh no, we don't want to do that. That sounds weird. That doesn't sound like it would be fun. We should do this instead.' And so, we came back together and were like, 'Hey, girls don't want to do this. We should do something else.' And obviously there are people that are really for this jungle theme party, and we kind of quieted down after that.

Jordan's experience, like Don's showed how the chapter centralized women in every social decision they were making.

Other participants also identified "girls" as one of the most prevalent outside influences that shaped the chapters' expectations. In some cases, as above, the influence was direct, such as hosting parties or being social. There was also a connection to other day-to-day behaviors. For example, multiple members of the Beta Gamma chapter mentioned working out had become a big priority within the chapter, to the point of becoming competitive. When asked why that was Christopher identified working out, and looking good, as central to being able to have sex with women and, ultimately, gaining status in the fraternity. Christopher attributed women as a source of the "huge competition aspect" of the fraternity and felt women were causing brothers to not "act themselves just because they want to fit the mold of what the whole group of guys want."

Christopher's example shows that not only do the women provide pressure, but also influence the pressure the brothers place on each other to be appealing to women.

Several participants even considered women's opinions of what they wore. Specifically, Jordan talked about how the brothers would change the brand of shoes they wore based on women. "If there's this big group of girls that all these guys hanging out with [them] and they say, 'You guys look really weird in those shoes.' They're not going to wear their shoes anymore." Jordan told this story after identifying women as the most influential aspect of chapter's expectations. He also felt this was "ridiculous," but still a significant influence in the chapter.

While there was a strong emphasis on avoiding sexual misconduct, members spoke about having sex with women as a priority. The differentiator did not seem to be about if women were respected holistically, but rather a person should not use force to have sex or "be creepy." Men in the chapter were rewarded and praised for being able to have a sexual relationship with women. Jacob said "hooking up with girls" gave chapter members status and was something they would compete over.

However, this praise came with caveats. For example, if a member hooked up with a woman who was largely considered attractive, he was praised. A member who had been with a woman who was less attractive would be harassed by his peers. Don described how "locker room talk" was still prevalent, aligning with hegemonic masculinity, despite the formal expectation to respect women. Ian recalled an example of why a member might be held informally accountable and stated someone might "get shit" such as "no way you hooked up with so-and-so, ew" and believed it's "very easy to get a reputation" for hooking up with undesirable women. While

having sexual relationships with multiple attractive women was praised, having a monogamous committed relationship, a girlfriend, was not.

Another participant's experience also enforced this idea that women were more for sex than friends. Christopher talked about how "girl friends," referencing platonic friends who are women, are not welcome around the social spaces shared by the brothers, such as the chapter house. Christopher believed his chapter brothers did not want platonic girl friends around the chapter house.

I think a lot of people are uncomfortable with having very close girlfriends stay around each other at all times. I know it's...normal to have girlfriends. ...we all have really good girlfriends, but it's ...when they spend time on the hall or when they spend a lot of time at our house, it just makes everyone a little uncomfortable. Cause that it seems like that's our space where it's like, 'Oh, that's our organization's house. What are girls doing there?' Conversely, the Eta Sigma members did not seem to have this aversion to having female friends. Don, Ian, and Tanner all said the brothers do have friends who are women they regularly socialize with. Ian did mention many of the men in the chapter had girlfriends. This could be a reason for the difference in culture surrounding relationships with women, along with the fact that women were not identified as a source of competition as frequently by the Eta Sigma brothers.

In some cases, participants even identified having a girlfriend as a reason a person would choose to no longer spend as much time with chapter brothers or come to events. Sam thought the only members who left the chapter had done so because they had girlfriends. The example from Sam illustrates the pervading theme that fraternities have a primary focus of creating spaces where men can meet, and ultimately have sex, with women. While their interviews revealed a

strong consensus about not forcing oneself upon a woman, the day-to-day behavior and discussions within the chapter suggest a top priority for men is preserving the environments where women find their chapter brothers to be the most desirable men to have sex with.

Guys Being Guys. Because masculinity was prioritized in the chapter, many of the behaviors discussed by participants, that might otherwise be problematic, were minimized. In many cases, participants did not believe these behaviors were problematic, but rather were just things college men do. Some of the behaviors that most commonly fell into this category were drinking, regularly playing and watching sports, working out, and pursuing sexual relationships with women.

There were multiple ways masculine behaviors took priority in the chapters. First, they were directly encouraged. Members shared experiences where they were encouraged by their peers to partake in drinking alcohol or go to the gym, for example. Christopher commented about how the Beta Gamma brothers would constantly encourage one another to go to the gym. Similarly, Anthony shared that SU is a “football school” and linked that to an expectation that everyone would want to tailgate, get drunk, and go to a game. Tanner also acknowledged, to outsiders, the fraternity might not seem the accepting because of the priorities placed on the typical male experience and not being very diverse.

In a similar vein, if a member said they did not want to do these things, their peers would antagonize them for doing something on their own. To this effect, Tanner shared an example of what might happen if a brother wanted to stay in to do homework: ““Oh, homework can wait, have a few beers with me.’ But that's just given between guys in general, in my opinion.” Tanner’s statement shows, how he reduced drinking to expected behavior between men. Both of these actions indicated direct support for traditionally masculine behaviors.

The second way members allowed guys to just be guys was by not upholding expectations that might otherwise interfere with behaviors that the members believed were a part of their masculine identity. One example of this was not addressing certain behaviors until they became extreme. For example, nearly all participants talked about how drinking alcohol was just something college men do. However, if someone drank to excess or was believed to be an alcoholic, a chapter would likely address the situation. For example, Anthony reflected on an experience when one of his brothers was drinking and it got to a point where “everyone was really worried,” so they intervened. However, alcohol was a normal part of the culture in Eta Sigma. In a similar example, Anthony also acknowledged that some of the chapter brothers smoke marijuana, but thought it was also a normal college thing. Christopher was dismissive of the competition in the chapter because it was fueled by women, and he believed pursuing women was normal for college men.

While both chapters had many instances where guys being guys was an excuse for behavior, some of the more senior members of Eta Sigma did challenge some of the typical perceptions of college men. For example, Ian talked about how he thought it was important to mitigate typical college male apathy towards academics and on campus involvement. He would use the phrase “it’s cool to care” and explained the point he was trying to get across by saying:

It's fun to find a passion and kind of run with it. So, I try to get guys involved on campus in our chapter. I'm really big on that cause I don't want your time to be wasted here at SU. Yes, it's fun to go downtown and drink and whatnot, and I obviously do that, but it's also fun to find your role at SU, find something that you can give back to and look back on your legacy. So, whether it's just caring about your brother, your friend, your family, if

you just show that and show how you're giving back to that, I appreciate that and I think that kind of goes a long way.

Ian acknowledged many young men believe it brings them status to act like they do not care about anything, and he felt it was important to change the narrative.

Additionally, six of the eight participants talked about the importance of mental health and breaking the stereotype that men should not talk about their feelings. Christopher talked about how he has built close relationships with men in the chapter, through the concept of brotherhood, that allowed him to feel comfortable talking about a “mental struggle” he has been dealing with. Ian, Anthony, Tanner, and Don all talked about Eta Sigma’s efforts to appoint a mental health chair. They also talked about how the campfire activity is meant to open brothers up. Eta Sigma recently had a brother attempt suicide and felt it was important to break the stigma around mental health. Don, in particular, recounted an experience when he was vulnerable with his brothers, which, in turn, caused them to share more about what they were going through.

Throughout the interviews, there was also a very consistent theme about why participants joined a fraternity. A majority of participants stated they were looking to replicate prior experiences they had in friend groups, be it a sports team or club, prior to coming to SU. For example, Tanner stated, before transferring to SU, his close friends were his teammates. He described his need to replace the comradery he had with his teammates and found Eta Sigma: “I was like, well, I’m kind of lost. I need, I need my guys.” Similarly, Jacob wanted to find a group of friends who were men to fit in with, having always been a part of a sports team. While the participants did not make the direct connection between their desires and what was going on in the chapter, it was clear they desired to be in a place where masculinity could be expressed with

other men. Collectively, the participants valued the opportunity to be a guy in a space where they felt others would appreciate it.

Participants also acknowledged the positive elements of masculinity that they linked to standard expectations for men. In doing so, they seemed to still embrace “guys being guys” but in a more positive manner. For example, nearly all participants talked about the importance of being hard working and “successful.” For example, Sam was interested in joining Beta Gamma because he saw an older brother who he believed was “ambitious” which was something he aspired to be. Similarly, Jacob thought the brothers were “highly motivated” which aligned with his goals as he first started at SU. Anthony also believed men holding each other accountable was a positive element of masculinity and he thought accountability was a part of the culture in Eta Sigma. While both positive and negative elements of what may be considered stereotypical men’s behavior appeared in the chapter, many of the things participants identified were dismissed as things that were normal for college men.

Culture and Context Set the Tone

During the interviews, it became clear that participants’ experiences were significantly influenced by the culture of their particular chapters, the members in each chapter, and the context of being at a large, public university in the southeast, like SU, which places significant value on the fraternity experience. This theme captures the impact of how a particular chapter can shape their own culture, but also is operating within the greater context of the university and the associated challenges.

Who is in the Room. The idea of who is in the room can be applied both within one chapter and is a theme when comparing the two chapters studied against one another.

Throughout the interviews, there were clear lines between how the members of Eta Sigma and

Beta Gamma prioritized certain values, emphasized masculinity, and held their peers accountable. Demographics of the SU student population cut across chapter lines and influenced the chapters studied.

Determining who makes it in the room starts as soon as a chapter begins the process of recruiting members. As mentioned previously, chapters identified various characteristics that they would seek out during the recruitment process, often in alignment with the existing values. The recruitment process is the main gateway for determining the priorities in the new member class. Jacob, Christopher, Anthony, Sam, and Ian all mentioned how they felt like they would get along most with the guys already in the chapter. For both Eta Sigma and Beta Gamma, a big part of the connection they developed with the new members was linked back to the regionality of their membership. Christopher talked about the difference between the two:

I feel like a lot of us, and a lot of the people that I'm surrounded with in my northern fraternity is that we all want to go back up north, or we all want to go even north, or somewhere populated. And it seems like a lot of the guys in the Southern, they want to say down south, they had friends from home that they knew basically everyone in the fraternity before they even got to Southeastern. So, it's a huge difference.

Similarly, Jordan recalled seeing “southern fraternities” pray during the recruitment process. As someone from a non-religious part of the country, he felt that was a bit strange and it caused him to gravitate towards the culture of a northern fraternity. These experiences highlighted the importance members placed on finding similar cultures to be a part of. Over time, as new members joined organizations with people significantly similar to them, chapters remained monolithic organizations by the nature of the way both chapters and new members considered one another during the recruitment process.

As the members continue through their experience, they are seen as influential by the younger members brought in during the recruitment process. These more senior members of the chapter are then more respected when it comes to decision making within the chapter. As such, the things they prioritize will influence the culture of the chapter. Senior priority was emphasized by all four Eta Sigma members during their interviews. Don and Ian also credited this to the fact that their senior members had made positive changes to the chapter and had established credibility for doing so.

Senior priority can also significantly stifle change from younger members as they wait for the older members to leave the chapter, usually through graduation or becoming disengaged as seniors. Jacob talked about how older members might not consider trying to address problems because they were close to graduating, stating “I’m going to be graduating and gone by then, right?” This, coupled with the culture of new members not wanting to approach change, created a situation where half of the membership did not feel empowered to say something and the other half did not care enough to do so.

While the general chapter membership has an influence, chapter leaders were also identified as having key roles within their chapter. Jordan recalled two times when Beta Gamma members had destroyed another fraternity’s property. The situations were handled differently, and Jordan explained why:

I think that it was honestly, the president of the fraternity. Last year he was, the guy that was president was a little more social...He was really big on having good parties...Whereas now the president that we've got is really focused on actually building us, not just outwardly, but also as people.

In Beta Gamma, the younger members observed the change in the chapter culture and context as new leaders were elected. Like Jordan, Christopher talked about the difference between the current president and his immediate predecessor. Jacob explained that it is normal in Beta Gamma for seniors to not be very involved and that the expectation to take on leadership roles usually shifts to second semester sophomores or first semester juniors.

Similarly, as executive board members, the Eta Sigma brothers spoke to how they, firsthand, participated in making changes to the chapter's culture once they were elected to their positions. Anthony recalled when he first joined Eta Sigma the chapter was not highly regarded by the campus community or other chapters. Historically, they had issues being known for drug use. However, Anthony shared a recent experience where drug use was "immediately shut down." Ian further elaborated on this point and stated the chapter had put in significant effort to get more involved on campus, beyond their chapter, and even with the local organization outside of SU's campus in an effort to improve their reputation.

Student demographics were also discussed in relation to the culture and priorities of the chapter. Over half of the participants acknowledged demographic details that influenced their chapter's culture. Most prominently, both Beta Gamma and Eta Sigma discussed their identities as "northern" fraternities, in that their members are primarily from the northeastern and mid-Atlantic regions of the United States. As discussed, that began as early as recruitment but continued into the chapter culture. Anthony stated "we all come from the same area, the same kind of backgrounds for the most part. So, I'd say the majority of us kind of just wear the same thing because that's kind of who we are." To the contrary, Ian believed, since some of the brothers were "Jersey guys" and others were "New York guys," they had a diverse chapter.

The demographics on SU's campus were relevant to how the chapters prioritized various behaviors. Members also cited campus demographics as a limiting factor on who they might recruit. For example, two participants acknowledged, what they perceived, as a relatively homogeneous culture at SU. Tanner talked about how some people might not want to come out to recruitment because they have a certain opinion of fraternities. Tanner also believed the SU student population was not as diverse as other schools which is why the fraternity was so homogeneous. However, he recognized part of the fraternity's behaviors and culture likely kept students who might not fit the fraternity demographic out of the recruitment process. Conversely, Ian seemed proud of Eta Sigma's progress in this area, as he stated the chapter had ten members "that are of the minority" out of over 120. Ian claimed this was more than most chapters in the IFC at SU. He clarified he only was referring to brothers from a minority racial background when making the statement.

In discussing chapter culture, participants acknowledged that a chapter's reputation ebbs and flows based on the decision makers in the chapter and what the members viewed as important or acceptable. This, in turn, directly impacted the accountability process. Don described how there is an agreed, understood ethos about things the chapter prioritizes. Tanner also said, in some case of informal accountability, there might be a "chapter agreement" of how to approach a certain situation, given the members share the same values of what is right and wrong.

Younger members then took on learning these behaviors from those in the room, continuing to set the tone for the chapter's culture going forward. Sam, who was the youngest participant in the study, stated he learned how to behave in the chapter from "role modeling," seeing what the older guys were doing and then newer the members would "just do as they

expect.” Jordan believed the chapter culture would cause people to be socialized, in their first few months, to behave in the pre-determined way. Jordan also thought this was in tandem to the impact of the campus culture, especially for students who might not have experience in the south prior to enrolling at SU.

Hierarchy on Campus. It is critical to understand how members and chapters view themselves within the context of the fraternity system on their campus. At SU, there were over 20 fraternity chapters that made up the IFC and nearly 1,000 men participate in recruitment each year. Given the significance of the fraternity experience at the university, hierarchy on campus played a significant role in setting the chapter’s priorities. This came up frequently when the members were asked to discuss the way external influences impact their chapters. The hierarchy on campus also played a role in the chapter priorities during the accountability process. For example, having a top-tier status on campus required chapters have social events, often with alcohol. As a result, both chapters in this study averaged three to four social events per week and did not confront situations involving underage alcohol consumption.

Participants were not directly asked to discuss hierarchy or status in the fraternity community, but it came up as being a key influence on the chapters’ decisions, both formally and informally. Tanner stated the source of the hierarchy was informal and was “how you’re talked about on campus,” referring to the chapter and its members. Nearly all the participants spoke to their chapter’s perception of their own status on campus and efforts to maintain it, if it was high, or improve it, if the chapter was not happy with it. For example, Jordan talked about how the chapter president held a brother accountable for doing something destructive and believed it was important because they “got status to uphold” and “can’t be retaliating for silly, stupid stuff.”

Social events, associations with other fraternities or sororities, and contribution to the campus community were all linked to having a higher position in the campus hierarchy. Anthony spoke about the importance of socializing with certain fraternities versus others. Don also discussed an informal divide that existed between the fraternities based on if their membership was primarily “northern” or “southern,” referencing what part of the country the membership was from. Don stated that Eta Sigma typically socializes with groups that are northern as well. “We’d typically hang out with the more northern sororities.” Regionality seemed to be a big component of the SU culture and influenced the associations and hierarchy between the chapters on campus. Tanner even mentioned there being a sub-hierarchy between the top northern and southern fraternity chapters since they do not usually compete for the same new members.

However, the top priority mentioned was sorority relationships. As discussed previously, fraternity chapters place significant priority on being around attractive women. As such, the ability to socialize with the sororities that are top tier is coveted. Christopher believed the competition to be around “hottest girls” that occurred within the chapter also occurred between chapters in the IFC. He believed all fraternity chapters were in this informal competition to be able to associate with the “best” sororities on campus, defined by how attractive their members were.

This sentiment underscores the value placed on physical appearance. Chapters that have the opportunity to socialize with attractive women, and likely have sexual relationships with them, are granted status on campus. While the campus values play a role in determining hierarchy, hegemonic masculinity also granted chapters points in the race to be at the top. Not only was being a man prioritized at an individual level as discussed above, but it also was prioritized with the campus context.

Destructive behavior between chapters also occurred as a result of competition for the top spot in the campus hierarchy. Jordan explained a common practice at SU is for fraternities to have their own homemade bars. A situation occurred where one brother destroyed another chapter's bar after a party. As mentioned, the brother was not held accountable because the chapter valued appearance of dominance over another fraternity. Jordan went on to explain the reason this brother was not held accountable was because a majority of the chapter determined destroying the other chapter's bar could increase their clout on campus.

The hierarchy on campus was also noticed in systemic ways, beyond solely the student population. The Eta Sigma participants, who had more direct connection to the university staff and administration, spoke about the relationship with university advisors also playing a role in the hierarchy on campus. Tanner believed their relationship with the campus IFC advisor had given them access to extra resources: "Sampson is a great guy because he knows we're working our way up. We've been doing well. And so, he's more willing to help us. He knows we're going to give it everything we've got." Anthony also talked about the relationship he built with the advisors: "The relationship that I have with IFC on a personal level and our advisors and all of that was nonexistent in our chapter six years ago. And right now, we have a strong connection with them." Anthony linked the relationship with the campus and community around SU to be a key part of what improved the chapter's hierarchy on campus. While the priorities for hierarchy determined by fraternity and sorority advisors are clearly different than the students, a hierarchy of which chapter is better is still established and, in some cases, also guides the decisions made by the chapter and campus professionals.

Summary

This chapter presented a summary of the two chapters participating in the study and information about each participant from the chapter, such as their demographics, time spent in the fraternity, motivation for joining, and any leadership position(s) they held during their time in the fraternity. The study procedures reviewed the process for data analysis before discussing the findings. There were five themes presented in the chapter, each with multiple subthemes. Formal expectations being only a formality addressed how formal rules and policies are not centered in the accountability experience within the chapter, but rather takes a back seat and violations are ignored or rarely addressed. Herd mentality: informal expectations of the group discussed how informal expectations are set and priority is given to assimilationist behavior and the importance of not disturbing the herd. Informal accountability is the real accountability identified the frequency with which informal accountability occurs and how peers play a role. Being a man prioritized centered the critical elements of masculinity that showed up in the participants' experiences with accountability in their chapter and how masculinity often usurped accountability. Finally, culture and context set the tone frame how each chapter and campus can be different based on its members and the campus's fraternity culture.

The next chapter presents a summary of the findings and enters into a discussion of those findings. Implications for both academia and professional practice will be presented, along with opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Summary of Study

This phenomenological study sought to understand the impact of masculinity on accountability in fraternity chapters. Social fraternities have been a part of the university experience of nearly 200 years (Syrett, 2009). They continue to be one of the largest avenues for student involvement with over 700,000 active members on campuses in the United States at any given time (Pike, 2020; Rhoads, 1995). However, there are continued criticisms of fraternities, namely around how their behaviors and perceived lack of accountability for the problems that can arise in a fraternity (Durkin et al., 2005; Harper et al., 2005; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). However, there are established systems in place designed to prevent and respond to misconduct. (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004; Paterson, 2013). Yet, issues continue to arise. Additionally, fraternities have been identified as hypermasculine environments which contributed to much of the problematic behavior (Harris & Harper, 2014). The purpose of this study was to explore the concept of accountability and its intersection with masculinity within social fraternity chapters.

Chapter one introduced the purpose of the study and outlined the research questions used to guide the study's design and execution:

1. How do fraternity members hold each other accountable for deviating from behavioral expectations?
2. How do the methods fraternity members use to hold each other accountable influence member behavior?
3. To what extent does masculinity play a role in the methods fraternity members are willing to use to hold one another accountable?

Chapter two introduced the conceptual framework of masculinity, defined by society (Harris, 2008, 2010; Harris & Harper, 2014, 2015; Kimmel, 2008). The chapter reviewed literature about social fraternities, peer accountability procedures, student conduct work at universities, and masculinity in society and fraternities.

Chapter three presented the methodology used in this study. Phenomenological research was appropriate for this study as it sought to discover what the participants experience was with accountability in their fraternities (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). These experiences then translated into the knowledge the participants formed about accountability. Data was gathered through document review and eight semi-structured interviews. Two fraternity chapters were selected for participation. Each chapter contributed four participants who participated in a single, semi-structured interview. After completing the interviews, In Vivo coding was used during first cycle coding, capturing exact language from the participants. Pattern coding was used to sort the In Vivo codes into categories. From these categories, five themes emerged.

Chapter four presented the findings of the study, organized into five themes. The discussion was organized by theme as the research questions overlapped and questions designed to address specific research questions often addressed a topic in other areas of the study. The researcher also had to interpret much of the tenants of masculinity, woven throughout the participants' responses, as they often did not directly associate their fraternity experience and hegemonic masculinity.

Chapter five will present a summary of the findings and a detailed discussion of each related to the literature reviewed for this study. This chapter will also discuss the limitations of this study and the implications for practice and policy related to the fraternity experience and

accountability. Finally, a discussion of the opportunities for future research will also be presented.

Summary of Findings

Every participant experienced accountability in the fraternity. Some were in formal positions involving accountability while others had more experience with informal accountability. All of the participants were extremely dedicated to their fraternity and spent a majority of their time interacting with other fraternity members. Participants' time in the fraternity and the role(s) they held directly influenced their perspectives and understanding of accountability. It was also clear the cultural dynamics in each chapter influenced the member experience. However, there were consistent themes across all of the interviews. While participants were able to identify key characteristics of masculinity, they lacked a clear understanding of how masculinity impacted their fraternity accountability experience. While the findings of this study came categories derived across all research questions, a discussion of the findings related to each question is presented below.

Research Question One

Findings in this section addressed the first research question: How do fraternity members hold each other accountable for deviating from behavioral expectations?

Fraternity members established two different categories of methods for holding each other accountable: formal and informal accountability. Within each category, multiple methods of accountability were identified. Participants knowledge of each type of accountability varied, often most closely linked to roles they held in their chapter. For example, the four younger participants, who did not have leadership roles, rarely spoke of formal accountability. Conversely, the four older members, who were serving or had served in executive board

positions, were very familiar with their chapter's formal expectations and accountability processes. The executive board members believed their roles demanded familiarity with the accountability process as they were often the first notified of a brother's misconduct. Additionally, while there was some overlap between the methods used by each chapter, there were clear, chapter-level influences which impacted how each chapter held their members accountable.

An understanding of formal accountability came from interviews and document review. The document review revealed lengthy, detailed form expectations each chapter had for its members, often derived from a standardized set distributed to all chapters nationally. They also had standardized outcomes for violations of the expectations. However, all participants reported they had rarely seen the formal accountability structure, referred to as a judicial board, used by their chapter. When a judicial board hearing was held, participants described the hearing as a court-like process whereby a brother was given an opportunity to explain themselves and then the board of peers determined a consequence for the actions, should they feel a violation had occurred. Some example outcomes from judicial board boards were social probation, fines, educational coursework, or removal from the chapter. However, the use of a judicial board was almost always theoretical. In Beta Gamma, none of the members had witnessed a judicial board hearing or knew of one occurring. Eta Sigma was more likely to use the judicial board and the members were more familiar with its process. But they also used it as a last resort for serious infractions.

Informal accountability was the most prevalent form of accountability within the chapter. While formal accountability was limited to one primary method and a specific group of brothers, there was not nearly as much structure in the informal process. Participants described multiple

ways they used informal accountability in their chapters. Some common threads across each of the methods included being easily accessible, quick, and undocumented. For example, if a brother saw something happening that was problematic, they would either “pull a brother aside” or “call him out,” quickly drawing attention to the issue. Phones and social media also offered a virtual method for informal accountability whereby brothers could draw attention to something the chapter thought was problematic without being together. Chapter brothers often used group text messages or social media to share, in the moment, what they were thinking about what their peers were doing.

Informal accountability was not identified in any chapter documents or taught directly to new members. Most participants learned informal expectations through observations during the early part of their experience in the fraternity. It was also not linked to any documented expectations but rather served as a way to police social behaviors. Informal accountability occurred daily within the chapter, be it at a formal meeting or simply when members were spending time together outside of any fraternity context. All of the participants were able to recall multiple times where they had witnessed or been party to informal accountability in the chapter. This study revealed that fraternity members treat informal accountability as the real accountability in their chapters.

Research Question Two

Findings in this section addressed the second research question: How do the methods fraternity members use to hold each other accountable influence member behavior?

Several factors determined how significantly an accountability method influenced a member’s behavior. These factors included the method of accountability, person involved in the situation, the outcome, and the individual’s personal values and priorities. Participants largely

had shared perspectives on what the most common outcomes would be in a given situation, but also identified outlying situations when certain accountability methods proved to be ineffective.

Whether a situation was formal or informal also had an impact on how likely a member was to change their behavior. Of the participants who had witnessed a judicial board hearing occur, none believed it was more effective than using an informal method of accountability. There was not a consensus about why a formal method was ineffective, but participants believed the judicial board was very formal in nature and it did not bring forward the impact on personal relationships. Many times, a formal hearing was also only used to address formal rules which brothers were likely unaware of. Also, formal accountability was often not as public as informal accountability, so brothers did not feel as pressured to change their behavior as they might by the public shame and scrutiny brought on by informal methods of accountability.

The second factor members identified as influencing the effectiveness of an accountability method was the people participating in the accountability. Six participants believed the relationship they or another person had with the person being held accountable would make a difference in the likelihood that the person would change their behavior in the future. This was further split into two categories. First, members believed a brother with a strong relationship with a peer, likely from the same new member class, was more likely to cause a person to change their behavior. Members believed new member classes were usually some of the closest friendships in the fraternity and thus the person being confronted would take it more seriously. Members also stated they, personally, would not care about feedback from someone who they did not have a relationship with. The second type of person who held more weight in the accountability process was a chapter leader. Half of the participants believed a chapter leader approaching a situation would have a greater influence than just a “random” other brother.

The outcome of an accountability method was significant to most participants. There were two formal outcomes identified as likely to cause change. The most formal outcome participants believed would cause a member to change behavior was threat of getting kicked out of the fraternity. This was such a rare occurrence that participants felt if a brother was threatened with expulsion from the chapter, they would realize the severity of their behavior. The second formal outcome most mentioned was social probation. Participants described social probation as a moratorium on a brother attending any social function of the fraternity. While the most common length of social probation was one to two weeks, both chapters reported having three or four social functions per week. Because members placed significant priority on being able to go out, drink, and meet women, taking away this component of their fraternity experience was viewed as a significant consequence that would deter future misconduct.

When it came to informal accountability, the most significant outcome mentioned was how an individual was perceived by their brothers and close friends within the chapter. A brother could be held informally accountable for doing something out of line with expectations or for failing to do something that the fraternity thought was important. For example, if everyone was attending an event and a brother opted not to come. Their friends were then disappointed by this decision. Because of the disappointment, the brother was significantly less likely to skip a future event, even if their reason was significant. Four participants told stories of their own experiences where they did something and, based on how their brothers responded, they thought they lost respect. All four believed losing respect from your brothers was one of the worst things that could come out of being held informally accountable and thus they never repeated the behavior.

While there were consistent themes about behavior change, participants did share times when brothers would not change their behavior linked to their personal values. In some cases,

incongruence did result in a participant being removed from the chapter. For example, there was a member of Eta Sigma who was removed from the chapter because, after multiple informal and formal accountability situations, he continued to behave erratically when drinking. Another brother stated he would attest from drinking for 75 days but failed to do so because he prioritized the social environments, where drinking was present, over the commitment he made to chapter. In a more informal situation, some brothers stopped coming to events because they had girlfriends which they prioritized over disappointing their fraternity brothers. As was mentioned by one participant, because every brother has different values, there is no “magic wand” that will get everyone to change their behavior.

Research Question Three

Findings in this section addressed the third research question: To what extent does masculinity play a role in the methods fraternity members are willing to use to hold one another accountable?

Masculinity was woven throughout the fraternity experience and impacted accountability in multiple ways. Masculinity impacted what brothers prioritized or normalized in their fraternity experience. Anything a chapter prioritized or normalized as typical masculine behavior was significantly less likely to be subject to accountability. In some cases, masculinity was prioritized over enforcing certain formal expectations of brothers. The most prominent example of this related to drinking alcohol. Every member admitted underage drinking is a regular part of the fraternity despite it being well documented what the expectations are. However, participants dismissed this as being something “college guys” do. Similarly, when it came to sexual relationships with women, the chapter prioritized opportunities to have sex with women and only

responded to situations where a brother was overly aggressive. If a chapter brother was disrespectful of a woman, especially in private, this was rarely confronted.

Masculinity also contributed to a significant set of informal expectations in the chapter. Participants most frequently talked about the impact of the informal expectations set by the chapter. Most of the informal expectations influenced the day-to-day chapter member's behaviors. For example, members were expected to work out in order to achieve a physique others would see as acceptable. The physique members were striving for mirrored characteristics of traditional masculinity, such as strong, fit, and attractive to women. Members were also expected to participate in social environments with a significant amount of alcohol consumption. The entire chapter culture also revolved around the opportunity impress and socialize women, especially women considered to be "hot." The focus on women was both at an individual level and as an entire chapter. At the individual level, a brother would try to be the most attractive person in the chapter. At the group level, chapters prioritized doing anything possible to be seen as the top fraternity in the eyes of the top sororities. This dynamic was deeply rooted in the desire for men to be associated or have sex with the most attractive women as a show of superiority and dominance.

Because masculinity was such a significant source of setting expectations, members would then hold each other informally accountable for not conforming to these expectations. The most common thread across the methods of informal accountability was shame and embarrassment. Participants associated significant value to informal accountability because they did not want to be shamed or seen as less than by their brothers. They also saw the rewards other brothers, who did perform hegemonic masculinity, reaped, and ultimately wanted to get that status. In turn, members would then prioritize masculine behaviors instead of adhering to the

policies and practices set out in formal expectations. Because maintaining a masculine identity was so key to the perception of a chapter's success it was extremely rare that a chapter would hold someone accountable for doing anything that could be perceived as masculine, even if it was problematic.

Masculinity also impacted brothers' decisions on who should be held accountable. Participants talked about informal status granted to members who prominently displayed hegemonic masculinity. For example, if a person was very dominant, loud, and perceived to be well-liked, it was less likely that they would be held accountable by their peers. Seniority was also considered when deciding who would be held accountable. Members who were older would rarely be approached by a younger member. Additionally, power was associated with leadership roles and those in leadership roles were given more agency to hold others in the chapter accountable. While participants did not directly identify the link to masculinity, their experiences detailed an environment where masculinity was central to every decision made in the fraternity, including accountability.

Discussion of Findings

Each of the five themes illustrated the participants experiences with the phenomenon of accountability. Each theme also had a connection to the literature used to guide this study. This section provides an overview of each theme, based on the framework, and how the findings in this study contribute the understanding of masculinity, accountability, and fraternities.

Formal Expectations only a Formality

The first finding, formal expectations only a formality, reflects the sentiment members had about the formal policies and procedures in their chapter. Fraternities begin setting expectations with new members immediately as a part of their formal new member process (Park

et al., 2009; Sanday, 1990, Syrett, 2009). Both chapters behaved consistently with previous findings and conducted a new member process designed to indoctrinate the new members into the fraternity's operations. According to formal documents provided by the chapters, the new member process was extremely structured with lesson plans and a week-by-week guide for a more senior brother to lead educational classes. The program also touched on the fraternity's espoused values, consistent with Schutts & Shelley's (2014) findings on the new member process.

However, this study found all education regarding formal expectations served more to check a box in the process than actually set a precedent for members. During the interviews, a clear delineation was made about whether or not a person knew the formal expectations. If a member held a senior leadership role, the duties of his position would make it incumbent on him to know the formal expectations. For example, Tanner talked about the disregard he had for the requirement to read the chapter's bylaws. Once he was elected to a leadership role, he had to reread the bylaws and constitution because he did not remember what the chapter was formally required to do.

The younger members who were interviewed, from Beta Gamma, were aware of some of the formal expectations, but often believed they were focused on operational aspects of the fraternity, such as paying dues, conducting elections, or minimum academic requirements. This finding expands on the research by Harris and Harper (2014) which posits that chapter leadership are the keepers of the formal expectations, but this study finds leaders were the only ones who knew the expectations at all. In many cases, they disregarded most of these expectations particularly those pertaining to formal expectations.

Fraternity members also largely behaved incongruently with formal expectations by either disregarding them altogether, encouraging behavior inconsistent with the expectations, or by ignoring violations of formal expectations. A judicial board hearing was the mechanism for holding someone formally accountable, consistent with previously established formal accountability methods (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004). However, this study found judicial boards were, in almost all cases, a matter of policy and rarely used in practice. Only one participant was able to recall more than one instance when the judicial board was used because it was his responsibility in his position in the fraternity. Members of Beta Gamma could not recall a time the judicial board was used in the nearly two years some of them had been members. Consistent with Anderson (2008) and Harris and Harper (2014), chapter brothers reserved the judicial board for the most serious forms of misconduct which were usually repeated violations of an expectation which the entire chapter considered egregious enough to warrant expulsion. Common examples of such behaviors, not previously identified in research, are driving while drunk or sexual assault.

In all interviews, participants recognized multiple ways their chapter behaved incongruently with the expectations from their bylaws, constitution, or fraternity and university policies. The most common example was drinking alcohol and using drugs. All of the participants reported drinking underage in their chapters themselves and stated nearly all other brothers were doing so as well. Sasso (2015) found men would prioritize masculine behaviors over judicial violations. Excessive alcohol consumption was also found to be one of the most frequent hegemonic masculine behaviors of college men (Caudill et al., 2006). This finding, along with the literature, finds that formal expectations are often discarded when the conflict with a fraternity's priority for status, expressed through hegemonic masculinity. Additionally,

neither chapter considered ramifications from their national headquarters or the university for violating their policies.

Herd Mentality: Informal Expectations of the Group

The participants' fraternity experience was dominated by informal expectations of the chapter, centered on creating a mentality where everyone was pushed to be a member of the herd. Unlike formal expectations, there was little or no documentation of the informal expectations in the chapter. Members learned the informal expectations after joining by observing the behaviors and actions of the more senior brothers. Bandura's (1971) social learning theory offered direct experience and observation as the two most prominent methods for a person to learn from their peers. Social learning theory can be used to describe the way that participants learned the informal expectations. For example, Sam discussed watching what older brothers were doing and then mirroring it, referring to it as "doing what they expected."

Consistent with Bandura's (1971) theory and similar findings by Anderson (2008) and Harris and Harper (2014), members utilized role modeling to set informal expectations of behavior. Participants reported both direct experiences and observations as sources for learning informal expectations. Participants recalled specific experiences where they had been rewarded or punished for not adhering to the informal expectations. Don shared an experience, from his first semester, when he was chastised for doing something outside the standard practice for communicating with sororities. During the interview, Don recalled the significance impact the feedback had on him and how he quickly realized there was a way everything was to be done. Don also quickly learned many of these expectations came from brothers who joined the fraternity long before he had.

Similarly, multiple members of Beta Gamma recalled experiences where they saw participants change things about themselves during the first few months of their membership. For example, Jordan was repeatedly identified as an outlier for having a southern accent. So, he quickly eliminated his accent so he could assimilate with the rest of the herd. Jordan was so struck by this negative reinforcement that he believed he might lose friends in the fraternity. Jordan's experience aligns with the findings from Mathieson (2005) which posit new fraternity members will transfer their primary reference group for behavior from external sources to the fraternity. This study expands on Mathieson's (2005) findings by recognizing a relationship between the amount of time a person spent with the chapter and how strong the influence of informal expectations was. The members who were spending the most time with their chapter brothers felt significantly more pressure to do the same things their fraternity brothers were doing.

Participants also recalled how people had progressively changed as their tenure in the chapter increased. Previous research of fraternity men found members only consider their fraternity brothers as a peer reference group (Carter & Kahnweiler, 2000). This study supported this assertion through the changes participants made in response to what their fraternity brothers did. For example, three Beta Gamma members discussed how working out had become more important to members because they thought everyone was doing it. Jordan went so far as to claim members would change their specific work out routines so they could all do the same thing. Participants and their peers in the chapter would do anything they could to be as close to the center of the herd.

The power of the informal expectations in the chapter became so strong that some participants would avoid doing things that might cause negative reinforcement when presented

with the opportunity to make instigate change. When it came time to decide, for example, to hang out with fraternity members or other friends, several participants decided to spent time with the fraternity because they felt an expectation was set for chapter brothers to spend all their time together. This shifting of their peer reference group was common in fraternities (Carter & Kahnweiler, 2000; Mathiasen, 2005). Participants attributed the significant amount of time together as a factor in the stronghold the fraternity had on their individuality. The shift of the reference group often had a negative impact on the participant's sense of self. It was hard for participants to be different from the herd when they were constantly around someone in the fraternity: living together, eating together, having the same friends, and socializing together.

The herd mentality became so pervasive in the chapters it impacted recruitment and selection of new members. During recruitment, current members focused on selecting new members who would fit in to the status quo. While prior research acknowledged the importance of setting the stage for member expectations (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014; Park et al., 2009) this study found this process started as early as recruitment. Chapters brothers looked for people that were like them or the fraternity as a benchmark during recruitment. There was no attempt to seek out individuals who, though different from the herd, might contribute positively. Rather, the chapters focused on recruiting those who would most likely fit in immediately and not disrupt the norm. While informal expectations were set for brothers in the chapter, the members then used those informal expectations as a gate keeping mechanism to make sure they would only recruit members who would pose little resistance to the unwritten rules.

The herd mentality was pervasive throughout all elements of the fraternity. The study found chapters will focus on agreement and there are clear rewards for those who go along with the herd. The chapters continue to find like-minded people to join during recruitment. There

were also systems in place to ostracize those who were not like the herd. Additionally, the herd elders, in this case senior members or recent graduates, helped pass down the informal expectations and ensured the herd did not change over time.

Informal Accountability is the Real Accountability

With informal expectations came informal accountability. In prior studies, informal accountability was described as quick ways for members to approach one another to stop behavior, such as pulling them aside or having a conversation (Baker-Zwernez et al., 2004). The findings of this study suggest these methods are still the primary forms of informal accountability in fraternities. Additionally, men have also started using social media, text messages, and group messaging to address informal issues. Prior research on this topic was conducted prior to the advent of social media and smart phone. As such, the findings of this study suggest ease of access and quick communication are integral components of informal accountability. Anything a brother did could easily become everyone's business, raising the pressure associated with informal accountability. Unlike formal accountability, informal accountability was found to have little structure. Participants cited the lack of structure as a reason informal accountability was more likely to be used. Informal accountability also felt more accessible to all members of the chapter because it required little effort, similar to findings reported in Harris and Harper (2014). Informal accountability far surpassed the use of formal accountability in addressing behavior concerns.

Informal accountability usurped formal accountability in large part because of the ease of use and availability to all chapter members. Participants relied on informal accountability for almost everything, including many of the formal expectations. For example, chapters had formal expectations and processes for dealing with issues such as poor academic performance, excessive

drinking, or drug use. However, participants substituted these formal processes for informal approaches instead. Unlike Anderson's (2008) findings, which stated participants prioritized more serious infractions for formal accountability, this study found both chapters relied almost exclusively on informal mechanisms. During the interviews for this study, all participants combined only recalled three instances when a judicial board hearing was held. Unsurprisingly, the participant who recalled the hearings was the person responsible for running the judicial board process.

Brothers also linked the use of informal accountability to the pride they had in the chapter. Multiple participants reported, consistent with previous research (McCreary & Shutts, 2015), their chapter was really good at "setting high standards" and "holding brothers accountable for the standards." However, participants lacked awareness of the impact of dismissing formal violations to the informal process. In one example, a behavior was repeated multiple times by brothers in the chapter because others had no idea that it had been a problem the first time. Because informal accountability is largely decentralized, there is a lack of consistency and alignment on what should be held accountable and who should be providing leadership to the brothers. Instead, each brother learns inductively, through their own experience.

Informal accountability was largely accessible to most members of the chapter. All of the participants felt comfortable with confronting situations in an informal setting and recalled at least one, if not multiple, situations where they confronted their brother or saw this type of accountability occur in the chapter. However, there were factors that might limit when a brother would confront a peer. Brothers often felt bound to the hierarchy within the chapter which caused them to be more hesitant to approach older chapter members or leaders. The methods brothers in the study used largely aligned with methods described in previous research, with the

addition of social media. (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2015; McCreary & Shutts, 2015), However, this study expands on previous findings by addressing a limitation to the agency brothers felt when using informal accountability. Additionally, consistent with prior research, brothers also found it difficult to use informal accountability if their perspective would challenge the culture set by their peers (Harris, 2010; Harris & Edwards, 2010). In most cases, brothers would keep their perspective to themselves in order to not stand out. They also prioritized the relationship they had with the other person. Brothers who did not like the offending party would often keep to themselves because it was not worth their time. This study also found a direction connection between masculinity and informal accountability. Hierarchy in the chapter, set by tenets of hegemonic masculinity, was a key factor influencing participants' likelihood to hold a brother accountable.

While formal accountability was limited to responding after a situation occurred, informal accountability was used before, during, and after a behavior took place to ensure brothers were aligning with the informal expectations of the fraternity. Informal accountability served as a way to ensure brothers aligned with particular expectations. For example, one participant talked about how everyone praising a particular type of shoe caused him to buy and wear those shoes, even though he had not personally been confronted about his shoes. The social pressure by itself served to hold him informally accountable. Participants shared several similar examples where behavior was modified based on the expectations of others and seeing others be held accountable. While prior research addresses the fraternity becoming the new reference group (Harris & Harper, 2015; Mathiasen, 2005), this study expands on the extent to which fraternity men feel this pressure in almost every aspect of their daily lives.

Informal accountability was often used in the moment to address concerns immediately. For example, if an individual was behaving erratically while drinking, a brother would approach him and to discuss the situation. Unlike prior research which found fraternity members focus on their brother's perceptions (Cater & Kahnweiler, 2000), this study found participants were seriously concerned about their perception and reputation amongst all members of the campus community. Brothers believed the student body's opinion of them held significant weight as to where in the campus fraternity hierarchy a chapter was placed. As such, in the moment informal accountability was used to stop a situation from getting out of hand and potentially damaging the chapter's reputation and lowering them in the hierarchy. However, participants were not as concerned with the fact that behavior occurred, but more that it was in public and risked their chapter's reputation.

One of the most distinct ways informal accountability was the real accountability was its use in place of formal processes. Participants shared myriad of situations where a brother might violate a particular expectation. For almost every situation discussed, the brother would likely get "pulled aside" informally to discuss the issue. In some cases, chapters resorted to only confronting extreme behaviors. For example, one brother explained the chapter allows underage drinking, unless the behavior becomes highly problematic, because drinking was such a part of the social environment. Brothers felt informally accountability was more effective. This was linked to the strong desire brothers had not to disappoint one another. While Mathiasen (2005) found role modeling promoted positive moral behaviors, this study expands on the research by expanding the specific impacts of role modeling. Role modeling was linked to the negative sentiment brothers feel when they have disappointed their peers. Because their brothers were their primary friend group, their opinion was very important. Multiple participants believed

disappointing a brother was the most significant outcome of informal accountability a brother could experience in fraternity.

Being a Man Prioritized

This theme highlighted how traditionally masculine behaviors were centric to the fraternity experience. Masculinity was woven into nearly every component of a member's experience, from the recruitment process, social events, and traits used to establish hierarchy in the chapter. Traditional traits associated with masculinity, such as objectification of women, use of alcohol and drugs, and sports were all consistent themes that influenced decision making of both participants and the entire chapter (Harris & Edwards, 2010). Not only did masculinity influence decision making, it also was used as an excuse for behaviors and to grant status to certain fraternity members.

Prior research on masculinity found several behaviors consistent with a masculine identity, such as drinking, promiscuity with women, interests in sports and video games, acceptance of homophobia, and academic apathy (Berkowitz, 2011; Harris, 2008; Harris & Edwards, 2010). In the fraternity, most of these behaviors were prioritized two ways. First, members would make decisions based on the idea that all men like the same things. Second, masculine behavior was given priority in accountability. For example, if a brother chose to do something atypical of a man, they were likely subject to formal accountability. Conversely, behaviors considered "college guy stuff," such as drinking or fighting, were often minimized, or dismissed entirely. For example, if two brothers got into a fight, they would be expected to just "talk it out" rather than go to a judicial board hearing. The participant who shared the example said the fraternity approaches it this way because it is just what guys do. While most behaviors from the prior research were prioritized in the fraternity, this study found fraternities have moved

away from accepting homophobia and academic apathy. Multiple participants spoke about rewards provided to members for academic success and newly established diversity, equity, and inclusion chair positions. Prior research indicated apathy of members was common (Kimmel, 2008), but this study suggests while masculinity is still prioritized, apathy is not considered a masculine trait.

Historically, compared to non-fraternity members, fraternity members have been found to have more sexually aggressive attitudes toward women and were more likely to objectify women (Corprew & Mitchell, 2014; Seabrook et al., 2018). Outside of fraternities, studies of college men have shown they are likely to objectify women in hypermasculine environments (Harris, 2008; Harris & Barone, 2010; Rhoads, 1995). Participants in this study talked about women very differently. All eight participants talked about respecting women as a high priority to their chapter, something that would be taken very seriously. Four of the eight believed disrespecting women would be cause for a formal response.

However, their strong views on respecting women were more centered on how the chapter appeared to others than members actually respecting women. For example, chapters did not want to jeopardize their opportunities to socialize with top sororities or have bad reputations in the eyes of attractive women. The participants talked about how prevalent social media is and the concern about mistreating a woman was everyone would find out very quickly. Additionally, brothers continued to talk about having sex with attractive woman as a conquest and would “give a brother shit” if he slept with someone the chapter considered unattractive. Rather than having an intrinsic motivation to treat women with respect, the chapter was focused on maintaining their ability to have a good reputation with the women they found most desirable to have sex with.

Participants from both chapters recalled experiences when the group decided to make decisions because they thought it would be the best to maintain a relationship with women. For example, a chapter would not host a particular party if “girls thought it was weird” and would be less likely to attend. On an individual level, multiple participants believed men were not motivated to go the gym solely for their health, but rather to make themselves more physically appealing to women. This finding expands on the prior research about how fraternity men treat women by showing how the opportunity to have sex with women influence chapter culture. Of note, the participants’ view grounded in hegemonic masculinity in that not a single participant acknowledged a member may not be heterosexual. The desire to have sex with women was the most pervasive way chapters prioritized hegemonic masculinity. Almost every individual and group decision fraternity men made was linked, in some way, back to impressing women.

While the participants emphasized the importance of not mistreating women, there was a focus on how mistreating women would negatively impact the fraternity or a particular brother rather than the humanity of the woman in question. For example, the emphasis centered on not being cut off from opportunities to be connected from high-status sororities. Additionally, some of the Eta Sigma members mentioned how the chapter reputation could be hurt quickly given the speed with which information travels. There was a lack of focus on the experience of a woman who was mistreated and the impact on their humanity. While informal accountability, such as pulling a brother aside, might stop the behavior, there is concern that it simply serves as a mechanism to preserve their reputation rather than protect the woman in question.

Brothers who demonstrated hegemonic masculinity were rewarded with status in the chapter. Consistent with prior research on fraternities, the chapters in this study awarded social status and advantages to members who exhibited dominant, masculine behaviors (Harris &

Struve, 2009). A person's status carried over into the chapter's accountability process. Three participants told stories about brothers in their chapter who were not held informally accountable for certain behaviors because they were seen to have status both in the fraternity and on campus. Not only were these brothers cool in the chapter, but cool on campus and thus the chapter did not want to upset them. The message was clear: be a dominant man and you get to do what you want.

Culture and Context Set the Tone

The chapter culture played a significant part in accountability, masculinity, and the expectations in each chapter. Because this study worked with two chapters, the differences between chapter culture was clear in the findings. Prior research has found chapters have significant agency over their culture, including their forms of accountability (Anderson, 2008; Mathiasen, 2005; Sasso, 2015). The findings of this study are consistent with prior research. This study found the agency within the chapter rests largely in the hands of the chapter leaders. For example, two different presidents of the same chapter responded to the same behavior in different ways; one held the member accountable while his predecessor did not. In the other chapter, chapter leaders noticed the chapter's priorities seemed problematic. In an effort to improve their reputation on campus, the new chapter leaders worked diligently to change the expectations of the chapter.

Chapters also had the power to set the tone for relationships between members. In Eta Sigma chapter, new members were expected to be vulnerable from the onset of their membership. Older brothers talked about some of the most difficult situations they experienced, including significant mental health issues. The brothers in the chapter were then much closer to one another and had less reservation when confronting problematic behavior. This finding is

similar to research by Harris and Harper (2014), which found “productive masculinity” can help disrupt problematic behavior in fraternities. Conversely, Beta Gamma did not create an opportunity for vulnerability. As a result, the members of Beta Gamm felt much more pressure to conform to hegemonic masculinity. The difference between the two chapters underscores the fact that chapters have agency to determine the priority masculinity is given in their chapter and how it impacts the member’s behavior.

The campus culture also played a large role in the culture in the chapter. In this study, all seven of the eight participants were not from the part of the country where the institution was located. This was particularly salient as they noticed their chapters, which were also largely out-of-state students, sought to align with the cultural norms of the southeast. Previous research indicated fraternities often do not care about their non-affiliated peers’ perspectives (Carter & Kahnweiler, 2000). However, the findings of this study suggest the opposite. In fact, seven of the eight participants spoke about how important the general student population’s perception of the fraternity was. Two participants also believed the campuses homogenous culture, which was similar to fraternity culture, made it even more important to conform to the campus’s values.

Chapters also wanted to be seen in a positive light outside of the student body. Eta Sigma went so far as to work on their relationship with community partners, such as city leaders and the police department. This mindset shift was largely attributed to the negative media attention fraternities have received recently (Taylor et al., 2018). Two of the participants specifically noted the campus and societal cultural shift towards social justice and recent efforts at Duke and Harvard to eliminate the fraternity system entirely. Multiple participants believed the shifting narrative around men’s issues, particularly mental health, was causing some changes in the way fraternity brothers supported on another.

The fraternity-centric nature of the campus social life was also a factor. According to one participant, who was a leader in the campus IFC, almost 20% of the men at SU are in a fraternity. There was also a death of a fraternity member on campus in the last ten years. As such, the chapters were hyper-aware of the attention being paid fraternities by campus administrators and the board of trustees. According to members from Eta Sigma, fraternity culture was “huge”, but they were concerned the campus had a very divisive opinion of fraternities and their members. In response, the chapter was constantly focused on putting out positive social media posts, conducting philanthropy events, and putting in community service hours. Sentiments about the campus relationship with fraternities was shared by members from both chapters, highlighting the importance the campus culture has on priorities of the fraternity.

Discussion in Light of Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the social construct of masculinity. This section highlights, in addition to the discussion presented throughout this chapter, how masculinity impacted the phenomena of accountability. Masculinity is defined as an identity which associated certain behaviors as being representative of holding a gender identity of a man (Kimmel & Messner, 2007). The research reviewed for this study primarily focused on hegemonic, or dominant, masculinity whereby men are aiming to exhibit certain behaviors that are believed to reward them in society. Prior to conducting the study, a thorough review of literature on masculinity was conducted so the researcher could interpret how masculinity impacted the participants’ experiences with accountability. A few questions were asked about what participants thought were positive or negative characteristics of masculinity and how they showed up in the fraternity experience.

Some participants believed the dominant narrative of masculinity was changing, referencing social justice movements occurring in society as a catalyst of change. However, the experiences participants had aligned with much of the previous findings in the literature on masculinity in traditionally aged college men. For example, every participant referenced the presence of one or more of competition, drinking, and frequent sexual interactions. These behaviors were previously found to be the most commonly associated with fraternities (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014; Seabrook et al., 2018). Hazing was not something participants reported experiencing. This suggests that the most extreme behaviors do seem to be changing over time. One participant specifically addressed a lack of hazing since so many people had died as a result of hazing. However, fraternities did not recognize consequences of more minor behaviors and they pervaded the fraternity experience.

The conceptual framework also suggested hegemonic masculinity would often be a driver of decision making, powered by a desire gain social acceptance (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Edwards, 2010; Harris & Harper, 2014; Kimmel, 2008; Kimmel & Messner, 2007). The findings contributed two additional points to the prior research. In Beta Gamma, the desire to fit as a driver of behavior was very present and supports all of the previous research on masculinity in social settings. All of the Beta Gamma members referenced significant pressure to conform to the chapter norms, driven by a desire to feel accepted and ultimately achieve status in the fraternity. While Eta Sigma brothers also reported a desire for social acceptance, it was driven slightly differently. For example, Eta Sigma brothers were more likely to accept brothers who were vulnerable, shared personal stories, and spoke up when something was wrong. This suggests that the prioritization of hegemonic masculinity can be mitigated by changing the chapter culture.

When considering the current study, it is clear that prioritization of hegemonic masculinity had a direct link to the behaviors that were considered problematic, and the methods used to respond to those behaviors. When hegemonic masculinity was prioritized members were not held accountable for behaving in masculine ways, regardless of any formal expectation. Additionally, when accountability did occur, behaviors were often relegated to an informal method. This allowed the chapter to preserve a culture that prioritized hegemonic masculinity and limited formal accountability to very extreme behaviors.

Limitations

This qualitative study focused on social IFC fraternities. As such, it should not be generalized to fraternal organizations situated outside the IFC. Some findings of this study may be transferable to additional settings, consistent with the demographics of the chapters in this study. This study did not extend to academic, honorary, or special interest fraternities. All of the eight participants in this study identified as white – in the majority in their respective chapters. What is considered part of hegemonic masculinity has been found to be connected to race (Harris & Struve, 2009). Masculinity has also been connected to values structures of individuals. Because each fraternity has its own values, this study is limited to the context of the values each of the two chapters studied had. Regionality can also play a role in values. This study was situated at a large, public institution in the Southeast United States. This study confirmed a suspect limitation. The location of the study could limit the transferability of these findings as institutions in different parts of the country or with different demographic characteristics will impact the priorities of the chapter.

All participants volunteered to participate in this study. However, one chapter only had individuals who served in an executive leadership role participate. These roles are more a rarity

in the fraternity experience as only four to five men per year serve in an executive board position. As such, the experiences of these men may not be as transferable to the experiences of members who do not hold leadership roles. Participants' narratives were from their own personal views and recollection of their experiences. In most cases, they were making meaning of these situations based on their perceptions of what occurred, and each participant had a variety of information on a particular situation. Because masculinity is a social construct experienced by the participants, this study is limited to the point in time when it was conducted, and a future study will yield a more up-to-date understanding of masculinity.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings in this study present a clear need to bridge a major disconnect between what is prioritized at the policy level and what is practiced on a regular basis within the fraternity. Documents and discussion of policy were largely incongruent with what participants saw in action and assigned value to in the accountability process. Participants also brought to the surface many opportunities to address the impact of hegemonic masculinity in the fraternity. Some participants also addressed problematic components of their fraternity experience but found it very difficult to make change. If fraternity chapters and members, their host institutions, and national organizations would like to see significant reduction in problematic behavior, there are steps that should be taken to help bridge the gap between the ideal processes and reality. Fraternities are supported at a variety of levels. As such, the discussion for recommendations is aligned with the groups that support fraternity, implications for members themselves, and general considerations for anyone who has a role in contributing to accountability policies.

Campus Based Student Affairs Administrators

Campus based student affairs administrators, also referred to as fraternity and sorority advisors (FSAs), provide direct support and advising to fraternity chapters on their campuses. These individuals are best positioned to see the daily activities of a chapter situated in the context of the campus they are located on. Most FSAs also have relationships with the campus IFC leadership and the individual chapter presidents. As such, the findings of this study could directly apply to decisions they are making and policies being implemented governing the fraternity experience on their campuses.

Campus FSAs should work directly with their peers to provide support to fraternity members and leaders in confronting violations in an informal manner. As this study has revealed, informal accountability has a significant impact on the member experience. For some fraternity members, they may have never been faced with approaching a peer, especially in a leadership position. As such, FSAs should offer training and support to members with the goal of increasing their efficacy with recognizing and intervening in problematic situations. Doing so could reduce the risk of misconduct spiraling to a level where significant danger arises or becomes the norm in the chapter.

Many FSAs also serve as the primary decision maker around required programming for fraternities on their campus. The findings of this study show masculinity still has a strong hold on the priorities for the chapter. Given the nature of their roles, FSAs should strongly consider incorporating masculinity programming as a required part of the fraternity experience. Most of the participants in this study did not even realize how much masculinity was shaping their experience. With dedicated education designed to surface these impacts, fraternities would likely

move away from prioritizing these problematic behaviors as the culture shifts away from granting status based on masculinity.

Finally, FSAs should consider how they can work with the IFC on their campus to improve the quality of recruitment. While not a primary focus of this study, it became clear that the current recruitment model creates an environment where members prioritize finding like-minded people in a short period of time. As such, men are focusing on people who have the same interests as them, often rooted in masculinity, rather than having time to look beyond the surface, making it more difficult for chapters to create long-term cultural change.

Fraternity Headquarter Staff & Volunteers

Fraternity headquarters staff and volunteers have a similar advising relationship with fraternities as campus FSAs. However, fraternity staff are a bit more removed from the campus context. They are more focused on setting and implementing standards and program for all chapters in their organization across the United States. Because this study was conducted at one campus, it may be harder to apply the findings to a fraternity headquarters work. However, consistencies between the multiple chapters in the study suggest these issues impact many fraternity chapters, regardless of the campus.

Fraternity staff should consider offering additional education to leadership roles. For example, fraternities often hold seminars or conference for new chapter leadership and advisors. These seminars should focus on accountability in action and emphasize the importance of informal accountability. Like the recommendation for FSAs, these staff members could take the opportunity to connect the importance of accountability with the fraternity's values. They could also train advisors in providing local, on-site support to the chapter leadership.

National fraternities should also look at their documents and practices for chapters. Every document provided in this study had some connection to a standardized process from a national fraternity. These documents were very robust and, in some cases, difficult to read. This study found most participants did not actually read the information provided to them by the national headquarters. As such, these staff and volunteers should review their materials with an aim of being more in line with the daily reality of the members and making the documents more approachable. If there is a lack of understanding of the expectations, members will struggle to follow them.

Fraternity Members

While those who guide fraternities, such as FSAs and headquarter staff, have opportunities to use this study in practice, the responsibility to implement any of the changes rest with individual chapters. Fraternity members should consider multiple findings of this study in the chapter experience. First, fraternity members should evaluate the bifurcation of informal and formal accountability to ensure it makes sense. This study found formal accountability was used minimally by the chapter. Ensuring chapter brothers are held accountable for their actions in a consistent, effective manner could cause other members to take expectations more seriously.

Fraternity members should also do a thorough assessment of the factors impacting their chapter culture. Homogeny was heavily promoted and rewarded in each chapter. A deepened understanding of the factors at play would create opportunities for more individuality in the chapter and serve to remove much of the pressure members felt to assimilate. This pressure caused some members to behave in problematic way or lose their sense of self. Creating a culture where individually is expressed and celebrated would remove the reward system for hegemonic masculinity as it would not be seen as necessary to have a positive experience in the chapter.

Fraternity members should also closely scrutinize their recruitment and selection procedures. During the course of the study, members revealed they are generally focused on finding new members that are similar to them and its usually a rushed experience. There is often a high bar for agreement to admit a new member, but the vote relies on the input of only one or two people. As such, it becomes difficult for a chapter to change their culture through diversifying their members. They chapters should consider finding a more systematic way to get to know potential new members an elevating the values of the fraternity rather than their personal relationships.

Finally, fraternities should continue to create a culture of vulnerability and authenticity. In this study, one chapter was already working toward this goal while the other was not. In the chapter that did so, members felt less pressure to assimilate to a specific, highly masculine culture. Participants in that chapter were also more vulnerable about mental health and tended to intervene more on problematic behaviors. Creating more opportunities to build these genuine relationships would enable situations where more chapter members feel empowered to take risks in confronting their brothers when behavior needs to be addressed. A lack of vulnerability was linked to members standing down from intervening on problematic situation. Fraternity chapters who emphasize a culture of vulnerability on the front end can then work to convert this into expectations for holding each other informally accountable.

Accountability Policies

Accountability policies for fraternities come from their host universities, the national offices, and from each chapter's own operating procedures (Paterson, 2013). These policies were reviewed as part of the document review for this study. The study found most of these policies were highly legalistic and focused on risk management. Additionally, many of the members

believed the policies were overly burdensome. There was also a lack of structure for accountability in the chapter. For example, many policies listed what should be done, but did not offer fraternity members guidance on how to approach it. Given the significant importance fraternity members placed on informal accountability, there is a surprising lack of information about doing so.

A recommendation from this study would be revise campus and national fraternity accountability processes to incorporate direction for informal accountability. For example, many campuses offer support to help train individuals on judicial board operations (Dannells, 1997). However, this study suggests that training on how to effectively have peer informal intervention would be more valuable. Many of the participants felt this was the most valuable form of accountability, but it was not addressed in any of the documents reviewed related to accountability in either chapter. Empowering not just chapter leaders, but the entire chapter, could go a long way in stopping problematic behavior from occurring. Participants overwhelmingly linked friendship to their ability to intervene informally more effectively. As such, campus leadership should consider working on more proactive relationship and trust building with fraternities.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on two fraternity chapters at one campus. Additionally, these two chapters both were situated in the Interfraternity Council (IFC) on their campus. As such, further research is necessary to understand the impact of masculinity on accountability both in other fraternities and similar organizations. Recommendations are presented to address the context of the study and the councils and organizations studied.

Institutional Context

This study was conducted at a large, public, land-grant institution in the southeast United States, Southeastern University (SU). During the course of the interviews, participants repeatedly referenced how the culture of the institution, regionality, and the student body all impacted their fraternity experience significantly. Additionally, they also referenced comparing themselves to fraternities on their campus and, to a lesser extent, other chapters at similar institutions in the state or region. An opportunity for future research would be to replicate this study at additional institutions. The fraternity operations were significantly influenced by the context of the campus they were on. Conducting this study at another institution could shed more light on how the institution's demographics and culture impact the priorities of the fraternity.

Similarly, conducting a similar study across multiple diverse institutions could provide more generalizability to the findings of this study across institutions of different types. For example, if this study had been conducted at different types of institutions or across the country, it would be clearer the extent to which campus demographics are at play in impacting accountability. One participant spoke to how he believed the experience is different at other institutions based on conversations he had with friends who do not go to school in the southeast. In this study, the primary focus was to compare chapter level differences, hence using two chapters. A larger sampling of institutional types could provide recommendations that would be more applicable beyond institutions similar to SU. Nearly one-fifth of the men at SU were in a fraternity. A study on a campus where fraternities are less prolific may also yield different results.

Variety of Councils or Organizations

An additional future area for research would be to expand the scope of the organizations and councils included in a similar study. This study focused on one subset of the fraternity community on college campuses. The chapters studied were members of the campus's Interfraternity Conference (IFC). The IFC membership is limited to certain national organizations based on a membership policy (Pike, 2020). Additionally, the IFC consists of predominately white fraternities (Syrett, 2009). Future research is needed to understand the impact of masculinity in predominantly non-white organizations, for example fraternities associated with the National Panhellenic Council (NPHC) (Gillon et al., 2019). Masculinity research has revealed that race and cultural dynamics impact how masculinity is presented in men's lives. Conducting research in more racially diverse groups would expand the understanding of the impact of masculinity across racial lines.

Because every fraternity chapter sets its own values, conducting this research with additional organizations would likely yield new results which could serve to expand this study's findings or reenforce the themes identified in this study. While this could include historically Black fraternities, it could also include non-social groups. Many campuses have fraternities for business, service, honorary, or other academic affinity groups. Many of these groups are not single gender (Syrett, 2009). Additional research needs to be done to understand how masculinity is present in non-socially focused fraternities.

Finally, a more longitudinal study could shed light on how fraternity members come to understand and experience accountability and masculinity during various parts of their membership. Because there was a clear distinction between younger and older members in each chapter, this evolution was hard to ascertain in this study. A longitudinal study of members in the same chapter would better understand the evolution of their experience with the phenomena.

Such a study could also factor in sociological changes, happening globally, to address the influence of the changing societal dynamic about masculinity.

Researcher Reflection

As an alumni fraternity member and active national volunteer and adviser, who believes in the power a positive fraternity experience can have, I felt extremely connected to the importance of this work to help improve the fraternity experience. I also, as a former fraternity member, resonated with the experiences members had in trying to be a part of the fraternity community on their campus. I also am a former student conduct professional and gay man. On the professional side, I have been involved in numerous situations where fraternity men needed to be held accountable and saw, through interacting with members, how masculinity influenced the situations negatively. On a personal note, as a gay man trying to excel in a largely heteronormative chapter during my own membership, I have seen first-hand how hegemonic masculinity is prioritized. All of this is important to understand how extremely connected to this work I felt throughout the study.

During the study, I was afraid that fraternity members would consider me an outsider and share minimal or inaccurate information, for fear of getting in trouble or damaging their reputation. However, quite the opposite proved to be true. The participants were very open and vulnerable and I felt the emotion many of them were sharing during their interviews. I journaled regularly to reflect on the stories the participants shared. Doing so also allowed me to minimize bias as much as possible when asking questions and during data analysis. However, I cannot ignore the fact that I have had many experiences which have caused me to identify certain behaviors as negative and others as inherently positive.

As a gay man, my experience in the fraternity was impacted by heteronormative values. During my time conducting this research, I was interested to see if there was an evolution to the inclusion of non-heterosexual members of the chapter. During the interviews, I found all of the members assumed their entire chapter was heterosexual. While no participant made an overtly homophobic comment during their interview, they never brought up the possibility that a brother may not be straight or that the chapter was operating heteronormatively.

At the conclusion of this study, I remain both extremely optimistic and concerned about the future of the fraternity experience. On one hand, the participants were acutely aware of the power they had to hold each other accountable. This influence provides young man with extreme power to set and maintain high expectations with one another. However, the opposite is also true. Because of this extreme power, younger members are extremely susceptible to conforming to the expectations of their peers which can prove to be extremely dangerous. I firmly believe that, with the right support, fraternities can create opportunities to break the dominant hold that masculinity has on men in this society.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand how masculinity influenced all types of accountability within fraternity chapters. Three research questions guided the study:

1. How do fraternity members hold each other accountable for deviating from behavioral expectations?
2. How do the methods fraternity members use to hold each other accountable influence member behavior?
3. To what extent does masculinity play a role in the methods fraternity members are willing to use to hold one another accountable?

There were five findings in the study, each with subthemes. The themes *formal expectations only a formality*, *herd mentality: informal expectations of the group*, and *informal accountability is the real accountability* addressed the expectations fraternity members had for each other and how they responded to situations when a member violated expectations and the impact they had on member behavior. *Being a man prioritized* discussed the significant impact masculinity had on the accountability experience and the priorities in each chapter. Finally, *culture and context set the tone* addressed the underlying impact of the context the fraternity is situated in and their individual cultures in the accountability process. This study contributed to an understanding of accountability in fraternities, masculinity, and the experiences undergraduate men have at the intersection of the two.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Question	Response Type	Response Options (if applicable)
Preferred First Name	Free Text	N/A
Last Name	Free Text	N/A
Preferred Contact Email	Email Address	N/A
Phone Number	Phone	N/A
Okay to text?	Radio Button	Yes/No
Age	Number	17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27+
Class Year	Radio Button	1 st Year, 2 nd Year, 3 rd Year, 4 th Year, 5 th Year, Other (with fill in)
Indicate any role(s) you've held in the Fraternity (select all that apply)	Multi-Checkbox	Executive Board Committee Leadership Committee Member
Please list the specific role(s) you have held if you selected any above	Free Text	N/A
What semester and year did you join the fraternity	Cross Tab	Fall or Spring (X axis) 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 (y axis)

APPENDIX B: DOCUMENT REVIEW MATRIX

Document Title				Last Updated Date	___/___/___
Document Source				Chapter	
	Note #1	Note #2	Note #3	Note #4	
RQ 1: Accountability Process					
RQ 2: Changing Behavior					
RQ 3: Masculinity					
Additional Researcher Notes/Reflections			Items for Interview Protocol		

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Procedure

1. The researcher will review the process and procedure of the interview.
2. The participant will be asked if the interview may be audio recorded.
 - a. *Note: The recording mechanism will depend on if the interview is in person. If via Zoom, the researcher should clarify that only the audio component will be used but participants should not shut off their camera.*
3. If the participant verbally consents to recording, the recording will begin.
4. The researcher will ask the interview questions in line with this interview protocol.

Interview Guidelines

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. My name is Shawn Knight. The purpose of this study is to understand how fraternity men hold each other accountable. I am going to ask you a series of questions. Your name will not be reported, and you can select your pseudonym. Please answer as fully, truthfully, and with as much detail as possible. None of the information you share here will be shared with your chapter, institution, or national organization or anyone else outside of this room. After the interview, I will provide you with a resource sheet which provides details on how you might report any concerning behavior and seek support for any experiences which might be covered during this interview. You do not need to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with. You can stop the interview at any time. Would you still like to proceed?

- If no, the researcher will stop the interview and ask whether the participant is willing to be interviewed at another time.
- If yes, the researcher will continue the interview.

Background Questions

- To start, I'd like to know what interested you in joining a fraternity.
 - Why did you choose to join the fraternity you are now a member of?
 - Did you compare that against other fraternities?
- Can you start by telling me about your fraternity membership? For example, what role(s) have or do you hold.
- I'd like you to share a little bit about the amount of time and involvement you have with your fraternity.

Research Question 1: Fraternity Member Accountability

- Tell me about how you learned about the fraternity's rules for members?
 - What are the ways the rules are set?
 - How do outside groups, such as the national fraternity or the university, impact the rules?
 - What expectations does your fraternity have of you that might not be "formal"?

- How did you learn about the informal expectations your brothers have? These might include things that aren't necessarily formal rules.
 - Tell me about how these expectations came to exist?
 - What influences outside of the fraternity have helped shaped these expectations?
 - What things, if any, does your fraternity support or encourage you to do that might not necessarily be okay by the formal rules we discussed earlier.
 - Examples: Drugs, drinking, cheating on tests, etc.
- Describe any experiences you have had, either directly or indirectly, when a member does not meet expectations.
 - Follow-Up: Ask a question about the formal/informal process depending on the answer above. Try to make the respondent consider both.
 - Tell me about a similar experience that you saw happen to another member of the fraternity.
- Talk about times where someone might violate an expectation, but they are not held accountable. What is your experience with this type of situation?
 - How did the fraternity arrive at a decision not to hold this person accountable? Who or what was involved?
 - Talk about the way this was perceived by those not involved.

Research Question 2: Influence of Accountability on Behavior

- Have you ever been held accountable for violating a fraternity rule or informal expectation, either through a formal process such as a judicial board or through an informal conversation?
 - Tell me about the situation (e.g., what was the behavior, how were you held accountable, is this something other people are held accountable for)
 - In what ways did your behavior change, if any?
 - (If yes) How did your fellow brothers treat you after the incident?
- What sort of things might cause a brother to change their behavior, if they violated an expectation?
 - How would it make a difference if it was formal outcome (punishment/jboard) compared to informal (being ostracized or excluded).
- Describe an example of a time where you saw a brother change their behavior after being held accountable.
- Describe an example of a time where you saw a brother did not change their behavior after being held accountable.
- Can you give me an example of something that stopped you from violating fraternity rules or informal expectations in the future?
- What do you think would stop others in the fraternity from violating rules or informal expectations in the future?

Research Question 3: Impact of Masculinity on Behavior & Accountability

- What are some things you believe are expected of a man in society?
 - Follow-up on negative behaviors if omitted or positive behaviors if omitted.
- Now that we've thought of some of those behaviors, can you talk to me about how those positive behaviors are present in your fraternity experience?
 - What behaviors are absent?
- Now that we've thought of some of those behaviors, can you talk to me about how those negative behaviors are present in your fraternity experience?
 - What behaviors are absent?
- How does the fraternity reinforce expectations of manhood?
 - If they focus on only positive or negative aspects, encourage them to think about the other dimension.
- What things have enabled you to address misbehavior or a fraternity brother.
- What things have stopped you or held you back from how you address misbehavior of your fraternity brothers.
- How have some of society's expectations of masculinity that you described earlier impact how brothers are held accountable for their behaviors in your fraternity?

Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about any of the topics we've discussed today?
[Once Complete, End Recording]

APPENDIX D: PRE-INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT PROMPT EMAIL

Dear [*Participant Name*]:

Thank you for volunteering your time to participate in this study. This email serves as a reminder that we are scheduled to meet [*in person location or via Zoom, with link*] on [*date*] at [*time*]. The interview is scheduled for 90 minutes. You do not need to bring anything with you or dress any certain way; this will be an informal conversation.

You were sent a participant consent form to this same email address using DocuSign. Please take a moment to review the form and follow the prompts in DocuSign to complete the consent form. You may reach out to me directly with any questions you might have about the consent form or if you are unable to locate or sign in.

For our upcoming meeting, I'd like to provide you some high-level things to consider which will likely come up during our conversation. Please consider some of the following before our meeting:

- Your experience(s) which have helped you understand what is expected of a member of your fraternity.
- Your experience(s) related to when you or someone you know doesn't meet expectations set for you.
- What things are formal expectations of chapter member sand what are informal, or learned through seeing what other members are doing?
- How do you think the expectations for men, especially young men, in society play into your experience in the fraternity and behaviors that take place in the chapter?

You do not need to prepare answers to these questions. We will explore them more in-depth together; I just wanted you to have an idea of what we are going to talk about.

If you have any questions or need anything before we meet, please reply to this email or contact me via phone/text at <phone number>.

Best,

Shawn Knight

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE PARTICIPANT RESOURCE SHEET

Thank you for participating in this research study. During our interview, some topics came up which can often be difficult to discuss. Sometimes, when we talk about tough topics, it can also bring up bad memories or remind us of experiences that we have worked to suppress or might even still be figuring out how to handle.

I've prepared this brief resource sheet to provide you with some starting points on where you might find helpful resources or professionals who can provide support, should you want to take advantage of it.

[The table below will be updated with appropriate details for participants' university and fraternity]

Reporting Misconduct		Sexual Misconduct Support & Resources	
Office		Office	
Phone		Phone	
Website		Website	
Fraternity & Sorority Life Office		National Fraternity Support Services	
Office		Contact	
Phone		Phone	
Website		Website	
Counseling Services (Campus Based)		Student Conduct Office	
Office		Office	
Phone		Phone	
Website		Website	