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On Line: The Pledging Experiences of Members of Black Greek-Lettered Organizations from 1970 to 1990

Antonio Dewan Jenkins

To the University Council:

        The Dissertation Committee for Antonio Dewan Jenkins certifies that
this is the final approved version of the following electronic dissertation: "On Line: The
Pledging Experiences of Members of Black Greek-Lettered Organizations From 1970 to
1990."

_____

Katrina A. Meyer, Ph.D.
Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend
its acceptance:

_____

Larry McNeal, Ph. D.

_____

Jeffery Wilson, Ph.D.

_____

Dwayne Scott, Ed.D.

Accepted for the Graduate Council:

_____

Karen D. Weddle-West, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Graduate Programs

ON LINE: THE PLEDGING EXPERIENCES OFMEMBERS OF BLACK GREEK-

LETTERED ORGANIZATIONS FROM 1970 TO 1990

by

Antonio Dewan Jenkins

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to memory of my great-grandparents, for always encouraging me to achieve high and do well. It is also an acknowledgement of the memories of Ms. E. Maiden, Ms. E. Stocks, Mr. M Fair, and Coach Bishop. As teachers, their impact helped me to grow to becoming a better student and to find my voice in education.

This dissertation is also dedicated to Dana College. For the two years of work in preparing and writing this dissertation, this place was my more than a place to work, it was home. To everyone there, from the Student Life Staff to the RAs, Maintenance, and the Concession Queens, I thank you. These thanks are also extended to Nancy and her staff at my favorite workstation, Scooters.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to the future; of education and doctoral students. I hope my completion is encouragement for my colleagues and classmates to make that final step. As this journey is never complete, I look forward to seeing my friends complete their doctoral journeys as well.

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Abstract

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Lettered Organizations from 1970 to 1990.

In 1990, the leadership of the Black Greek-Lettered organizations that comprise

the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) agreed to ban pledging as the official member

entry process for new members. For 20 years (1990-2010), each organization has

developed and used a membership intake process (MIP) to replace pledging in order to

prevent hazing and injury to prospective members. Studies on membership entry into

these organizations have focused mainly on fraternities during the MIP era (1990-2010)

and the persistence of hazing during their process.

This study explored the experiences of men and women who joined BGLOs prior

to the 1990 ban on pledging among the organizations. This study adds to the body of

research on BGLOs, specifically the experiences of members joining when pledging was

the official process of membership entry.

This study used the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory as well as

Black Feminist Theory and student development theory to explore the broad range of

African American men and women experiences in pledging Black Greek-Lettered

fraternities or sororities.

The qualitative framework of phenomenology provides the appropriate methods

for participants to share information, which is a part of the organizational history and

culture of BGLOs.

Several themes arose from the members overall pledging experience. Members

were introduced to BGLOs in multiple ways. Members either celebrated crossing the

burning sands or had some type of controversy. Members created varied relationships

with line big brothers and sisters, others outside the organizations, and their own line

members. Members defined the differences between pledging and hazing. In addition,

members shared perspectives on how the national organizations, specifically the leaders

of the organizations, can improve the future direction of BGLOs in membership entry and

combating hazing.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Black Greek-Lettered organizations or BGLOs are a unique phenomenon in American higher education. These organizations are Alpha Phi Alpha, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi, Delta Sigma Theta, Phi Beta Sigma, Zeta Phi Beta, Sigma Gamma Rho, and Iota Phi Theta. Of the nine prominent BGLOs of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), eight were formed during the early years of the 20th century and during the Civil Rights Era, when racial exclusion in higher education was prominent (NPHC, 2009). Loosely based on models of White Greek-Lettered Organizations (WGLOs), BGLOs place a greater emphasis on meeting the needs of the community. BGLOs attracted African American college students to groups that uplifted the race, and became ambassadors to support the education of African-Americans. African American students who enrolled at predominantly White institutions or PWIs, still suffered from institutional racism as well as discouraging treatment from faculty members and fellow White students. BGLOs are based on African American cultural values such as fictive kinship or extended family networks to socially uplift students to sustain and shield themselves against a racially charged environment that denied certain resources such as campus housing, membership into honor societies, or campus social organizations (Harris, 1998).

Similar to historically WGLOs, BGLOs adapted pledging as an official process of membership entry into its fraternities or sororities. These organizations have developed and changed their pledging programs to increase safety for those pledging and maintain tradition. Pledging is the required process a person must complete to become a member

of a Greek-Lettered organization (Nuwer, 1999). During this process, a person was introduced to the organization, orientated to the organization's history, values, completes assignments established by current organization members, and participants in an induction ritual that formally recognizes them as a member (Kimbrough, 2003).

During the 1980s, several organizations of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) began to experience an increase in reported cases of severe hazing that was occurring within a chapter's pledge program. Hazing is defined as "any action taken or situation created intentionally, whether on or off fraternity premises, to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment or ridicule" (Fraternity Executives Association as cited in Nuwer, 1999, p. 31). Activities considered hazing include "paddling, creation of excessive fatigue, physical or psychological shock, morally degrading or humiliating activities, late work sessions… and any other activities inconsistent with fraternal law and regulations and policies of the affiliated educational institution and federal, state or local law" (NPHC, 2003, p. 4). Some of the reports of hazing incidents developed into lawsuits that stemmed from injuries and deaths Kimbrough, 2003; Nuwer, 1999). In 1990, the presidents of eight Black Greek-Lettered organizations met in St. Louis, Missouri to discuss the future of their organizations in relation to pledging. The leadership of all of the organizations agreed to pursue a ban against pledging and implement a membership intake process (MIP), which regulated the length and activities of the membership entry period for aspiring members.

As this change ended the decade's long practice of pledging, the new membership intake process (MIP) differentiated the membership: those who pledged before 1990 and those who became members after. The culture of hazing continued in the form of

underground or secret pledging, a membership entry process in which new and aspiring members legitimize their membership within their respective BGLO (Jones, 2004a; Kimbrough, 2003). As the number of BGLO members who officially pledged is diminishing, it is vital to explore their experiences that are different from current members who joined after the NPHC presidents' agreement (NPHC, 2009). This study is an exploration of the experiences of members who officially pledged Black Greek-Lettered organizations prior to the 1990 agreement.

Traditional Intake Process

Each fraternity and sorority developed its own pledging program for new members. There are several stages of the traditional pledging or intake process of NPHC organizations. In a study on pledging experiences of NPHC sororities, Jenkins (2008) identified three stages in pledging: organizational introduction, pledging process, and initiation/crossing the burning sands (Jenkins, 2008). In studying pledging programs of BGLOs, Harper Dickinson (2005) identified aligned and compared the traditional pledge program of NPHC organizations to West African initiations. Harper Dickinson (2005) noted 13 elements of a BGLO pledge program:

1. Pledges are separated from population to learn and interact with each other as much as possible.

2. Pledges are exposed to pressured situations to think as collective and self-actualization.

3. Pledges were required to complete daily activities (eating, studying, sleeping) together and communicate with organization members to establish a kinship type of rapport.

4. Pledges experience social probation, limited interaction with family, friends, and social interaction outside classes and pledging.

5. Pledges make a pledge to the organization's principles.

6. Pledges are taught organization ideologies, myths, Greek alphabet, and chapter history.

7. Pledges have a uniformed appearance (similar clothes, hairstyles, etc).

8. Pledges are give several tasks to prove their readiness to be members of the organization.

9. Pledges experience a probation or "hell week" prior to initiation and are initiated as new members.

10. New members learn the secrets of the organization (meaning of symbols, passwords, signs, etc.).

11. New members are given new names to signify their transformation into the organization.

12. New members experience the enlightenment of being a new member. They were referred to as neophytes or "new to the light" (Harper Dickinson, 2005, p. 17).

13. New members continue the rite of passage by learning the rituals, organization literature and then teaching the information to future members.(p.16)

Rituals

Rituals are very important in establishing and communicating the values of an organization to new members (Bolman & Deal, 1997). In Black Greek Fraternities, "rituals are nothing more than forms of behavior or interaction repeated again and again for the fraternal vehicle to function in a particular manner" (Jones, 2004a, p. 48). The

pledge process serves several purposes, one being to establish the behavior of members within the organization according to the group's principles. McCoy (2005) believes that "rituals offer a way for people to express their tremendous dependence on continuity for their sense of identity and their ability to draw on their own memories and the faith of those around them" (p. 300). According to Jones (2004a), "members believe that if the pledge ritual is tampered with too extensively, or eradicated, the very fabric of the organization will certainly unravel" (p. 48).

Several rituals within BGLO organizations such as calls, hand signs, stepping, and pledging itself are similar to or derived from African traditions (Branch, 2005; McCoy 2005). This link to Africa may serve to attract African students at American universities to membership in BGLOs as well as support claims that BGLOs are based less on WGLOs (Kimbrough, 2003).

As rituals serve to communicate organizational values among members (McCoy, 2005), it can also have adverse affects. "With the banning of the pledge process in 1990, much of what made the undergraduate BGLO experience intriguing is now missing. This might result in the development of new calls and other rituals to fill the gap" (McCoy, 2005, p. 303). When older members lack "ritual awareness" of new traditions, new organization members may assume that these persons are ignoring them or a nonmember is pretending to be a frater or soror.

<center>Introduction of Theoretical Framework</center>

A theoretical framework that has a critical analysis of race is suited to explore the culture of BGLOs. Critical Race Theory (CRT) was developed as a guide to review legal issues or subject matter through an ethnic or minority lens point of view (Bell, 1993).

<center>5</center>

According to Delgado and Stefancic (1993), "Critical Race Theory took start in the mid-1970s with the realization that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s had stalled and that many of its gains, in fact were being rolled back" (p. 461). Ladson-Billings and Tate are two researchers who have broadened the use of CRT from its legal domain to the field of education. Their research examines the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in higher education, and school funding formulas on communities of color in school districts. Both Ladson-Billings and Tate assert that, "despite the salience of race in U.S. society, it remains un-theorized as a topic of scholarly inquiry in education" (Tate, 1997, p. 196). In her analysis of the use of CRT 10 years after she and Tate introduced it at the 1995 American Education Research Association conference, Ladson-Billings (2005) expresses that "CRT is a theoretical treasure -- a new scholarship covenant, if you will, that we as scholars are still parsing and moving toward new exegesis" (p. 119).

CRT makes race the focal point in examining a society's treatment or influence of the dominant culture on the non-dominant culture(s). The foundation of Critical Race Theory is based on any of the five following assumptions:

1. CRT recognizes that racism is endemic in U.S. society's laws, cultural norms, and sometimes limits the educational opportunities of students of color (Tate, 1997, p. 234).

2. CRT crosses epistemological boundaries, borrows from different traditions (Tate, 1997, p. 234) and uses a narrative style or storytelling to give voice to peoples' experiences (Delgado, 1995)

3. CRT is critical of liberalism and of the limitations of Civil Rights laws in remedying racial inequality in education (Tate, 1997).

4. CRT questions whether the theoretical perspectives in education address practices of "objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy" (Tate, 1997, p. 235).

5. CRT questions the role of "experiential knowledge of race, class, and gender play(s) in educational discourse" (Tate, 1997, p. 235).

<div align="center">Research Method</div>

Pledging is a lived experience of fraternity and sorority members participating in a membership entry process. The use of qualitative research methods (specifically phenomenology) is best suited to explore the BGLO fraternity and sorority pledging experiences. Phenomenology is the study of the essence of a lived experience (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). The purpose of this research method is to "construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 41). By gathering unfiltered data directly from organization members, the use of phenomenology will "transform lived experiences into a textual expression of its essence-in such a way that the effect of the text is … reflective appropriation of something meaningful" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36).

Although the research method uses one open-ended question to gather data, the qualitative researcher must use additional or follow-up questions in case a participant renders short, non-detailed responses. The researcher must be proficient in interviews to probe inquiry areas. A list of prepared follow-up questions or an "interview schedule ensures good use of limited interview time; they make interviewing multiple subjects more systematic and comprehensive; and they help to keep interactions focused" (Hopefl,

1997, p. 57). The interview schedule of commonly asked follow-up questions, and areas of importance are found in appendix section (Appendix D).

Rationale for Study

The rationale of this study is rooted in the value of organizational membership and that qualitative research methods can extract and analyze information of the BGLO pledging experience. The members of the organizations have actively participated in an official pledging process. Although the presidents of NPHC organizations agreed to ban pledging in 1990, pledging has continued in the form of underground or in secret sessions occurring prior to or during, or after the membership intake process(Kimbrough, 2003). As participants share their experiences, they are also sharing a part of their organization's culture and history. The sharing of these experiences will further critical inquiry into the pre-membership-intake or pledging era of BGLOs, whereas most studies on BGLO pledging focus on the membership intake process (MIP). The experiences of members are a part of the development of the organization's symbols and traditions. These activities are "rituals and ceremonies [that] provide direction in uncharted and seemingly uncharitable terrain" (Ortmer, as cited in Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 219).

Conducting a qualitative study on the pledging experience is important for several reasons. First, members are able to share experiences of becoming members, the history of his or her fraternity or sorority, and its organizational culture. I observed these aspects while witnessing elders of my fraternity speak to a group of brothers who became members during the membership intake era. As he spoke of his experiences being pledged and pledging others, it was apparent that he was an important link or keeper of history that diminishes with time.

Second, the abolishment of pledging as the official form of membership reproduction may have created a rift within the organizations between those who pledged (elders) and those entering post-1990 by way of MIP. According to Jones (2004a), a "belief exists that if the pledge process is tampered with too extensively or eradicated, the very fabric of the organization will certainly unravel" (p. 48). Because of their knowledge, older pledged members of the organizations serve the role of "priest or priestess…and to intercede in matters of gravest importance" (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 260). Pledging from a symbolic perspective "is essential to team building and is a spiritual undertaking…a search for the spirit within and the creation of a community of believers united by shared faith and shared culture" (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 267).

<div align="center">Research Purpose</div>

There are several reasons why this research is needed. One purpose is to add to the research about membership experiences in Black Greek-Lettered organizations. Another is to inspire others; Kimbrough (2003) was inspired by another author and intends to inspire others to continue the work:

> Just as Lawrence (Ross) inspired me to complete this book, I hope others are inspired to write additional books on the subject. The foundation has been set. *The Divine Nine* was the logical first step, in that it provided the basic, historical information that only true scholars of Black fraternalism would have known. This book hopefully is the next logical step in that progression of research. But hopefully, now there will be several books that come into existence that further shed light on a culture that is expanding into mainstream Americana. (p. 188)

Another reason for this research is to study a process that has shaped present membership of BGLOs. The members, who interviewed, participated in a process that is no longer sanctioned by the national organizations. After 1990, all organizations of the National Pan-Hellenic Council agreed to pursue bans on pledging and to create a membership intake process as an official method for one to gain membership into an organization. This makes experiences of members prior to 1990 unique. As more years pass and more members join BGLOs through MIP, the population of members who pledged will begin to diminish in number, and efforts to collect and gather information about personal experiences will be lost.

Therefore, there is a need to record the culture of individuals whose numbers are declining. Several projects have been initiated to record the oral history of people who lived through several important events, such as the World Wars or Civil Rights era. As time advances, recording this information becomes more difficult. Participants may suffer from memory loss, are ill, or distrust others and refuse to share information. In death, the valuable information is lost forever with the person.

Research Question

The subject of this study is the pledging experience of African American men or women into an NPHC affiliated fraternity and sorority. The study answers the question "What was the experience of a person pledging a Black Greek-Lettered fraternity or sorority prior to 1990?" Various supplemental questions and approaches are utilized to allow each participant to share and describe his or her personal experiences. Follow-up questioning offers a better understanding of the essence of the participant's experiences and how the environment around them influenced these actions.

Limitations of Study

This study had several limitations. Members may choose not to share their experiences in pledging or may partially describe the pledging experience. Men and women may feel that speaking to a non-member of his/her organization about a personal experience that is now outlawed is showing disloyalty or speaking negatively about the respective fraternity or sorority (Jenkins, 2008). Because I am member of an NPHC fraternity, members of other BGLO fraternities may perceive that my results portray their organizations in a negative manner. In addition, sorority members may have felt hesitant to participate in a study conducted by a male researcher. As a member of one of the NPHC fraternities, my gender presents a logical concern about my ability to describe a Black woman's pledging experience through a Black feminist perspective (Collins, 1990).

Another possible limitation is the use of colloquial terms. Members of BGLOs may use some terms that are associated with a particular region (Kimbrough, 2003). An example of this is the terms "line" and "ship." Universally, a group pledging a BGLO is known as a "line." However, in the Midwest and Northern states, organizations may use the term "ship" instead.

Definition of Terms

To operationalize terms that are specific to qualitative research and to members of Black Greek-Lettered organizations, I have developed a list of definitions. These terms assisted me in creating a mutual understanding with the reader on the research methodology and Black Greek life (Kimbrough, 2003; Williams, 1992).

African American or Black: An American person of identifying as African

heritage; an American of African descent (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate

Dictionary, 2003).

AKA: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2009)

A Phi A or Alphas: A reference to members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity

(Alpha Phi Alpha, 2009)

BGLO: Black Greek-Lettered organization (Williams, 1992)

Boulé: Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity (Sigma Pi Phi, 2009)

Crossing: Completing final initiation ceremony also known as "crossing the

burning sands" (Williams, 1992)

DST or Delta: Reference to a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

(Delta Sigma Theta, 2009)

Frat or fraters: A member of a fraternity; used to address a member of the same

fraternity (Kimbrough, 2003)

Fraternity: An association of collegiate or college-educated men who share the

same ideals in the promotion of brotherhood (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,

2003)

HBCU: Historically Black College and University (Harper, 2007)

Iotas: Iota Phi Theta Fraternity (Iota Phi Theta, 2009)

Kappas or K A Psi: Reference to a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity

(Kappa Alpha Psi, 2009)

Line or Ship: A group of people who pledge together (Kimbrough, 2003)

Neo or Neophyte: A new member to the organization (Williams, 1992)

PBS or Sigma: Reference to a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity

(Phi Beta Sigma, 2009)

Phenomenology: The study of the essence or meaning of a lived experience or phenomena (Van Manen, 1990)

Probate: A stepshow featuring Neophyte members (Kimbrough, 2003)

PWI or PWCU: Predominantly White Institution or predominantly White College and University (Williams, 1992)

Q Psi Phi or Ques: Reference to a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity (Kimbrough, 2003)

Sands: refers to persons who are initiated at the same time regardless of chapter affiliation (Kimbrough, 2003)

SGRho: Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority (Sigma Gamma Rho, 2009)

Soror: Greek term for "sister"; used by sorority members in addressing fellow members (Kimbrough, 2003)

Sorority: An association or of collegiate or college-educated women sharing like concerns or ideals; as referred to as a sisterhood (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2003)

Stepshow: A synchronized group dance performance (Kimbrough, 2003)

Underground: Pledging in secret or an unsanctioned pledge process (Williams, 1992)

WGLO: White Greek-Lettered organizations; refers to social Greek-Lettered fraternities and sororities in which a majority of the membership has been historically Caucasian and may have practiced excluding members of minority populations (Bankhead, 2003)

Z Phi B or Zeta: A reference to a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority (Zeta Phi Beta, 2009)

The following chapters will provide an overview of the research topic and outline the study. Chapter 2 is a review of literature on the history of BGLOs and research on the organizations and members relevant to this study. Chapter 3 contains a brief overview of phenomenology and provides a detailed description of the study's methodology. Chapter 4 is a report of the results and findings of the study. Chapter 5 is conclusion and discussion of the findings and gives suggestions for further and future studies.

Summary

This chapter is the introduction to the study and establishes the basis for the study of Black Greek-Lettered organizations or BGLOs, specifically; the pledging experiences of fraternity and sorority members prior to 1990. This chapter briefly chronicles the beginning and describes the historical and unique aspects of BGLOs in regards to its membership. The introduction presents the ideals of a traditional pledging or membership induction process, the importance of rituals to these organizations, and how the rituals create the identity and character of an organization (Bolman & Deal, 1997).

The chapter presents a brief synopsis of the theoretic framework and research methodology. The theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory or CRT (Bell, 1990), is a tool for educational research to analyze its own policies and practices towards creating an environment of inclusiveness in education that affect people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Tate, 1997). Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology that uses in-depth participant interviews to study the lived experiences during a phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990).

The rationale is that this research adds to the limited body of knowledge of the members' experiences joining BGLOs through a sanctioned pledging program and to

continue the research on BGLOs in general. The question "what is the experience of someone pledging an NPHC organization?" also serves as the primary interview question for participants. Preconceived limitations to conducting this study are noted prior to the definition of terms. The definition or explanation of the terms that are familiar to BGLOs is to operationalize the terms for BGLO members, those unfamiliar with BGLOs and for continuity with current and future BGLO research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

A review of literature revealed that there has been limited study of the personal experiences of Black Greek-Lettered organization members pledging prior to the implementation of the membership intake process in 1990. This review was organized to concentrate on several areas concerning BGLOs and research that supports the impact of these organizations. The review of literature begins with the formation and cultural context of BGLOs, and the information provided by studies on BGLOs. The review then covers current research or discussions on BGLOs, including MIP, relevancy, and issues of Black masculine and feminine identity. Knowledge not known about BGLOs includes leadership framework and training, focus on Black Greek-Lettered sororities, and the future direction of the organizations. Areas of further study and concern are the last area covered in the review of literature.

Brief History of BGLOs

Starting out as a literary society, the Black Greek-Lettered fraternities provided a safe haven and social support for its members as they faced the rigors of attending a predominantly white institution (PWI) or as a social outlet at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Several BGLOs were started between 1902 and 1904 on HBCU and PWI campuses. In 1903, Alpha Kappa Nu was formed on the campus of Indiana University, but only existed for 14 months (Crump, as cited in Kimbrough, 2003). Gamma Phi was founded March 1, 1905 on the campus of Wilberforce University. Unlike Alpha Kappa Nu, Gamma Phi was able to sustain itself and establish other chapters, consequently, it ceased to exist around 1947 (Kimbrough, 2003).

Outside of academia, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, also known as the Boulé, was founded in 1904 as a social network for accomplished college-educated African American professional men who were a part of the "Black Elite" (Graham, 1999). Enlisting Black college-educated professional men as its members, the Boulé sought to celebrate the "binding [of] men of like qualities into a close, sacred fraternal union, that they may know the best of one another" (Minton, as cited in Harris, 2005, p. 98). Graham (1999) stated that the Boulé "is the quintessential organization for professional black men, members are not even considered until they are well beyond college and graduate school. It is considered by many the elite men's club, and its membership has included the most accomplished, affluent, and influential black men in every city for the last ninety years" (p. 130). In a similar fashion, all of the organizations of the NPHC have alumni or graduate chapters. These chapters are tailored collegiate or undergraduate members who have graduated from college and wish to continue their affiliation with their respective organizations. These chapters can also induct persons as members who were not members of the organization in college, but have an undergraduate degree and an interest in joining the organization.

Of the nine member organizations of the NPHC, eight were founded between 1906 and 1922 and have been successful in sustaining active memberships through 2010. Among these organizations, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, the oldest college-based BGLO, is still in existence. Although Alpha Kappa Nu was a precursor, Alpha Phi Alpha is still considered the first collegiate fraternity for African American men, and the first BGLO founded on the campus of a PWI, Cornell University. The seven "jewels" or founders of Alpha, as it is commonly known (Alpha Phi Alpha, 2009) were looking to establish the

group, which was a social and literary society at the time, as more of a fraternity (Kimbrough, 2003). The ideals of a Greek-Lettered organization originated from the founders who worked as waiters in the houses of WGL fraternities at Cornell (Kimbrough, 2003). Not to be purely social, Alpha was interested "in the struggles against segregation, discrimination, prejudice, mistreatment, and the advancement of themselves and their people, and in supplying an adequate leadership for them" (Brown, 2005, p. 60).

Alpha would begin to expand beyond Cornell in New York state. The fraternity established a second or "Beta" chapter at Howard University, an HBCU. Being the first Greek-Lettered organization at Howard may have ignited the Black Greek movement, as several groups of students organized "Alpha" chapters of their organizations at Howard after the arrival of Alpha Phi Alpha.

The first Black Greek Lettered sorority was founded at Howard University. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (also called AKA) was founded January 15, 1908 by 16 women (9 upperclassmen, and 6 from the sophomore class) of various academic disciplines at Howard (McKenzie, 2005). The sorority was based on the words of its motto "by culture and by merit" (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2009; McKenzie, 2005). The chairwoman of the organization, Ethel Hedgeman, gained the inspiration to start a sorority from two of her Howard professors, Ethel T. Robinson who spoke often to Hedgeman about her sorority experiences at Brown University, and Elizabeth Appo Cook. Robinson (Kimbrough, 2003). Although this influence played a large role in Hedgeman's motivation to start a sorority, the perception is that Alpha Phi Alpha influenced the genesis of AKA. It is Hedgeman's relationship with George Lyle, a

member of Alpha's Howard Chapter and later Hedgeman's husband, who is often cited as the influence of Alpha in the creation of AKA. Members of both organizations refer to the fraternity and sorority as "the first family" of BGLOs (Kimbrough, 2003).

The next organization of the NPHC to form is Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, founded in 1911 at Indiana University. The fraternity was formed to "address the racial inequalities and social isolation" (McKenzie, 2005, p. 186) of Black undergraduate men on the Bloomington, Indiana campus of Indiana University. According to Kappa Alpha Psi historian, William Crump (as cited in McKenzie, 2005) "assimilation into the life of the school was impossible. The administration maintained an attitude of indifference as blacks were slowly matriculated and swiftly forgotten" (p. 186). The nine founders of the fraternity originally started the group as Alpha Omega, "until details of a Greek –letter society could be more fully formulated" (Crump, as cited in McKenzie, 2005, p. 187).

Two of the founders of the organization, Elder Watson Diggs and Byron K. Armstrong, were previously students at Howard University until early 1910. While at Howard, they were approached about membership in a fraternity, but declined membership. The fraternity is thought to be Alpha Phi Alpha, which was the only fraternity at Howard in 1909-1910 (Kimbrough, 2003). Diggs and Armstrong transferred to Indiana University and pursued the idea of starting a new fraternity. On January 5, 1911, the group of nine, including Diggs and Armstrong, transferred Alpha Omega into Kappa Alpha Nu. In 1915, Kappa Alpha Nu Fraternity changed to Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, due to white students referring to the organization as "Kappa Alpha Nig" (Crump, as cited in Kimbrough, 2003, p. 23).

In the same year that Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity was founded, another fraternity, Omega Psi Phi, was founded at Howard University on November 17, 1911. Omega Psi Phi Fraternity is the first fraternity and the third BGLO started at Howard University. The fraternity was also the first organization to have a campus faculty member, Ernest E. Just, as one of the founders.

According to McKenzie, the fraternity's name comes from initials for a Greek phrase that means, "Friendship is essential to the soul" (p. 190). Centered on this motto and the four principles of manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift, the organizations and chapter members drafted a constitution to submit for faculty approval. Because the organization was established as a national, rather than a local organization, the administration of Howard University, led by its president, Dr. Wilbur Thirkield, was opposed to recognizing the existence of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity (McKenzie, 2005). After several meetings with the administration, the fraternity was allowed to be recognized as a national organization, incorporating on October 28, 1914, 10 months after the founding of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, which was recognized by the administration April 15, 1914 (McKenzie, 2005).

In 1913, several members of Alpha Kappa Alpha were seeking to "adopt a more service-oriented focus and to address the social concerns of the rights of women" (McKenzie, 2005, p. 205). The chapter president, Myra Davis, and several younger members of the AKA wanted to change the name, color, symbols, and motto of the sorority. It is suggested that Davis and others believed people viewed "AKA was merely a derivative of Alpha Phi Alpha and had no unique significance of its own . . . and the letters . . . failed to denote any real semblance of Greek character" (McKenzie, 2005, p.

206). The women chose Delta Sigma Theta as the new name, with the new colors of crimson and cream, and the African violet as the sorority flower. It is speculated that members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity advised the women about the recognition process at Howard University and the choice of the African violent represented a tribute to the assistance of the fraternity (Giddings, 1994). When a graduate member, Nellie Quander, moved to stop the 22 undergraduate members from changing AKA and issued a deadline for the women to drop their proposal, the women left and "filed an application for recognition of a new sorority, Delta Sigma Theta, in December 1912" (McKenzie, 2005, p. 192). Howard University recognized the founding of the new sorority on January 13, 1913. Myra Davis became the first president of the new sorority (Giddings, 1994).

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity is the second fraternity and fourth BGLO to start at Howard. Founded January 9, 1914, the idea for the fraternity began in 1910, when one of the founders, Abram Langston Taylor, had a conversation with a student at Howard University about Greek life on campus. It was later, after he began his studies at Howard, that Taylor approached two other students, Leonard F. Morse and Charles I. Brown with the idea of starting a new fraternity on campus in October 1913. After a series of meetings, the fraternity was born in January 1914 with Taylor, Brown, and Morse as founders and nine other men as charter members. According to Morse (as cited in McKenzie, 2005), "these nine men were different in temperament, ability and appearance, which was precisely why the founders chose them" (p. 194). The organization received recognition from Howard University on April 15, 1914, six months before the institution recognized Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, which was founded on the campus in 1911 (McKenzie, 2005).

The last NPHC organization founded on the campus of Howard University was Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, founded January 16, 1920. Two members of Phi Beta Sigma fraternity who were actual brothers, Abram Langston Taylor (one of the fraternity's founders) and Charles R. S. Taylor developed the idea of having a sister sorority to Phi Beta Sigma. Charles Taylor shared the idea with Arizona Cleaver, a female student at Howard and one of the five founders of Zeta. Although the start of another sorority at Howard was deemed "dangerous," women who were initially attracted to the organization refused to join due to rumors, ridicule, and fear of not achieving high academic standards (McKenzie, 2005). The Taylor brothers gained support from the fraternity to allow the women to frame the sorority's constitution based on that of Phi Beta Sigma's. Phi Beta Sigma and Zeta Phi Beta are two "constitutionally bound" BGLOs and considered brother and sister organizations (Phi Beta Sigma, 2009; Zeta Phi Beta, 2009).

The last sorority of the NPHC is Sigma Gamma Rho, which was founded November 12, 1922 by Black women teachers who attended Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana, a PWI. In the early 1920s, the Indianapolis area was considered a stronghold for the Klu Klux Klan, a white supremacist organization (McKenzie, 2005). This may have been an important factor in starting the sorority as an organization to support Black women teachers working in a racially hostile environment (Kimbrough, 2003). The sorority's focus was on Black women in the educational profession as the founders were graduates of normal schools and all enrolled at Butler University. In 1925, the sorority's constitution changed to extend membership to women who completed two years of college study and were of various academic professions, and again changed its

constitution prior to joining the NPHC, allowing women to join who were currently enrolled in colleges and universities (Kimbrough, 2003; McKenzie, 2005).

The last major Black fraternity was founded September 19, 1963 at Morgan State University, an HBCU. Founded during the Civil Rights movement, Iota Phi Theta was a reflection of its time. The founders of the new fraternity were 3-5 years older than most of the campus population, some married with children or having prior military service before arriving at Morgan State (Jones, 2004a). According to the founders of Iota, "the existing black fraternities reflected a bygone era" (McKenzie, 2005, p. 201). This is reflected in the fraternity's motto, "Building a Tradition, Not Resting upon One" (Iota Phi Theta, 2009). Being the only major BGLO birthed during the Civil Rights movement, the organization's growth was stunted by the members being older than the campus population and their not residing on campus, as well as the organization's not being a member of the NPHC, a factor some used as a credential for BGLOs (McKenzie, 2005). The view that NPHC was a credential for BGLOs may have been fueled further by the organization adapting rules that would only allow Iota Phi Theta to petition for and qualify for membership in 1997 (Kimbrough, 2003).

In 1930, members of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta, Alpha Phi Alpha, and Kappa Alpha Psi founded the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) on the campus of Howard University (McKenzie, 2005; NPHC, 2009). Phi Beta Sigma, Omega Psi Phi, and Sigma Gamma Rho joined in 1937 and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity joined in 1997 (Kimbrough, 2003). As the umbrella organization for the nine major BGLOs, its purpose was to "foster unanimity of thought, and action as far as possible in the conduct of Greek Letter Collegiate Fraternities and Sororities, and

consider questions and problems of mutual interest to its member organizations"

(McKenzie, 2005, p. 203).

The NPHC represents the nine major BGLOS. The NPHC organizations are

estimated to have a combined membership of 1.5 million college-educated men and

women through collegiate and alumni memberships in 2008 (NPHC, 2009). The men and

women who joined prior to 1990 through an undergraduate chapter have pledged as a

requirement for membership entry into their respective organizations. All undergraduate

or collegiate chapters are affiliated with a college campus. Each man and woman must be

financially active with his or her respective organization to be recognized as a member.

All NPHC organizations have alumni chapters for collegiate members to continue

membership and service after graduation. These chapters are located throughout the

United States and Africa, Asia, and Europe (NPHC, 2009).

Race in Higher Education

African Americans entering HBCUs and PWIs in the early 1900s had a greater

need for social outlets than their White predecessors did in the fraternity movement

(Kimbrough, 1997). PWIs not only limited the number of Black students allowed to

attend, but the fraternities and sororities during the late 1890s and early 1900s excluded

these students from becoming members. The ability to learn with peers of a different race

could not elevate a Black man or woman to becoming a member of a social organization.

This practice of non-inclusion contributed to Black students' need to strengthen their own

networks of like-minded colleagues. According to Johnson (2001), "because systems of

privilege center on dominant groups, those who aren't included have reason to feel

invisible" (p. 110). Thus Black students created campus literary societies, study groups, and fraternities and sororities.

Johnson (2001) noted, "racism is also built into the systems that people live and work in; Its embedded in a capitalist system organized around competition over scarce resources and organized to be White dominated, White-identified and White centered" (p. 112). The need for African American fraternities and sororities for college men and women lies in the fight against the dominant campus culture which excluded them. "Blacks have used civic and social organizational memberships to solve personal and community problems" (Benjamin, 2005, p. 132). Benjamin (2005) believed the high civic engagement among educated Blacks may lead to social, political, and professional affiliations that are linked more to class than race as they move higher in social economic status.

BGLOs are unique because the fraternities and sororities were created out of the exclusionary practices started by WGLOs. According to Williams (1992), "the establishment of separate organizations for women, although it met a decided need, subtly ushered in an era of exclusion" (p. 23). In this model of Greek-Lettered involvement, fraternities were for males only and sororities for females only. When groups are invisible, they form organizations centered on drawing attention to their existence and issues (Johnson, 2001). Johnson (2001) also stated:

> Often the only way that marginalized groups can get attention is to make an issue
> of how social life is centered on dominant groups. So women form their own
> support groups at work; attend women's colleges, where they don't have to
> overcome the cultural weight of male-centeredness; Blacks form their own dorms

or clubs on college campuses and sit at their own tables in the dining hall; schools create special programs that focus on women or African Americans or various ethnic groups; women participate in a "Take Our Daughters to Work" day; lesbians and gay men organize pride marches to draw attention to the simple fact that they exist. (p. 111)

Within integrated predominantly White institutions (PWI), African American students face a potentially racist campus climate. There are three major assumptions of racism (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). The first assumption is that one group (race) is superior to others. The second assumption is that the superior group uses its power on the dominated (minority) group. The third assumption is that racism affects multiple persons of color, not just one group in particular.

Black students may experience racial microaggressions, innocuous behavior that is subtle and covert, but not apparent in public discourse (Solorzano et al., 2000). According to Loo and Rolison (1986), sociocultural alienation at a California university caused some Black students to feel intellectually and academically inferior.

Rather than pursue membership in WGLOs, Black men and women at Cornell University, Howard University, Butler University, and Indiana University choose to create their own fraternities and sororities. For the sororities, the founders created new groups that combined the philosophy of racial uplift (Giddings, 2001) and ideals and norms of fictive kinship networks, two distinct philosophies of African American cultural traditions (Phillips, 2005).

Student organizations based on African American cultural values, such as BGLOs, help educated Blacks cope with the stress of existing and coping in a world dominated by White, European culture (Benjamin, 2005). Greer and Chwalisz (2007) suggested that "perhaps African American students enrolled at PWCUs [predominantly White colleges and universities] are at greater risk for high levels of stress and challenges to academic success if in fact their campus environments are replete with racial conflict, biases, and stereotypes" (p. 403). Members of Black student groups use the organizations to mentor the next group of educated Blacks to replace them (Harper, 2006). Mentoring within these organizations, in which the members are considered the "Black elite" or "the talented tenth" of the population, helps to ensure Black success. (Benjamin, 2005). According to Hughey (2008b):

Many African Americans have continued to struggle to legitimate their individual and collective identities as well as ensure their actual survival. Consequently, the multiplicity of various expressive cultural practices of African Americans as well as the specific organizational practices of Black Greeks often entail the protective shifting of identities through masking, performance, and rhetorical strategies. (p. 533)

Critical Race Theory and BGLOs

As stated in Chapter 1, several theoretical frameworks could have been used to frame this study: Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1993; Delgado & Stefancic, 1993), which will include the use of Black feminist theory (Collins, 1990), and student development theories (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). In grounding the study, I used Critical Race Theory. Several theorists and researchers have been at the forefront in the development of

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the Critical Race Theory since Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993) first developed it in the 1970s. Bell originally developed the theory to argue court cases to challenge and change existing laws in the fight for civil rights in the United States (Bell, 1993). Patricia Collins (1990) expanded the scope of the Critical Race Theory with her work on Black feminist thinking, thus giving voices to Black female experiences. Richard Delgado's (1993) work using the CRT has given a voice to Latina/o populations in America.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) makes race the focal point in examining a society's treatment or influence of the dominant culture on the non-dominant culture(s). Within the context of higher education, CRT is used to examine the inequalities in the American education system (Ladson-Billings, 2005). CRT assumes that the researcher has a deep investment in the research and the persons who will be affected by the representation of the data to a wide audience.

At HBCUs and PWIs, Black students sought to incorporate parts of their culture that were unique, or African. According to Brown (2005), "two key factors probably influenced the establishment of BGLOs. The one factor to influence the establishment of BGLOs was the tradition of organizing for the 'good of the race'" (p. 11). The number of Blacks with an education, living in the upper class, and holding community leadership positions was relatively low. As representatives of what African-Americans had to offer to the world, the educated few had an obligation to help their "people" move beyond low status in society towards equality. Those involved in racial uplift help direct coordinated responses to whatever is opposed (e.g., Civil Rights). The other factor, Brown (2005) concluded, is "the naming [BGLO chapters] overtly affirmed the connection between

Black North American institutions, organizations, and people and their African ancestry'
(p. 12). According to Harper (2007), BGLOs are leaders in protecting other African
American students from "social isolation, racism, and discrimination at their
predominately White campus" (p. 106).

Unlike their White counterparts, BGLOs have maintained a charge for social
justice, evident by members' participation in movements for social change, and in
sheltering Black students against racially charged campus climates (Solorzano et al.,
2000). A study by Person and Christensen (1996) recommended that institutions take
responsibility for creating "a balanced experience for Black students through academic
support services and programs and cultural and social activities that are sponsored,
coordinated, and funded by the institution" (p. 55). When Black students do not feel
heard or visible, these Black student groups are vital for students to "support each other,
and to celebrate publicly their history and culture, and to address racial identity
development issues" (Person & Christensen, 1996, p. 55).

Student Development Theory

Tinto's (1993) theory of departure describes how college students must let go of
familiar assumptions and cultural knowledge to assimilate into the campus culture to
succeed. Guiffrida (2006) challenged that the theory was based on a Eurocentric
framework of PWIs and does not accurately apply to students of color. In a study of high-
achieving Black students at a PWI (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007), it was asserted that "it is
important for Black students to connect with other Black peers to provide them with the
support they need to deal with dominant [White] context" (p. 515). Black students are
compelled to dispel negative myths of Blacks in higher education not being academically

prepared and often are compelled to act in ways that are considered "non-Black" to gain

peer acceptance. The cultural knowledge that Tinto (1993) believes a student must let go

of to succeed in college is the knowledge that supports Black students attending PWIs as

they are faced "with Anglo-centric stimuli in the social and academic milieu of the

campus" (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007, p. 515). BGLOs are organizations that connect

Black students by drawing them to familiar cultural knowledge to support achievement

in college(Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Guiffrida, 2006) as oppose to departure (Tinto,

1993). These organizations provide leadership development to Black students at PWIs

and HBCUs. According to Kimbrough and Hutcheson (1998) BGLO members were more

involved in campus activities than Black non-BGLO members, which include "holding

one or more leadership positions over a range of activities" (Kimbrough & Hutcheson,

1998, p. 103). Membership in BGLOs increases the level of involvement of Black

students in leadership positions in their respective campus organizations. The Greeks at

HBCUs seemed to score higher on "measures of student involvement, perceptions of

their leadership ability, and leadership skill development than did their non-Greek

counterparts" (Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998, p. 103) at the same institutions. Members

in Greek organizations believed that organization membership contributed with

leadership skill development more than non-Greeks do.

BGLOs provide more than leadership development to members. "A student's

affiliation to a Greek organization increases his or her … probability of completing a

college degree program" (Austin, as cited in Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt, 2001, p. 280).

PWIs were found to be increasing the number of multicultural and traditional campus

groups (including BGLOs) and continuing to improve the services these groups offered to

Black students (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). However, the "scarcity of research on

BGLOs handicaps administrators who are unfamiliar with the Greek system, but who

must contend with the serious problems by which these organizations are beset"

(Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998, p. 104). Kimbrough and Hutcheson (1998)

recommended that administrators should continue to focus resources on leadership

training for NPHC organizations and to keep supporting and monitoring undergraduate

chapters to "refine the chapters' leadership development potential" (p. 104).

<div align="center">Current Research</div>

BGLOs vs. Others

Fox, Hodge, and Ward (1987) suggested there are differences in the attitudes of

Black and White fraternity members. Using a sample from a college campus in the

Southwest of the United States, the study suggested that "White fraternity members are

less involved in social issues, less satisfied with faculty and the student body, and less

involved with studying than White non-fraternity students" (p. 533). Their study also

suggested that Black fraternity members have a higher level of liberal ideation (espousing

socially progressive ideas), satisfaction with faculty, and social awareness than White

fraternity and non-fraternity members. The Black fraternity experience is also different

from that of traditionally White fraternities (Fox, et al., 1987). Fox concluded that Black

fraternities "function as a quasi-activity office for all Black students" (p. 534). This

function is similar to a Black cultural center or BCC providing social support, which is an

important determinant in Black student satisfaction at PWIs (Patton, 2006).

According to a study by Kimbrough and Hutchinson (1997), members of Black

Greek-Lettered organizations were "more involved in activities on campus and

organizations than were Black non-Greeks" (p. 102). The study also found that the

leadership experiences of BGLO members occur in multiple student organizations

(Kimbrough & Hutchinson, 1997). Harris (1998) conducted a study on how membership

in a BGLO sorority affected mentoring. She found that membership in the Delta Sigma

Theta Sorority impacted the members' involvement in mentoring, possibly due to the

sorority providing members with opportunities to form meaningful relationships, develop

self-esteem and ethnic awareness, and influence their persistence to achieving academic

success (Harris, 1998).

Persistence of Hazing

An issue of importance to Black Greek fraternities and sororities is pledging and

hazing; two terms that are used interchangeably, but have different meanings (Scott,

2007). Pledging is a process in which a person actively seeks membership in a Greek-

lettered organization (Nuwer, 1999). During this process, persons may have to complete

several assignments as a group in order to create a bond or brotherhood or sisterhood

with others who are pledging. Hazing may occur during the pledging. Prior to 1990,

pledging was the formal process of BGLOs to orient candidates or initiates to the

fraternity or sorority. Due to increased hazing incidents, organizations banned pledging

as a way to prevent hazing. According to Nuwer (1999),

> Hazing is an activity a high-status member orders other members to engage in or
>
> suggest that they engage in that in some way humbles a newcomer who lacks the
>
> power to resist, because he or she wants to gain admission into a group. Hazing
>
> can be noncriminal, but it is nearly always against the rules of an institution, team,
>
> or Greek group. It can be criminal, which means that a state statue has been

violated. This usually occurs when a pledging-related activity results in gross physical injury or death. (p. xxv)

Little research exists directly related to the actions of hazing and pledging in Black Greek-Lettered sororities. Zooks (2006) wrote about the death of two BGLO pledges in 2004 and Weathers' (2001) study of organizational practice described members' attitudes towards changes in the membership entry process. Most studies focus on all Black Greek organizations (Crenshaw, 2004; Kimbrough, 2003; Nuwer, 1999; Williams, 1992) or just on fraternities (Jones, 2004a). Williams (1992) included sororities in his study of members' perceptions of the membership intake process created in 1990. According to Williams (1990), members wanted to know what evidence supported the no pledge policy (MIP), the impact of MIP on membership quality, and how lifelong commitment would be established through the MIP process (p. 3). Williams also found that members, specifically those within the undergraduate membership, believed that pledging had great value to building membership and continued to unofficially and illegally pledge new members under the no pledge policy (p. 103). Kimbrough (2003) replicated this study and found that the results were similar to those of Williams (1992). Weathers (2001) noted similar attitudes by members of her sorority towards changing the pledge process.

According to Kimbrough (2003), certain terms are considered an insult to some members of these organizations. The term "paper" is a reference to a person who did not pledge and just completed the membership intake process (p. 58). Kimbrough (2003) briefly exposed hazing in Black Greek sororities when referencing an incident reported to him by a former student seeking membership. He also provided a listing of 49

investigated cases of hazing within NPHC organizations since the beginning of the membership intake movement to 2001 (p. 189-192). In 2004, two women drowned in a reported hazing incident in California. Zook (2006) interviewed the families of the women as well as other members of Black Greek sororities who talked about their experiences being hazed during their respective membership intake process (Pelisek, 2004).

Relevance of BGLOs

One of the conversations about BGLOs is their continued relevancy to the times. In the 1960s, Frazier (1965) believed Black Greek sororities were a part of the bourgeoisie or new middle class and only concerned with wealth, not society. He wrote on how these organizations seek to "justify their existence on the grounds that they render service to the Negro masses" (p. 95). In his critique, Frazier referenced a 1952 report in which the BGLOs spent over $2 million on national meetings attended by social and intellectual leaders, not college students, as opposed to spending this money on philanthropic causes (Frazier, 1965, p. 203). Graham (1999), through his own personal narrative, continued this critique of BGLOs. He explained that only five of the NPHC organizations -- Alpha Phi Alpha, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Kappa Alpha Psi, and Omega Psi Phi -- are socially acceptable to the Black bourgeoisie (1999). Jones (as cited in Ruffins, 2004) believed that the "mission and significance of Black Greeks will be meaningless to Black life overall until the BGLOs collectively work to establish a progressive, social, political and economic agenda" (p. 78). He also thought the ability of Black Greek organizations to address certain political issues was limited because they were not affiliated with specific political parties (p. 78).

Membership in BGLOs comes with opportunities "to act as a stress buffer in reducing the impact of social isolation" (Benjamin, 2005, p. 201) and to advance the quality of African American life, the BGLOs "are not immune to the effects of this progression [advancement in quality of life]" (Jones, 2004a, p. 12). African American females were "forced to redefine their knowledge of self and their world-view" (Morgan, Muecgelo, & Turner 2002, p. 348). Harper (2004) viewed Black Greek-Lettered fraternities as agents that define ideals of Black masculinity on college campuses and increase involvement in campus life. He stated, "organizations specifically designed for African American male students…typically attract many men who would otherwise remain completely uninvolved" (p. 103).

Some critics of Black Greek-Lettered fraternities equate the groups to being educated gangs (Hughey, 2008a). The reference to BGLOs as gangs is an example of how examination of BGLO culture has been narrowed into a "binary framework of good–bad, positive–negative dichotomies that only re-inscribes BGLOs within the structure that is used to dehumanize them" (Hughey, 2008a, p. 458). This "negative" version of this framework may create a moral panic that calls "for the introduction of policies that can allow the state or other institutions to clamp down on black resistance, self-determinism, or leadership" (Hughey, 2008a, p. 457).

A phenomenon that has occurred more in BGLOs than in predominantly White organizations is cross-cultural membership. Not all NPHC organizations have been exclusively for African Americans. Memberships in these organizations have included other Blacks (African, Caribbean, West Indian, etc.) (Hughey, 2007; Kimbrough, 2003). It is estimated that 10% to 15% of the membership of NPHC-affiliated fraternities and

sororities is not African American (Kimbrough, 2003). White students have been joining

BGLOs since the 1940s (Hughey, 2007). Kimbrough (2003) believed "it may appear that

more Whites, more so than Asian and Latinos who are rapidly developing fraternal

organizations similar to NPHC groups, will continue to seek Black Greek membership as

an option to the predominantly White organizations" (p. 172).

Hughey (2007) investigated the meaning of Whites' membership into BGLOs.

Although many non-Black members have various reasons for joining BGLOs, the cross-

racial membership creates several negative outcomes. Whether a person of color is

joining an historically WGLO or a BGLO, cross-racial members may experience being

labeled as token members, fear hazing during the pledge or membership intake process as

validation of their being "other," and face those who do not want see their organizations

have a cross-racial membership (Hughey, 2007). The membership of Whites in BGLOs

may cost these organizations their non-dominant cultural capital (Carter, 2003). "Non-

dominant cultural capital describes those resources used by lower status individuals to

gain 'authentic' cultural status position within their respective communities" (Carter,

2003, p. 138).

Brother/Sister Relationships in BGLOs

Phi Beta Sigma fraternity and Zeta Phi Beta sorority have the only official

partnership among the NPHC organizations by recognizing each other in their respective

constitutions. There were other unofficial pairings between the Black Greek-Lettered

organizations based on individual connections between members. Informally, Alpha

Kappa Alpha sorority and Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity have an unofficial connection

through two individuals: George Lyle (Alpha Phi Alpha) and his wife, Ethel Hedgemen

(Alpha Kappa Alpha). Delta Sigma Theta sorority shared a similar connection to Omega Psi Phi fraternity although it is not confirmed who in the fraternity assisted the women with the process of gaining recognition at Howard University (Giddings, 1994). Sigma Gamma Rho and Kappa Alpha Psi share the distinction of being founded in the state of Indiana.

Although these brother/sister connections exist formally and informally, there is no research on how these connections work or affect the organizations. Graham (1999) noted that among the Black elite, members in certain Black Greek fraternities and sororities interact and even marry. Since these connections mostly exist among ethnically based Greek-Lettered organizations, there is little need to examine these organizations using WGLOs as a standard. Clarification or research at a national and local chapter level could yield valuable information on the dynamic of Greek life within the context of race and gender.

Black Greek Sororities

Morgan et al. (2002) defined Black sisterhood as a shared connection "with economic, political, and social realities of women across the globe" (p. 334). Giddings (1994) noted that the rise of Black sororities might have been fueled at PWIs because of racism and at HBCUs because of sexism, which could also explain the lack of research. According to Kimbrough (2003), in the early 1900s women in college received more severe sanctions if there were evidence of them smoking or drinking. Collins (1990) described how race and sex are used as tools of oppression, a "matrix of domination" against African American women.

With the exception of Zook (2006) and Weathers (2001), fraternities are mostly the focus of BGLO pledging experiences. Although Williams (1990), Kimbrough (2003), and Crenshaw (2004) included sorority members in their studies, in-depth analysis on this issue is about the male experience. Movies that describe a fictionalized view of the "Black Greek experience" are also dominated by males. *School Daze* (1987) described Black experience at a fictional HBCU; with most of the movie displaying the Black Greek-Lettered fraternity experience (Lee, 1988). According to Whaley (2005), feuding scenes between two female groups in the movie were representative of two Black Greek-Lettered sororities and standards of African American beauty. Movies about the Black fraternity include references to or descriptions of hazing, with the movie of a fictional Black sorority focusing exclusively on hazing (Anderson, 2003).

In *Black Haze*, Jones (2004a) examined how hazing and pledging played an important aspect in the ritual of pledging in Black fraternities. Jones analyzed five fraternities of the NPHC (Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi, Phi Beta Sigma, and Iota Phi Theta) through a historical lens that included the effects of exclusion from historically White Greek-Lettered organizations against minority membership, and how initiation rituals and violent treatment of Black males by the dominant culture contribute to pledging. Pledging is a part of the initiation process that "is meant to bring about a solid, concrete result" (p. 49). The result is "not to reform the initiate, but to remake him entirely" (p. 57). The rituals are used not only to affirm membership; they are also a form of a rite of passage to affirm manhood status upon members of the organization (Jones, 2004a). "Specific hazing tactics are nothing more than creative

variations individual fraternity members employ to push initiates to their limits in a supposed effort to establish worthiness" (Jones, 2004a, p. 57).

Overall, *Black Haze* is an inquiry into Black Greek-Lettered fraternities' use of ritual to define Black manhood and masculinity. Jones (2004a) believed that NPHC fraternity members "assert that the pledge process is a historical, cultural construct that should not be tampered with" (p. 115). The thought that pledging should remain the official process for making members is shared by members of NPHC organizations. Undergraduates believe that the membership intake process (MIP) was enacted too quickly and without undergraduate members' input (Crenshaw, 2004; Kimbrough, 2003; Williams, 1992).

In 2007, I completed a pilot study on the pledging experiences of NPHC sorority members (Jenkins, 2008). I conducted interviews with five women representing the four sororities of the NPHC, all pledging between 1970 and 1990. Several themes that emerged from the interviews formed a timeline of pledging as well as the theme of anti-sororal (un-sisterly) behavior (Jenkins, 2008). This behavior occurs within the context of sisterly discourse, one of nine themes of African American sisterhood (Harris, 1998), that may affect sorority member involvement.

The themes found through analysis of the interviews focused on the process or timeline of pledging. In the first phase, the women described making the decision to pledge and exploring an organization, which this included attending informational sessions. The second phase covered all actual pledging activities, including tasks or sanctions (including punishments and possible hazing) that occurred for incomplete tasks.

The third phase was actual membership, which covered "crossing" into the sorority and becoming an active member pledging other women into membership.

Membership Intake Process

Several articles question the future direction of Black Greek Letter Organizations. After the NPHC groups banned hazing in 1990, Williams (1992) asserted that the membership intake process was not working and the culture of hazing still persisted. The membership intake process established a uniform membership induction period and interest, usually shorter than chapter pledging periods Kimbrough (2003). Also, MIP eliminated or banned physical activities (e.g., walking in line, dressing alike, etc.) and promoted educational sessions and testing before membership induction (Williams, 1992). Kimbrough (2003) believed that the membership intake process created an "underground" pledging culture in which hazing occurred in secret, which is noted by a number of hazing incidents that resulted in injuries, death, and lawsuits (2000). Williams (1992) cited the lack of input from undergraduate members as a major reason for members' resistance to the MIP and the creation of underground pledging. Kimbrough (2000) suggested that a lack of monitoring by college campus and national fraternity officials are factors in the persistence of hazing a decade after the 1990 ban.

Scott (2007) conducted a phenomenological study of hazing in Black Greek-lettered fraternities. He found that several factors contributed to members hazing prospective members during the membership intake, including "acceptance/respect, bonding, expectation/willingness, intrinsic values, and pressure/tradition" (p. iii). Jones (2004a) called the current pledge ritual of Black Greek-Lettered fraternities "random, aimless, and degenerative, which may be due to the members' loss of memory (or

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complete absence of knowledge) concerning the original purposes and tactics involved in fraternity ritual" (p. 115). Jones also suggested that fraternity national offices and college campus officials work together to eradicate violence as a part of the MIP or pledging, going beyond meting out "suspensions and expulsions of students and chapters rather than seriously attempting to study, understand, and prevent the occurrences" (p. 117). Ruffins (2001) questioned the existence of BGLOs due to the persistence of outlawed pledging practices that have resulted in death, injury to prospective members, and lawsuits against the organizations. If there, was not an aggressive change in the culture of pledging NPHC groups, some organizations would not be able to withstand lawsuits and would cease operations (Jones, 2004b).

Research on Leadership Development

Kimbrough (1998) noted the leadership opportunities provided to undergraduate members of BGLO. There is limited research on the leadership of each organization and how this affects membership development or possible direction of each organization. All BGLOs were founded with a mission to represent the best of the African American race and increase participation in social awareness activities (Phillips, 2005). In a study on campus leaders (Dugan, Komvies, & Segar, 2008), African American students scored higher than their white peers on inventories of civility, citizenship, and change. The study affirmed that students from underrepresented populations who experience oppression and lack communal influence rely on leadership styles that stress collaborative effort to advance their issues (Dugan et al., 2008).

One unique characteristic of BGLO membership is the emphasis on servant leadership (Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998). Servant leadership focuses on leaders being servants first to their constituents, and leading people to use their talents through influence, and not through power or coercion (Greenleaf, 1970). BGLO participants in leadership study indicated that they provide leadership in the form of more service-oriented activities than their non-Greek and White Greek counterparts (Kimbrough & Hutchinson, 1998).

There has not been an examination of the leadership of the NPHC organizations. Based on anecdotal information (Harris, 1998; Kimbrough and Hutchinson, 1997), each organization promotes a model of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970), putting service of community needs above those of the individual. This type of leadership would also suggest a leadership framework that is non-bureaucratic, one in which the direction of the organization is determined by the membership. An examination of past and current leadership within a multiple framework that includes symbolic, human resource, political, and structural frames (Bolman & Deal, 1997) would possibly yield information on how these organizations have maintained their existence as well, as how one becomes a regional or national leader within their fraternity or sorority.

Williams (1992) also noted the number of studies on BGLOs increased during the 1980s. According to Jones (as cited in Ruffins, 2004), "it is sad that so much of the research is focusing on hazing and stepping" (p. 78). Research on BGLOs is still needed. BGLOs are not monolithic; there is no typical "Black Greek experience." Every person's experiences are different as are the cultures of each chapter of the same organization (Kimbrough, 2003). Benjamin (2005) stated, "too often, when the impact of racial

oppression is examined, Black females and males are grouped together, muting the differences despite the fact each experiences oppression differently" (p. 159). Stephens (1998) explored the perceptions and experiences of sorority membership, not of the pledging process. Women who join different organizations are subject to their own subjectivity and background. Some unexplored areas of potential research within Black Greek-Lettered sororities deal with issues around the increased social integration of Black women on PWI campuses as well as the impact on these organizations of historical and traditionally White sororities accepting Black women into the membership (Phillips, 2005).

<div align="center">Further Research</div>

What is largely missing from the known research are the experiences of members who were pledged in Black Greek- Letter organizations. There is limited research or narrative data on the experience of a person joining any BGLO, especially pre-1990, the year when organization presidents agreed to ban pledging and establish the membership intake process (NPHC, 1990). Giddings (1994) only briefly described her pledging Delta Sigma Theta. Her experience is more descriptive of reactions to the activities that occurred and how it affected her perception of membership and sisterhood. Most of the other information on members' experiences is during the membership intake process era (post-1990) and focused more on hazing than pledging (Kimbrough, 2003; Zook, 2006). As these organizations are seen as institutions that establish the ideals of Black masculinity and feminism, they may also provide a way for bisexual, lesbian, gay and transsexual (BLGT) men and women to hide or deny their sexual orientation (Case, as cited in Kimbrough, 2003).

Brumfield (2008) wrote one of several accounts of men "impersonating" or claiming to be members of Black Greek-Lettered sororities. The men opposed joining one of several organizations for gay men of color. Brumfield believed that the conservative environments of HBCUs and need for expression of identity may lead more gay men to unofficially join sororities. Although these occurrences are recent, some research may focus on members ideas and reflections on organizations becoming non-gender based, and members attitudes and perceptions towards having sisters who are openly homosexual (Brown et al., 2005).

<div align="center">Recommended Research</div>

Several areas deserve additional research. Although studies and dissertations provide an opening to unexplored areas, these studies are not meant to solve the world's problems and be all encompassing of every issue within the content area of the research (Bhattacharya, 2007).

As all Black Greek-Lettered organizations are reaching their centennial mark (with the first founding in 1906), there is a necessity for gathering information from elder members who aging and dying, sometimes without speaking of their own experiences as members.

Oral History/Tradition

The use of a methodology that uses in-depth interviews to collect information from an African American community has traditional significance. Using oral history/tradition is, among many populations of African descent, the most used method of transferring important traditions, family heritage, and intergenerational communication (Saldana, 1995) that occurs through oral tradition.

Within West African villages, a group or single person within the community is responsible for remembering and recall significant community-wide or familial events. This griot (American Heritage Dictionary, 2009) incorporates skills such as song and dance to "recreate" the story of the lives of those in the village. During the transatlantic slave trade up until the American Civil War, it was a crime for Black slaves to be educated, so most stories or even sermons were pasted along through oral presentation (Johnson, 1990). Essentially, they used oral history to retain important family information. Often, it was the elder members of the plantation community who were responsible for maintaining and retaining the history of the people who lived on the plantation, whether they remained, sold or ran away, or died (Saldana, 1995). Oral tradition, such as turning stories or information into song were a way to communicate secretly of meetings (the number of slaves gathering was regulated) and plans for escaping bondage.

Within most communities of people of color, the oral history/tradition is the best method of transferring information to new generations of community members. Certain qualitative research methods, such as phenomenology and ethnographies, use oral history as "unstructured interview data (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p. 79) when examining the lives of people of a particular ethnicity or how a group of people experience a particular event or phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). With Critical Race Theory, oral history or tradition was used to draw information about the lives of people of color and how they try to resist the dominant culture (Bell, 1993).

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to record and examine the personal experiences and history of men and women pledging NPHC fraternities and sororities prior to 1990 and analyze how members make meaning of their pledging experiences.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The review of literature details the genesis of Black Greek Letter organizations, beginning with the history of African Americans in higher education at the beginning of the 20th century. The brief biographies of the nine NPHC fraternities and sororities reveal that BGLOs are not a monolithic group, but share similar values and causes. These organizations were provided the social and service outlet to African American college students who were limited by race at PWIs or strict codes of conduct at HBCUs. These racist defined environments affected the development of education for African Americans and the growth of BGLOs. As more Black students have greater access to higher education, BGLOs serve a similar purpose for students who have become members during membership intake process era. Chapters of these organizations provided leadership opportunities for members (Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998) and provide social outlets to other students on the campus (Kimbrough 1995).

The review of literature also presents Critical Race Theory (CRT) and various student development theories to expand the context of the BGLOs. CRT is a critical tool in analyzing the information in this study. Developed for review of court cases, the field of education is making use of CRT examine campus environments (Ladson-Billings, 2005). CRT would allow an analysis of BGLOs within the context of race to explore the unique perspectives of members' experiences and to give a more analyzed interpretation

of each experience. The student development theories ground this research in issues that students of color face in institutions of higher education as they persist towards graduation.

There is limited research on pledging BGLOs prior to 1990. Post NPHC ban research starts with Williams' (1992) study on the MIP established by all NPHC groups on the persistence of hazing and secret pledging. Other studies that followed continue to study no-pledge or MIP programs and the persistence of hazing post 1990 (Jones, 2005; Kimbrough, 2003; & Scott, 2007) and answer the relevance of BGLOs (Jones, 2001). The remaining current research is a combination of BGLO research on the areas of membership induction post 1990, including underground pledging in BGLOs, unique relationships between BGLO fraternities and sororities as well as the research on Black Greek-Lettered sororities membership and influences. Kimbrough and Hutcheson (1998) find that BGLOs offer leadership opportunities.

Future research and recommended research is consistent in that further study in needed of BGLOs in areas of pledging, relevance into the organizations history, and other areas that have yet to receive attention or on new phenomena in BGLO culture.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe in depth the experiences of men and women pledging Black Greek Letter organizations. In particular, the study examined the pledging experiences of those who joined BGLO fraternities and sororities between 1970 and 1990. February 1990 is when organizations of the National Pan-Hellenic Council officially began banning pledging and moved to the membership intake process (Kimbrough, 2003; Williams, 1992). Since the MIP process has been under review, researched, and critiqued for 20 years (1990-2010), this study seeks the experiences of the NPHC members who pledged during the last 20 years prior to the ban.

This study answered the research question, "What was the experience of a person pledging a Black Greek-Lettered fraternity or sorority prior to 1990?"

Research Design

As the researcher, I used phenomenology to seek the essence of the human experience within a particular situation or event. According to Sanders (1982), "phenomenology is simply the study of conscious phenomena: that is, an analysis of the way in which things or experiences show themselves" (p. 353). The event or series of events that define a particular phenomenon are examined for invariant (similar) themes. Phenomenology is a theoretical framework as well as a methodology within qualitative research.

As a theoretical framework, phenomenology questions how a person experiences the world as a human being (Van Manen, 1990). This qualitative methodology increases the depth of information that is examined to describe the experience of each participant.

Phenomenology demands the researcher become an instrument of data collection (Hoepfl, 1997) and a descriptive investigator of conscious phenomena. The interviewer must avoid the appearance of power and superior knowledge because the participant is expert on his or her experiences (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). According to Hoepfl (1997), a researcher must "pay attention to the idiosyncratic as well as the pervasive, seeking the uniqueness of each case" (p. 49). In designing a phenomenological research model, the researcher must determine the limits of what and who is investigated, the method of data collection, and the phenomenological analysis of the data (Sanders, 1982). The phenomenological research design for this study was based on procedures described in Creswell's (2007), *Research Design and Qualitative Inquiry.*

When used as a methodology, the phenomenological researcher listens to participants talk about their first-hand experiences of living through a phenomenon or defined event. Data was gathered through the use of in-depth interviews, asking participants a direct question about what they experienced. Phenomenological research is an emergent research design, with a single interview/research question. The research question is the first question used in the interview with follow-up questions developed during and from interviews with the participants of the study. This method allows the participant and researcher to collaborate in creating an interview that explores in depth the individual's personal experiences in pledging.

Phenomenology is one of the most widely used methods of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, Van Manen, 1990). Researchers use phenomenology to study a single event or identifiable groups who have experienced a similar event or condition. Using phenomenology, Harper (2007) examined the various stories of African American

males who were successful in persisting and achieving high levels of academic success in college. Bankhead (2003) studied the membership of White women in NPHC sororities at predominantly White Midwestern colleges and universities. Both Williams (1992) and Kimbrough (2003) used a version of phenomenology as a part of a mixed methods designed to examine the membership intake process within Black Greek-Lettered organizations.

<div align="center">Subjectivity Statement</div>

As a qualitative or phenomenological researcher, I am an instrument of data collection. I must consistently review my identity as the researcher of this study, my interest, and involvement. I am an African American male, currently working at a private liberal arts institution in the Midwest United States. My current position is a mid-level manager in student engagement. As an undergraduate, I joined a fraternity during the era of the membership intake process at a public PWI in the southeastern region of the United States. I have held several leadership positions within local chapters and the state level. I am currently a financially active (continuing membership through a local chapter) alumni member of an NPHC fraternity.

My interest in personal membership experiences is influenced by former teachers and attending my fraternity's national conference. Several of my schoolteachers, as well as college professors and advisors, are members of Black Greek Letter organizations. Their active membership and participation in those organizations influenced my decision to join an NPHC fraternity. The second influence results from my attendance at several national conferences of my fraternity. Several older members, including national officers, would discuss their experiences with members who joined post-1990, after the instituting

of the membership intake process as well as conversations were about personal

membership experiences, pledging, and previous conventions.

There are few studies about members' experiences, specifically those who

pledged prior to 1990. The advancing age of persons who pledged prior to 1990 may

affect the opportunity to record and study their experiences and it is important for me to

be the person collecting and analyzing these experiences.

<center>The Participants</center>

Participants for this study were African American men or women who attended an

institution of higher education after 1970 and prior to 1990. Participants joined a

collegiate chapter of a fraternity or sorority of the National Pan-Hellenic Council during

his/her undergraduate studies. As a part of the process for joining, the participant

participated in activities identified as a part of a pledge process. There was no

discrimination as to whether the participants pledged in a collegiate chapter that is active,

inactive, suspended, or dissolved. Membership entry must have occurred between the

years of 1970 through 1989.

The number of participants for a phenomenological inquiry can range from one

person to over 300 participants (Creswell, 2007). Bankhead (2003) interviewed four

white members who joined NPHC sororities at Midwest universities. Dukes (as cited by

Creswell, 2007) "recommends 3 to 10 subjects (participants)" (p. 126) for a

phenomenological study. For this study, I sought one representative from each NPHC

fraternity and sorority for a total of nine participants. Due to the large amount of data

expected for analysis from initial and follow-up interviews, additional participants to the

study were added with careful consideration if there was a need to resolve conflicts within the analysis.

Participant Recruitment

Recruiting men and women for this project occurred several ways. Using acquaintances as informants, I identified men or women who met the criteria of this project. For face-to-face interviews, men and women were recruited from fraternity and sorority chapters within, and surrounding, the states of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Nebraska. All interview participants within an 80-mile range of these locations were interviewed face to face.

Letters were emailed to identified members and chapters. Men and women on the list received a letter by e-mail informing them of the study and requesting their participation. A letter was sent to a single fraternity or sorority member who had been identified by a personal contact or a fellow chapter member. Chapters received a letter informing the membership of the project and requesting members, or the identification of members, willing to participate in the study.

I also asked personal acquaintances to assist in posting the letters to regional or national listservs to increase the pool of possible respondents. Women and men willing to participate in the study made contact with me through e-mail or by phone to answer any questions they had about the project and its procedures. At this time, a tentative date and time for an interview was selected by the participant. A letter of informed consent (Appendix B) was emailed or mailed to the participant and was signed and returned prior to the interview by postal mail or e-mail. The signature was handwritten or electronic.

As a member of this study, the participant became a partner with me, as the researcher, in the interview process, as his/her assistance was required after the initial interview session. After the initial interview, the participant engaged in follow-up interviews, and member checking to clarify and increase my understanding of the information provided during the interview.

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Memphis (Appendix A).

Data Collection

In phenomenology, the primary source of data is from the participants themselves. Each interview was conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone. Men and women who resided within an 80-mile radius to my location arranged a face-to-face interview. He or she chose a location that provided the participant with a sense of comfort, security, and provided enough privacy for the interview. Men and women who lived outside of the 80-mile radius were interviewed by telephone. The only requirements needed for this is that I have access to a phone with speakerphone capabilities where I can increase the volume for voice clarity. The interview required the use of a voice recorder for review of data and transcribing purposes.

The participant interviews served as the primary data source for the study. I elicited as much information as possible through the initial interview and with any follow-up discussions by phone or email to clarify answers or descriptions given during the initial interview. This process, tied to a data collection timeline, appears in a later section.

Triangulation

One way to increase the trustworthiness of the interview data is through triangulation (Creswell, 2003). In triangulation, data are collected through multiple sources to justify the emerging themes "or collecting data with different samples, at different times, or in different places to compare different approaches to the same thing" (McMillan, 2008, p. 296). Using the interviews, this study was triangulated through time, space, and persons.

Within time, the pledging experiences may differ in the length of time spent pledging, time of year (fall, winter, spring, or summer), and the year (pledging in 1970 may be different from that of a member of the same fraternity pledging in 1980). Space identified data collected from different locations such as regional location (pledging in the South versus East) or institutional type (HBCU versus PWI). Personal differences are also a factor in pledging experiences of BGLO members (example: Fraternity vs. Sorority), age of the participants, as well as personal backgrounds (socioeconomic status).

The information to support the triangulation of the interview data came from the interviews, follow-up questions or secondary interviews, theories (Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Theory, and student development) and from the researcher. I maintained a journal throughout the entire study, starting with the approval to commence research. These personal notes were taken during and after the individual interviews with participants. Writing in the journal ceased at the conclusion of the last interview. These data included personal observations of the settings, appearance of the participants in the face-to-face interviews, intonations of voice or attitude noticed in the phone interviews,

as well as potential interview questions or follow-up questions. A personal reflection was a part of the conclusion of each interview as well as a reflection at the conclusion of the data collection.

Timeline and Data Collection Process

 The length of the formal interview ranged between 40 to 65 minutes and depended on the participant's depth of memory and reflection. Interview transcriptions were completed within one to two weeks of the digitally recorded interview. This process continued until all of the interviews were concluded.

After the interview was conducted and recorded, the participant was contacted within a week (7 days) after the interview to start follow-up questioning. This 1 week follow-up allowed the interviewer to complete the transcription and prepare the questions resulting from the initial interview. The follow-up allowed time for the participant to ask any question he or she wanted to ask the interviewer as well as offer additional information to their testimony of experience. The total time for this interaction was 2 weeks.

Reciprocity with Participants

I engaged in several types of reciprocity during this study. Reciprocity is defined as mutual exchange of privileges (Merriam-Webster, 2003). In qualitative research, the researcher must engage in reciprocity throughout the research process. I shared my personal experience of joining a BGLO as well as knowledge of the pledging process in discussing the study and gaining their commitment to the project. During the study, I engaged the participants as an expert in the field, as they are the experts of their own experiences. Reciprocity was maintained at the end of the study by updating participants

on progress in completing the results of the interviews as well as the final committee presentation. I maintained contact with the participants in case there was a need for further studies on the topic.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, I used a qualitative data reduction method developed by Moustaka (1994). This method requires all recorded interviews to be transcribed. The transcribed interviews along with written notes must be read and re-read for coding. Data coding identifies parts of the information that may have a significant meaning. Data codes are topical, descriptive, or analytical in nature (Creswell, 2003). Similar codes are grouped into emerging categories. This allows the researcher to focus on merging the connected categories into themes and producing an invariant theme that is applicable to all or most of the interview data. The researcher microanalyses or reduces the total data again to information that is only connected to or associated with the emerging themes. Concentrating on the emerged themes allows the researcher to closely review information to present a complex interpretation of the phenomenon.

The data provided by the participants was analyzed in a process to increase the scope of interpretation of each interview. The review of literature provided the initial organization of interviews. Using "important quotes from participants, observations, vignette, and insights from note taking" (Wolcott, 2001, p. 42), the data were sorted into broad categories. After being sorted by data type (interview quotes, notes, etc.), the data were sorted by alignment to the emerging themes of the study prior to analysis.

I coded each interview to compare incidents and events that developed into categories. According to Glaser and Strauss (as cited in Dey, 1997), categories are

theoretical properties indicated by the data that are analytical and provide meaningful

description of the experiences of the participants involved in the study. Continuous

comparative analysis of participant responses through emerging themes may provide

information of how a similar theme or event is perceived by multiple individuals. Themes

that are consistent across participants were analyzed as a unique perspective category

throughout the study.

There were several influences on the data analysis. One influence was the need to

increase the number of themes to sort all of the codes for the study and to capture more

information from the participants. Wolcott (2001) recommended a qualitative researcher

use large categories at the beginning of the data-sorting process to keep the activity

simple and move efficiently to analyze data for emerging themes. All the emerging

themes are framed through the lens of Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefancic,

1993) and Student Development theory(s) (Chickering and Ressier, 1993). The use of

Black Feminist Theory (Collins, 1990) was appropriate for adding a layer of analysis to

the experiences African American women/Black Greek sorority members.

<center>Trustworthiness and Rigor</center>

Maintaining Rigor

In order to build trust with participants and maintain research rigor during the

interviews and throughout the study, I conducted several activities identified by

Bhattacharya (2007). By using such activities as member checks, peer debriefing,

bracketing, and reflective journaling, I added a layer of trustworthiness in building

rapport with study participants as well as in analysis and interpretation of the data

(Bhattacharya, 2007; Van Manen, 1990).

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Member checks occurred as needed after the interview. When the interview was transcribed, I sent a copy to the participant (if requested) to review or ask questions about certain information in the text which would confirm or to build a shared understanding of terms and ideas in the data. All of the participants requested to receive a copy of the actual dissertation. Two participants requested the actual recording of their interviews.

"Keeping a journal, diary or log can be helpful for keeping a record of insights gained, for discovering patterns of work in progress" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 73). Throughout the study, I kept a journal to reflect on pre-study activities, notes during the data collection and analysis, and thoughts at the conclusion of the study. Information from the journal adds another dimension to examination of interview data. I used the notes to focus on details not captured by the interview records and maintain the context in which the interview occurred for a more defined interpretation.

Peer debriefing, like reflective journaling, occurred throughout the research project. The debriefer, currently a university professor, was familiar with qualitative research methods and assisted with reviewing and improving interview techniques to elicit in-depth responses from study participants. The debriefer assisted in addressing issues that arose from gender differences, since I am male and a number of the participants were female. The debriefer is also familiar with Black Greek-Lettered organizations and conducts research on these groups as well.

Trustworthiness

The informed consent is a contract of commitment to the project. The form explains how I, as the researcher, will conduct the project in the most professional manner possible. This includes using the described protocol for requesting an individual's

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participation to interview and managing data. All of the participants are assigned a Greek-Letter pseudonym which denotes the order of the interviews. I agree to manage the data so as to not identity women and men participating in this project by name, but by using a Greek-alphabet pseudonym. I also did not reference the names of other individuals mentioned during the interviews, including their Greek-Lettered aliases or line-names. The names of the chapters and colleges and universities that host the undergraduate chapters were identified in relation to geographical region and institutional type. As the interviewer, I was entrusted by the participants to maintain a high level of trustworthiness with the information. A statement of confidentiality is in the letter of consent and assured each participant that any identifying information such as name or residence was not included or revealed within this study and would never be shared by the me. Other identifying information not used in the study was the name of the participants' undergraduate institution, actual name of the pledging chapter, or the names of members mentioned during the interviews. Each participant received a designated alias. All interviewees are acknowledged by an alias that keeps her or his identity anonymous and also captures the order in which interviews were conducted.

All written or printed notes, communications with participants, and transcripts were secured at my home. All audio recordings of interviews and personal notes were transferred to a compact disc and stored in the same file cabinet as the written and printed files. Electronic files, typed or audio, was stored on a personal hard drive separate from my personal computer were not transferred over the Internet, viewed by anyone other than the researcher, downloaded to a secured website, or listened to without personal headphones. The computer remains password protected for single user access.

At the completion of the study, all printed copies of notes, interviews and correspondence will be shredded and disposed. All remaining information will be stored electronically on an independent hard drive for up to five years after the completion of the dissertation. During this time, I will use this information to create presentations for conferences, classroom and organizational presentations and to draft publication submissions. After five years, all electronic files will be permanently deleted from the independent hard drive and the compact disc will be destroyed.

Summary

Chapter 3 begins with a background and in-depth description of phenomenology. The methodological framework is the foundation of the research design for this study and how it has been used in other research projects. In the subjectivity statement, I fully disclose my background, membership in a BGLO and my prior knowledge of pledging, MIP, and underground hazing in NPHC organizations.

Participant selection is very important for this study, as all of the participants must identify as Black or African American men and women who pledged NPHC organizations between 1970 and 1990. I relied on contacting individuals I know by e-mail to participate, or assist in identifying members of their respective organizations of participate in the study.

All data collected through in-depth interviews either face-to-face (if within an 80 mile radius my location), or by telephone and recorded on a digital voice recorder. Triangulation was used to focus the data between, space, time, and person along with the interview data being analyzed through Moustakas' method of data reduction (1993) to reveal the essence of the participants' experiences (Moustaka, 1993). Trustworthiness and

rigor were maintained throughout the study starting with the informed consent and by adding member checks, peer debriefing, bracketing and reflective journaling.

Once data collection and analysis were completed, all information was used for the study and will be used in subsequent research projects. All data will be secured for up to 5 years and then destroyed.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter reports the findings of this study. The findings were separated into three sections: participant characteristics, emerging themes, and analysis. The participant section describes the background and statistical information of the participants. The analysis is the interweaving of triangulated data with emerging themes from the interviews and aligning those themes with the theoretical frameworks (CRT, BFT, student affairs theories).

The Participants

This section is a brief presentation on the participants of this study. As contact was made with all nine NPHC fraternities and sororities, representatives from only six of the nine organizations responded. Members of three organizations (two fraternities and one sorority) were not interviewed for this study. Initial contact was made with a member of one of the non-interviewed fraternities. We set a time for the interview and I e-mailed the informed consent form. When I made contact with him for the actual interview, I connected with his voicemail service. Messages on his voicemail or e-mail were not returned. I also made contact with three members of the sorority, but did not receive a response to the request for an interview, with only one sorority member agreeing to pass along the information to other members. No contact has been received from the remaining fraternity not participating in the study.

It should be noted that some of the participants pledged in some very unique situations. This is not to say that all other participants had a "typical" experience. Two participants pledged outside the prescribed timeline in situations that provided information that fit the context of this inquiry into pledging BGLOs. One fraternity

member who pledged in 1968 two years prior to the established timeline (1970-1990) volunteered for the study. In his experience, he was actually a graduate student pledging the collegiate chapter on his campus. He was included in this study for three reasons: First, he pledged close to the beginning of the timeline and he was a graduate student pledging a BGLO through an undergraduate chapter, which is unique for NPHC organizations. The second reason is that he was later responsible for pledging programs in his fraternity on the local, regional, and national level for 15 years, for a majority of the timeline of the study. He was also working as a regional/national official of the organization at the time the NPHC organizations agreed to ban pledging prospective members so his perspective is important.

A second participant is a woman who pledged her sorority in 1991, one year after the timeline. She had actually chartered the chapter of her organization on her college campus, a process that took two years, beginning in 1989. Once she and members of her line received approval, they simultaneously received the chapter charter and crossed as members of the sorority. Together, these experiences add the perspectives of graduate students pledging in collegiate chapters, and of chartering a chapter while pledging at the same time.

Participant Biographies

This section includes a brief biography of each study participant. Demographic data about the participants are located in tables following the biographical information

Bro. Alpha: Pledged his fraternity as a graduate student in 1968. He had no plans of pledging after he was turned away from another fraternity. Pledged at an HBCU in the eastern region of the NPHC on a line of three, and was later responsible for increasing

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membership of the chapter he pledged and was responsible for pledge programs in his fraternity on the local, regional, and national level for 15 years. He was a regional/national official when NPHC organizations agreed to ban pledging in 1990.

Bro. Beta: A member of the same fraternity as Bro. Alpha and pledged in 1982 at a PWI in the eastern region of the NPHC. He was initially pledging another NPHC fraternity, dropped out, and decided to join another fraternity with his original line members. He pledged for four months on a line of three men. No chapter existed on his campus, so he was pledged by two local collegiate chapters.

Soror Delta: Pledged her sorority at a public PWI in 1978 in the southern region of the NPHC. She pledged on a line of nine for 9 weeks, with the last week under the supervision of the local alumni chapter due to a hazing investigation. She later worked as an advisor to collegiate chapters and regional official of her sorority

Bro. Gamma: He pledged at a public PWI in the north central region of the NPHC in 1976. He spent a total time of 32 to 46 weeks seeking membership into his fraternity (as a member of an interest group and then pledging). He crossed on a line of six men, which started out as a line of more than 30.

Soror Epsilon: She pledged her sorority at a public PWI in the southwestern region of the NPHC in 1991. She started in 1989 with the chartering process and pledged 8 to 10 weeks on a line of 11. She was originally invited to pledge another sorority.

Bro. Zeta: He pledged the same fraternity as Bro. Gamma in 1986 at a public PWI in the southern region of the NPHC. He was on a line of five with all first-year students and one upperclassman. He pledged for 5 weeks.

Bro. Eta: He pledged at a public PWI in the north central region of the NPHC in 1987. He pledged for 4 weeks on a line of six during his junior year of college. He attended informational meetings of his organization before deciding to pledge.

Soror Theta: She pledged the same sorority as Soror Epsilon. She pledged in the southern region of the NPHC in 1982 on a line of two at a private HBCU. She is the only legacy (her mother was also a member) interviewed in this study.

Soror Iota: She pledged her sorority at a public HBCU in the southern region of the NPHC in 1976, starting on a line of 19, and finishing with 16 on the line. She changed her major several times in school and had to drop most of her courses due to requirements of pledging. Her line was later pledged by the local alumni chapter for the remainder of the pledging period because her original big sisters (members in charge of pledging) were not academically eligible to be enrolled students at her institution.

The participant information is summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Participant Data

Participant	Member	Crossed	Interest club	Line (cross)	Pledged
Alpha	Fraternity	Spring 1968	0	3(3)	6 weeks
Beta	Fraternity	Fall 1982	0	5 (3)	4 months
Gamma	Fraternity	Fall 1976	30	24(6)	6 months
Delta	Sorority	Spring 1978	24	15(10)	10 weeks
Epsilon	Sorority	Spring 1991	0	11(10)	6-8 weeks
Zeta	Fraternity	Spring 1986	0	6(6)	5 weeks

(*Table continues*)

Table 1(Continued)

Participant Data

Participant	Member	Crossed	Interest club	Line (cross)	Pledged
Eta	Fraternity	Spring 1987	0	5(5)	5 weeks
Theta	Sorority	Spring 1982	0	2(2)	2 months
Iota	Sorority	Fall 1976	0	19(16)	2 months

Table 2

Pledging locations

Participant	NPHC Region	Institution	Funded
Alpha	Eastern	HBCU	Private
Beta	Eastern	PWI	Private
Gamma	North Central	PWI	Public
Delta	Southwestern	PWI	Public
Epsilon	Southwestern	PWI	Public
Zeta	Southern	PWI	Public
Eta	North Central	PWI	Public
Theta	Southern	HBCU	Private
Iota	Southern	HBCU	Public

Emerging Themes

The process of data reduction yielded the following emerging themes from all of the interviewed persons:

- Introduction to BGLOs: How or who introduced the participant to BGLOs and introduced the idea of pledging;

- Crossing the burning sands: This relates not to the ceremony, but to activities leading up to the actual crossing ceremony (activities of pledging, changes in the line, etc.);

- Relationships: The relations participants developed or maintained with other line members, big brothers/sisters, and those outside the BGLO (including family);

- Pledging vs. hazing: How participants define each term; and

- Now what? In the opinion of someone who pledged a BGLO and has seen MIP, what should NPHC organizations do, if anything, to change the organizations' MIP?

Introduction to BGLOs

At some point prior to pledging, all of the participants were introduced to BGLOs or the notion of pledging in some form. It was through this introduction that the individual decided to pledge and select an organization to seek membership. Contacting the organization or gaining knowledge of it came in one of four ways: by associating with or observing members of the organization in an everyday setting, through family or friends who are members, by independent research, and by attending informational meetings held by the organizations.

Observing members. Several participants were influenced to join an organization after associating with or observing members of their respective organizations in their daily activities. Bro. Alpha's introduction to fraternity life came from negative interaction with another fraternity in the residence hall. "I had not planned to pledge once I had been turned down … that involved being blackballed because I replaced a graduate student in the dormitory who was a [member of this fraternity]." According to Bro. Alpha, he was not allowed to seek membership in this particular fraternity on his campus. However, it was meeting a member of his fraternity that changed his mind about pledging.

> [I] was not allowed to pledge anything until a young undergraduate put a book
> under my arm… I was very skeptical. He said 'you can read, can't you?' and I
> said 'yes'… in reading it, I found out the [fraternity] was dedicated to everything
> I was dedicated to, and I realized that if I joined that organization, that unlike the
> campus organizations which had to generate controversy all the time to keep the
> membership up, that [this fraternity would] have an intake [of] membership [that]
> could rise to action when necessary, but could fall back to other activities when
> not necessary. So that gave me an interest in pledging.

Bro. Gamma learned about BGLOs from seeing his future fraternity brothers in class and as his tutors. He was not a target for recruitment to the fraternity; rather he was impressed by what the individuals were doing on campus. He states, "I did not know they were members of that organization until much later." After attending the interest meeting for all of the NPHC fraternities on his campus he decided to pledge a fraternity that he "had more in common with in terms of shared values, etc." He continued to do research on the organization by reading the history book and national magazines about the

membership. He also joined a group where men interested in the organization could learn more about the organization. For 8 to12 weeks, he did "community service or assisted them in community service, got to know them better, [they] got to know each other better because there were more than 30 people."

The experience of Soror Delta was similar. Because she was over 500 miles from home, she did not know anyone from her hometown attending the institution. The members of her sorority "were very nice and . . . felt like [she] fit in." Her interest in BGLOs led her to attend informational meetings of two organizations on her campus. Being a member of an NPHC fraternity's sweetheart organization, she attended a rush meeting for a sorority that her group attended. After attending the rush meeting for her future sorority, she received an invitation to interview.

Family/mentor influence. Information about BGLOs and pledging was also provided by family members and/or mentors or teachers of the participants. For Soror Theta, her mother and another family member were members of the sorority she pledged. She did not consider any other BGLO on her campus. Her mother also served as a regional officer of the sorority during her time pledging. A person seeking membership into a BGLO where one of the parents, older sibling, and to some extent, an aunt or uncle is a member is considered a legacy (Kimbrough, 2005). Some NPHC organizations may have different criteria for membership intake process for men or women who are legacies. According to Soror Theta, her sorority did not have designation for legacies when she joined, just an acknowledgement that she was the daughter of a member.

Members of her sorority mentored Soror Iota prior to her pledging. "I had experiences where my mentors were all members of the sorority; they held key positions

at the institution [and] in town." Because of this relationship and influence by her mentors, Soror Eta, "was well versed from a young girl what the sorority was about. And so it stood to reason that had I done anything else, it would have been a slap in the face of several of my mentors." She only attended the informational meeting for one sorority and was invited to interview and join the line.

Independent research. Soror Epsilon was the only member to do independent research, gathering information from the library on her sorority before joining because a chapter of her sorority did not exist at her institution. With a friend who had an interest in the sorority, Soror Epsilon researched her sorority, made contact with the campus office of Greek affairs and the national organization in an effort to charter a chapter on her campus. Because the sorority did not exist on her campus and the nearest alumni chapter was two hours away, she and other interested women were not able to attend an informational meeting. Starting in 1989, she and nine other women finally crossed and chartered their sorority on their campus in 1991. She is the only participant to actually charter a chapter of a collegiate NPHC sorority.

Informational. All of the participants with the exception of Soror Epsilon were able to attend an informational meeting to learn more about their particular organization or about multiple NPHC organizations. Like other members, Bro. Zeta observed some of the members of his fraternity. He saw "they were fun-loving, you'd see them at the parties but you'd also see them going to class. They were also working and helping out in the community so that was something that attracted me." After attending four or five informational meetings before he achieved the requirements for membership, Bro. Zeta was invited to interview and joined the pledge class for his fraternity.

Crossing the Burning Sands

The last step in the process to become a member of a BGLO is "crossing the burning sands" or being initiated into the organization by going through a formalized ceremony (Kimbrough, 2003). Prior to crossing the burning sands, the participants described experiences that were related to who was in charge of their pledging process, changes in the number of pledges and the duration of the pledging experience.

From Bro. Alpha's point of view, the pledges were in charge because they could actually control the process to keep the fraternity members from issuing physical assignments or creating other challenges for the pledges to complete. Bro. Alpha described the situation as a game between the pledges and the fraternity members:

As we made the game fun for them by messing up, then it was going to be more difficult for us. Once we turned the game to ourselves and made it less or no fun for them, the process was going to end. So we necessarily plotted each week to have some activity we would do to keep the brothers off point. For instance, we gave our cards on campus; we purposely gave out the cards to a few of the more attractive girls on campus but primarily to the unattractive girls on campus or those that we considered unattractive. That then caused the attractive girls to be seeking out our big brothers to try to find us to get a card… She wants nothing to do with [the big brother]; she wants to know where are the [pledges].

For other participants, the fraternity and sorority members were in control of all pledging activities. For Bro. Beta and Soror Epsilon, chapters did not exist on their campuses, so their lines were under the auspices of nearby collegiate and alumni chapters of their organizations. Bro. Beta's line pledged between two local collegiate chapters.

Bro. Beta describes attitudes of one chapter as being "snooty" and he was not "used to [that] type of personality" of the members of that chapter. He describes the members of the second chapter to be more favorable or brotherly. In Soror Epsilon's process of chartering a chapter, two alumni chapters of her sorority worked to bring her line into the sorority. Their pledging activities were limited due to both alumni chapters being in different cities almost two hours away from the campus and the two chapters were "bickering" over which one was responsible for the pledging and possible chartering of this new chapter.

Soror Delta's line was "crossed" by the local alumni chapter due to an accusation of hazing by a member of the line. This line member was a legacy according to Soror Delta, because her mother and grandmother were members of the sorority. She quit the line and alerted the campus officials and "the consequence of that… [the] line was dropped, the regional director had [to] come in and investigate" during the sixth week of pledging. After returning from spring break (when all lines on campus were to conclude), the chapter "had to go another two weeks under the grad chapter." Because of the situation, the chapter was suspended when the new members returned during the following fall semester. "We couldn't wear any paraphernalia and the sorors (ones accused of hazing) were still nice to us."

Numbers. The number of pledges varied among participants' lines as well as organizations. In chartering a chapter, a mandatory minimum number were needed to receive the charter. Having more people on a line may have put several participants in uncomfortable situations such as completing activities in small spaces. For Soror Delta, doing everything together required all ten members to ride back to campus in a Pinto,

"not a Pinto wagon either, a regular Pinto." Soror Eta was pledging on a line with 18 other women. All of the members had to sleep together in a dorm room she describes as "a prison cell" because of the room's small size, with two big sisters pledging them.

Not all of the members of each line made it into the organization. Several participants discuss members dropping the lines during the pledging process for various reasons. Soror Delta started out with 10 being accepted into the pledge club, and one dropped the first week. During the first pledge meeting the sorority members "just grilled us on what did we learn and some of them were demeaning…calling names or whatever." It was after this meeting that the line sister dropped and did not return to the process. Later, two others dropped during the fifth week of pledging with another dropping during the sixth week. The last of Soror Delta's line sisters to drop also accused the chapter of hazing. The regional director concluded hazing did occur, and all who dropped the line were allowed to return. Only the last three to drop returned to cross into the sorority. "The girl from week one, she said 'no, I don't want to come back on' because she knew that if she came back on she wouldn't be looked at favorably."

Soror Epsilon's line originally had 11 members. The member that led the group in gathering information on the sorority and recruiting interested women was not academically eligible when the group was finally cleared to pledge and charter the chapter. According to Soror Epsilon, "she wanted us to wait on her, but we didn't want to wait." The name of the line was "legendary 10 plus 1" honoring all original members of the group. On the charter, a space was available to add the name of the one member when she became eligible to pledge.

Two of the participants were on very large lines (10+ members); Soror Iota and Bro. Gamma. Soror Eta started with 19 members and 16 members crossed when they completed pledging. As stated previously, Bro. Gamma started out as a member of his fraternity's interest group, which had 30 members. When he starting the actual pledging process, he was one of 24 members of the line. He was a part of the largest line the chapter had at the time, and they were visited by members from other chapters. "We became a novelty of sorts throughout the state because you have other chapters who want to come visit you." As his process continued, Bro. Gamma's line brothers "were dropping like flies. It [pledging] was kicked up a notch as we got closer and closer and closer [to the end] and I think for some people, it was unmanageable." When the line finished after 24 weeks, only six remained from the original 30 from the interest group and of the 24 members of the pledge group.

Time. The time each participant spent pledging varies from 5 weeks to 6 months. Some of the members describe this length of time in similar details, as the pledging time was set and monitored by the campus and all lines had to begin and end by an established date. Bro. Alpha acknowledges that at his campus, an HBCU, all pledging occurred during a six-week period and had to end by the spring break or Easter Holiday. For others, due to conflicts with those who were pledging them, the time pledging extended beyond one semester in some instances. Bro. Beta, with no chapter on his campus, pledged for four months, as Soror Delta pledged approximately 10 weeks with the last two weeks under the supervision of the alumni chapter. Bro. Zeta pledged approximately 5 weeks, which was the shortest pledge period of any members of this study.

Bro. Gamma pledged the longest of all of the participants, pledging 24 weeks before becoming a member of his fraternity. This was in addition to being a member of his fraternity's interest group for 8 to 12 weeks prior to actually pledging. Bro. Gamma described the experience of crossing into the organization as "exhilarating… for one, I couldn't believe it was over…it was a sense of belonging, it was a sense of relief. They would always tell us, this is nothing, the hard part starts when you really get in…if this is nothing then what must actual membership be like?"

Different experiences. After being inducted as a member, each participant had various experiences as neophytes or new members. Bro. Alpha worked with his charter to reestablish it on his campus. According to him, within three years, the chapter went from three members (all members of his line) to over 100 financially active members on his campus. Bro. Beta performed in a probate or neophyte step show, which serves to formally introduce new members to the campus community and celebrate their achieving membership in the organization. Soror Epsilon's line learned to step from a NPHC fraternity and they competed in a step competition after crossing. Bro. Zeta's line crossed after the deadline to end pledging on his campus. They did not have a neophyte step show.

Soror Delta also did not have a neophyte show. Due to an accusation by members of her line, the chapter was under suspension after her line completed the pledging process. It was a year before they were able to wear their letters on campus and were acknowledged as members of her sorority. Bro. Gamma, after pledging 24 weeks, did have a neophyte step show. He describes his experience as "a kind of coming out thing and the other Greeks would bring you presents and the organization… did a nice step

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show for us… but I think people just felt sorry for us because we went so long so it was, it was very nice."

Relationships

Relationships are a very important theme to emerge in this study. For the participants, some of these relationships influenced their decisions to become members of BGLOs and to pledge particular organizations. Relationships also played a role in assisting the participants in completing the process. In constructing this theme, relationships for the participants focuses on the connections with big brothers/sisters and with those outside of the organization.

Big brothers/sisters. The relationships between the participants and the big brothers/sisters vary with each participant. This includes interactions with the group and individuals. Since BGLOs are unique in that some fraternities and sororities have a close affiliation (by constitution or history) to each other, some pledges had to interact with the affiliate organization fraternity or sorority (Kimbrough, 2003). Also, the term big brother or big sister not only refers to those actually involved in pledging new members, but includes other members of the organization that pledges may have come into contact with during their time pledging.

Bro. Alpha's interaction with his big brothers (and sisters) involved playing the "game of pledging" or getting out of many of the challenge assignments of reciting organizational information, physical exercise, or "being motivated" by being paddled. With the big sisters, his game consisted of composing "a little poem or song or something" in order to get out of any challenge or task given to him by them. Bro. Beta, pledging between two chapters, developed a closer relationship with the members of the

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chapter he found to be more positive. "Being around the [chapter] brothers really made you want to be a [member]." All the members of Soror Delta's line had personal or special big sister. She describes her experience with her special big sister:

> Our specials would ask us to bring certain things to the sorority meeting. Like my special would always want five scoops of vanilla ice cream and it better not be melted, and another special's would want a certain kind of pizza, it better be hot. Just things to challenge us and see how we were going to accept the challenge and react to it. I can remember washing cars on Saturday; you know, "come pick up my car and wash it and it better not be whatever."

After she became a member of the sorority and the chapter was on suspension, Soror Delta mentions, "the sorors (former big sisters) were still nice to us, but it wasn't until the following semester when we were able to get off the suspension." She and the other women interviewed do not describe a continuation of the relationship with the big sisters after they crossed into the organization and after graduation. Soror Epsilon's big sisters were members of two nearby alumni chapters. Soror Theta did continue a relationship with the big sisters, but was not doing much work with the chapter after crossing. The following year was her senior year and she had a more academic focus at the time.

Soror Iota did not have a positive experience with her big sisters and did not have a relationship with them while pledging or after she became a member. Towards the end of her process, it became known that "the two active big sisters at the time on the undergraduate level… none of them were actually enrolled in school or whatever or didn't meet the grade point average requirements." She described several hazing incidents including times when her entire line (16 to 19 women) were locked in a closet

all night and missing classes the following mornings due to pledging activities beginning at 5:30 a.m. "I can honestly tell you that the semester I pledged into the sorority, I might have received one grade out of 16 hours."

In meeting other big brothers and sisters on campus or in the local community, most of the participants describe being required to collect signatures from alumni members on a weekly basis while pledging. Other than garnering signatures, the interaction with outside big brothers and sisters seems to have been minimal and did not result in relationship building. Soror Iota spoke about eating lunch in the cafeteria:

Because we were in a line, we never under any conditions could allow anyone to break our line. So we had to make sure that we were tight all the time, and that we would physically, if we had to, push, fight, or do whatever we had to prevent someone from entering or breaking our line. So as we ate, we had to tighten up as we'd go through the line to receive our servings; we would have to tighten up so, you know, just unconsciously. Throughout the institution, folks were aware that they should not break our line. It wasn't the non-pledges that would usually attempt that; it was always a member of the sorority or the frat who would attempt to break our line to see if we were actually cognizant of what was happening around us.

In meeting members from outside the chapter, Bro. Gamma described the interaction with one word: frightful. He later explained that his chapter set ground rules so that his line was not touched; however, the interaction with outsiders was intimidating. Members from other chapters were invited to visit his line, since they were, at one point, the largest in the history of the chapter.

Friends and family. Relationships with friends and family members also emerged from the interview information. Several of the participants relied on the help of family and friends to "make it through" the pledging experience. Friends assisted the participants with daily tasks that they did not have the time or physical stamina to complete, but were a necessity to complete. For some, family also offered some of the same assistance or encouragement to complete what may have been a difficult or long pledging process. Soror Iota stated, "unless you had a trusting sister, brother, or roommate, you never would be able to do your laundry. So it was always help from others [that] you could trust or confide in to help you go through the pledging process." For her, she had several brothers who made sure she was doing okay, and gave her money from time to time. A roommate of one of her line sisters stored extra food so the line could eat. "We helped each other through friends that we could trust."

Family encouraged Bro. Beta to complete his pledging process. Pledges were required to carry certain items while pledging (Jones, 2004a; Kimbrough, 2003). Leaving his brick at home prior to a pledge session, his mother drove to his pledging meeting to bring it to him. He said, "I sat in the car and I'm like, 'I can't do this no more, I can't do this, I can't do this.' She [his mother] said 'you can do it son, you'll be all right, and you hang in there.' And just cause she talked to me that one time for three minutes, I took my brick and just went off, just went on and stuck with it."

Some relationships did not last through the pledging process. Bro. Gamma lost several college friends because of the time he spent pledging his fraternity. They were friends he made as a student and were not members of BGLOs. His time outside of class

was spent with his line brothers studying for class, fraternity history, or in pledging activities.

Where are they now? After becoming a member of his fraternity, Bro. Alpha was in charge of pledging in various regions of his fraternity for nearly 20 years. He described the purpose of pledging as a way to "to have the young men become actual brothers of each other by the time that they went over—that they would know each other's mother's names, their father's names, um their sibling's names, what foods they liked—that they'd be close enough to one another that they could build relationships that would last for the rest of their lives." Much of the time in pledging process is used in building the relationship between the pledges, but this does not translate into the lifelong relationships that Bro. Alpha describes.

The amount of contact between the study participants and their line members varies from yearly meetings to no contact. Bro. Zeta keeps in touch with all of his line brothers, and knows that they are not financially active within the fraternity. He responded, "I am personally working to get them all to reactivate." All of the sorority participants have had difficulty keeping up with line sisters because some moved out of the country for military service or concentrated more on academic pursuits. On a line of two, Soror Theta lost contact with her only line sister after crossing. She said, "I moved away to the other side of the country and … I think she left school for a year and then came back and we were kind of disconnected." Sorors Epsilon and Iota do keep up with some of their 10 and 16 line sisters, respectively. Soror Delta keeps up with two of her nine original line sisters. "We try to see each other every couple of years or so because

with my husband in the military and me moving, it was kind of difficult, but now we're

both back in [home state] so it's a little easier [to stay in contact]."

Pledging vs. Hazing

Some the participants revealed their thoughts on pledging and hazing. Those who

did describe pledging and hazing defined the two differently, not as interchangeable

terms (Scott, 2007). In a previous section, Bro. Alpha defined the purpose of pledging as

a process to create a fellowship among the members of the pledge line. In defining

pledging and hazing, Soror Delta defined pledging as " the process that's needed to really

understand the organization that you're gonna become a part of and get to know the

people that are already in that organization that you want to become a part of." The view

of hazing is "basically how they define it now: anything that [causes] you . . . any

physical harm or emotional harm because I don't think you need to belittle anybody to

determine what their loyalty is going to be to your organization. Um, making them do

tasks; that's not going to make them be a better soror."

Bro. Gamma defines pledging and hazing in this statement:

Certain activities where one is being taught about the organization they are

pledging, and learning about the other individuals that are going through this

process with them in terms of activity. It's educational in nature and again not just

content all the time but it's … a teaching tool to help the individual learn things or

initially learn the things… Hazing to me is the antithesis of everything I just said.

It's not educational. It is not necessarily [required of] one in being a member in

my opinion. Hazing—there's different types. You have emotional hazing,

physical hazing, and ect. But I think there's a distinct difference, I think you can

pledge someone without hazing them, obviously a lot of people disagree."

Now What?

I asked each participant their thoughts about their respective organizations using a membership intake process instead of the pledging program they experienced. In this reflection, participants covered several topics: their pledging experience, views on MIP, and views of BGLOs dealing with accusations of hazing and pledging deaths. Responding to the questions, Bro. Gamma stated, "Now what? That is a good question."

Being very critical of the leadership of the organizations, Bro. Alpha believes an issue that has affected the membership intake process is how the NPHC presidents pursued a ban on pledging without involving greater input from the general membership of their organizations. He insisted this action resulted in the disconnection between alumni and collegiate chapters. Alumni members had a duty to teach collegiate chapters how to properly pledge someone. Since the introduction of MIP, chapters are engaging in underground or secret pledging activities as a part of MIP that are physical, and not the mental challenges associated with pledging of the past.

Bro. Beta believes the shortened timeframe for MIP is not enough time to bring a member into a fraternity or sorority. "I don't think the brothers that were pledging me got to see the best of us as a line, but they knew we were quick and when you see that that makes the difference." He also expressed his ideas about hazing that was reported in incidents that led to injury or the death of pledges. "I can't fathom it. I'm sure there's been a couple of times I could have keeled over if I hadn't been in the best of health."

Bro. Gamma said, "if this is still happening, it makes me think we need to have a moratorium. . . the organizations need to take a step back because obviously membership intake as currently defined . . . it's exacerbated the problem because at least when it was

done in my day, you could see it. Here, it's hard to acknowledge that it's even taking place."

Soror Delta also believes that the amount of time for MIP in her organization should be expanded. In her service overseeing collegiate MIP for her local sorority, she feels that more time gives her an opportunity to "get to know the girls better, [and] they got a chance to get to know each other better." She also said that there is a need to complete background checks on prospective members. "Background checks are not going to catch everything either, but it will weed out some people."

Soror Epsilon believes that the NPHC organizations must do something to prevent future lawsuits for hazing and pledging infractions. She believes that her sorority has taken the necessary steps to prevent hazing by having mandatory training for all members that includes MIP and post-MIP training for new members.

Bro. Zeta would like to see MIP overhauled in his organization and that there is a need to pick better persons for membership. "I don't think pledging hard makes you a good member of your organization. I think you can still learn a lot over the course of four to six weeks." He describes his experience as hard pledging and the results of hard pledging do not equate to continued financial membership.

Bro. Eta, similar to Bro. Zeta, believes the quality of members needs to change and that the change starts with the members already in the organizations. "I think it is incumbent upon us as organizations to say 'hey brother or sister that stuff (hazing) is not welcome.' You know, the program is here, this is what we're supposed to be doing, this is what we're going to do. And if you don't like it, you can do another chapter or you know, I'll report you and you can be excommunicated."

Soror Theta believes that a possible solution is to end collegiate/undergraduate MIP, but recognizes that this would create another issue. She stated, "Sometimes I think we should stop intake on the undergraduate level and just do intake at the graduate level, and other days I know that that process produces leadership of our students especially at HBCUs."

Soror Iota knows that her own experience in pledging was not the right way to become a member of her sorority, but she was afraid to challenge the big sisters. Her pledging experience required physical exertion, poor nutrition, and the condition of some women pledging (one of her line sisters was pregnant before dropping), and these are issues that need to be addressed by organizations and advocates for organizations to require medical examinations for prospective members. She, like Bro. Alpha, is also critical of the national leadership. "Our national officers need to be more vigilant. They need to get out from wherever they are during intake period… and come and see what chapters are doing today."

<div align="center">Analysis</div>

The purpose of the previous section was to report the findings with actual responses by the participants. This section analyzes the themes using the different theories presented in Chapter 2. The inclusion of these theories gives a foundation for understanding the theme generated from the data of the participants.

Introduction to BGLOs

Before the participants could decide on which organization to join, they were introduced to BGLOs. Choosing to belong to an organization that was founded to bring together college students of a similar racial group seemed to be in line with a multicultural framework that asserts that Black college students look to connect with

others like themselves to resist the anxiety of being in a dominant culture institution (such as a PWI). None of the participants discussed an interest in becoming a part of Greek-Lettered organizations that were not Black/African-American. In addition, all of the sorority members did not attempt to join NPHC fraternities, as the sororities were exclusively for African American women (Williams, 1992). For participants attending PWIs, the environment that was "white-identified, white-centered" (Johnson, 2001, p. 112) made being a member of a Black group essential. In Critical Race Theory (CRT), racism is recognized as being imbued in the campus cultural of U.S. colleges and universities and affects opportunities or cultural mobility of students of color (Bell, 1993; Tate, 1997). At HBCUs, Black Greek-Lettered Organizations were the only Greek-Lettered organizations to join. Although the PWIs had other WGLOs, the cultural norm of excluding persons of color from these groups made BGLOs the norm or the only choice of Greek-Lettered life for participants at PWIs (Solorzano et al., 2000).

Each participant was introduced to life of the fraternity or sorority by family, friends or acquaintances, or by coming into contact with members of the organizations. For the members who were introduced by their families, it seems that there may have been an expectation of joining a BGLO as a part of the college experience for Black students. For some it was a question of which organization to pledge while for others it was when to pledge, as with Soror Theta, who was a legacy. Being introduced to sorority life by family could be interpreted that she was not a first generation college student, and her joining the sorority was a part of the family's movement through the American social class system (Benjamin, 2005; Graham, 1999). Some BGLOs are considered a part of the Black elite or upper class, so membership is a symbol of status (Graham, 1999).

The influence of friends was the greatest for Soror Epsilon, who was responsible for chartering a chapter at her institution. Although she pledged for two months, she and the other women she worked with in establishing the chapter had already formed a fictive kinship network (Collins, 1991; Harris, 1998). Receiving the approval of the institution and national sorority recognized the group's efforts in an environment that could have posed racist and sexist obstacles (Collins, 1991; Giddings, 1994). It was important for Soror Epsilon to establish another organization for Black women on campus, as she revealed that her institution had a racist history including the original charter for the institution referencing it being for "white students only." Soror Epsilon's institution was in a state that had segregated institutions of higher learning for Caucasian and African American citizens (public PWIs and HBCUs). Through the gaze of Black Feminist Theory, the establishing of a new sorority on campus gave Black women another choice in affirming their resolve in persist to graduation in a historically racist and sexist environment (Collins, 1991; Giddings, 2001).

Outside of family and friends, fraternity and sorority members influenced participants to consider joining a BGLO. Several participants mentioned that they were attracted to community service, fellowship, and friendliness of members. Bro. Gamma stated he realized later that most of his tutors were members of his fraternity. The fraternity members were the primary keepers of information for prospective members sought to research more about the organizations principles, prominent members, and other parts of history. According to Bolman and Deal (1997), "power flows to those who have the information" (p. 169). The organizations held power over pledges because they were the primary resource for information needed to pledge.

Crossing the Burning Sands

This section is not about how the participants actually crossed into membership (the initiation ceremony); it is more about the process and factors that surrounded the conclusion of the pledge process. One subject here is who was in control of the pledging process of each line? It is unclear if the college/university administration, the BGLO's local alumni chapter, or the regional/national organization was aware of the campus chapter's pledging activities. If so, was Bro. Gamma, and Soror Theta's experiences part of a formal process to affiliate new members to their organizations? Some of the participants did not mention meeting alumni members of their organizations or were not aware of a local alumni chapter, like Bro. Beta.]

The campus chapters seemed to be more independent in their operations (Kimbrough, 2003). This could have been due to loose or poor communication between chapters and organizational authorities or the independent approach of the organization's structure. Institutions also seemed to have a hands-off approach in handling BGLOs (Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998). The most regulation seemed to come from HBCUs, which imposed limits on the length of pledging for all organizations. Nevertheless, it also seems that HBCUs lacked oversight of daily and non-public activities of pledges, like Soror Iota's experience in being pledged by two women who were not enrolled students at her institution, yet were able to reside on campus and have authority to pledge a line. Between the interview data and journal notes, I believe that there was no formal office of student activities or Greek Affairs or someone with the formal authority to check on these organizations or regulate student organizations at Soror Iota's institution. Non-students being able to pledge and haze Soror Iota's line could be attributed to lack of oversight by

the institution to address retention and academic progress (of the two big sisters and Soror Iota) as well as campus safety.

It was with Bro. Beta and Bro. Gamma, at public PWIs, where participants seemed to be at the will of the campus organizations. Bro. Gamma pledged for nearly 30 weeks, in addition to 8 to 12 weeks as a member of an interest group prior to pledging. There was no mention of meeting with campus officials or regulation of pledging activities by student affairs administrators. Two local collegiate chapters were pledging Bro. Beta from other area schools. His institution did not provide oversight for his pledging. His campus allowed his line to perform a neophyte step show in which a "vice president attended." This could be seen as the campus relying on BGLOs to provide multicultural programming for the campus at the expense of the organization, not the institution (Fox et al., 1987). The administration of the institution (the vice president) showed support for the entertainment aspect of BGLOs (the stepshow). The purpose of the men pledging was also to start a chapter of the fraternity. This did not occur due to lack of interest and members leaving school (Bro. Beta). I believe that the institution sought to rely on BGLOs to address student involvement needs of Black students, which only attract students interested in joining BGLOs, and not the needs of all students of color on campus (Johnson, 2001).

A celebration after crossing the burning sands (Kimbrough, 2003) is customary with BGLOs and could be rooted in other African American rites-of-passage traditions that usually include dance (Person & Christensen, 1996). For BGLOs, the neophyte presentation or step show is sometimes very important for the new members, as this is their first official public action as members, which could also be used to communicate to

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the campus community the presence and strength of the new membership of the fraternity or sorority (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Branch, 2005). As some participants described their crossing celebration as celebration of relief (especially after pledging for a long period), not all of the participants experienced a celebration. Several members could not due to the lines finishing at the end of the semester during, or after exam week, or because their line was suspended and the members could not do social activities.

The celebration is a part of the affirmation of membership to the organization. Although it is not mandatory, the use of celebration could have a particular meaning for the members and aid in membership retention and recruitment for the organization (Harper Dickinson, 2005). The lack of a celebration when joining the organization could affect members' perception of the value of chapter organizational membership (Bolman & Deal, 1997). The celebration or neophyte step show could be a part of the ceremony of crossing the burning sands. If the role of ceremony is to "socialize, stabilize, reassure, and convey messages to external constituencies" (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 227), then the campus chapters did miss out on an opportunity to socialize new and old members of the organization, to reassure support for chapter events, and to convey a message of organizational strength to the campus community (Carter, 2001). Opportunities to do this were missed with several of the participants: Soror Delta, Bros. Zeta and Eta, as well as Bro. Beta, who did have a probate show, but no one from his fraternity attended, "not a single member."

Relationships

Relationships are the interpersonal connections that pledges make with others during the process. It also relates to the maintenance of connections with people prior to and after the end of the pledging process. The theme of relationships was conveyed in Bro. Alpha's statement about the purpose of a pledging process, in creating lifelong relationships with others to support one another after the pledging process has ended (McKenzie, 2005; Person & Christensen, 1996). Trying to establish connections with line brothers/sisters while maintaining current friends presented difficulty for the participants in this project. The primary relationships for the study participants were with the other members of the line and to the big brothers/big sisters of the organization(s).

I agree with a statement by Bro. Gamma that when a line has too many individuals, it becomes difficult for some of the members to think of the betterment of the group versus the person. This dynamic plays out several times in the participants' experiences. For those lines who pledged over an average of 6 weeks, the pledges had not learned to operate as a group or unit, so the length of time was extended to bring about this outcome. In another way, large lines affect individuals' goal of loyalty to the organization when some students dropped the line (or quit) and did not return. I believe that if the individual dropped from the line due to issues of hazing such as with Soror Delta's line, it could be rationalized that these persons were thinking of the betterment of the group by filing accusations of hazing against the organization in order to protect the other members of the line (Nuwer, 1999).

Only some of the participants provided an in-depth description of the relationship they had with their big brothers or sisters. Bro. Beta talked about the constant contact his

line had with their dean of pledges or DP, who was present at all pledging activities and with other members with whom he had a positive interaction. Other fraternity participants describe having "positive" relationships with the chapter members at the time of pledging, which in the context of African American males, is important in retention and persistence in college (Harper, 2004).

For the women, there were two different views of the relationships with the line and big sisters. One view is that the relationships with the big sisters were positive in building a sisterhood, which is "about women learning how to care for one another" (hooks, 2002, p. 12). All of the women, to some degree, discuss being able to create these sisterhood relationships with their lines and have a positive relationship with the big sisters pledging them, even if the beginning of pledging experience seemed to be negative (Jenkins, 2008). The women also described feelings of frustration with their line sisters on certain decisions. One such decision was Soror Delta's line sister dropping the line and accusing the sorority of hazing. Soror Delta felt that her line sister should have said something in the beginning, not towards the end of the process. Soror Iota also expressed frustration with her line sisters over saving their sorority plot on campus, which included unique plant life that later died. Her line expressed that being a pledge did not give them a voice in the decisions of the sorority, so they chose to remain silent and not discuss the plot with the big sisters. When analyzing the experience through Black Feminist Theory, the discourse between the lines and with the big sisters is a part of the experience of building African American sisterhood (Harris, 1998). However, the hazing that occurred with some of the sorority participants, such as being locked in a residence hall room with

16 to 19 women throughout the night and missing class the next morning, are examples of building sisterhood based on victimization (hooks, 2002).

Soror Delta's line sister did return to the line, but was treated as an outsider after they crossed, even though she completed most of the pledging with the line. When others (including their own sorority sisters) treat sorority members in a manner that shuns them from the organization, this is anti-sororal behavior (Jenkins, 2008). This goes beyond the sisterly discourse defined by Harris (1998) and the un-sisterly treatment defined by Black feminists such as hooks (2002). Jenkins (2008) defines anti-sororal as the "deliberate action of women in a sorority or group, to ostracize, exclude, or shun another soror or group member" (p. 26). Actions such as these may diminish any connection the women would have to the sorority and members, and eventually lead to sorors becoming inactive, if not renouncing membership.

The pledging process affects the prior relationships pledges have with members outside the organization as well as with members of other organizations. Another sorority on campus chose Soror Epsilon while she was chartering her chapter. When she turned down the invitation, the relationship with her friend and with the other sorority changed. Bro.Gamma completely severed relationships with several friends he had made prior to his pledging nearly 30 weeks. He was able to maintain his friendship with his roommate, whom he had known since childhood. Although the decision to join a BGLO is viewed as associating with one's known culture (Guiffrida, 2006), the pledges are required to, for a time, let go of the familiar -- friends, routine, cultural knowledge -- in order to learn about and how to be a member of their fraternity or sorority (Tinto, 1993). In the context of pledging for Bro. Alpha, in order for him to succeed in joining an organization of

individuals like himself – an African-America male inclined to scholarship and community service (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007) -- he had to depart from his friendships that were familiar to him prior to pledging (Tinto, 1993) .

Relationships after pledging have not lived up to the "lifelong relationships" expressed by Bro. Alpha. Contact between the participants and their fellow line members varies among the participants, with some having contact with all of their line brothers and sisters to others having no contact, even if they were on a line of two. One argument about the difference between BGLOs and WGLOs is that BGLO members continue membership and activities beyond the collegiate experience (Kimbrough and Hutchinson, 1998; Williams, 1992). The continuation of relationships among line members was not always as successful among these study participants. As members can change chapters and regions, the relationships or closeness to their lines can also change. Bro. Gamma stated " people say we have to make (pledge) people right, that says to me that there is a wrong way to make someone." If someone pledges, becomes a member of a BGLO, stays committed to the organization but loses contact and closeness with those who pledged with them, does that mean they were made wrong or is it that they have been able to use the organization as a broad professional/social network (Benjamin, 2005)? Essentially, does pledging or pledging hard (i.e., for periods longer than the prescribed time or past 2 months, enduring difficult tasks and hazing) increase the bonds between line members for lifelong friendships or fictive kinships (Collins, 1991)? For the nine participants of this study, the answer is no.

Pledging vs. Hazing

I wanted to explore the participants' understanding of pledging and hazing without asking them directly "were you hazed while pledging?" A few participants expressed during the interviews that they were hazed during their pledging experience. In following my personal notes from the interviews, some of the participants expressed that while they were pledging, they viewed hazing as just an obstacle to overcome with the group in order to become a member of the fraternity or sorority.

In overcoming this obstacle, they did not view some of the activities as a threat to their physical or mental well-being, but necessary to enter into the brother or sisterhood. However, at least three participants had reached a point where they were going to quit the pledging process just prior to actually becoming members. They had reached a limit – a limit to tolerating the hazing or the length of time pledging – and were ready to give up seeking membership.

If participants questioned the hazing during the pledging process, he or she met resistance from other members of the pledge line. This is similar to the resistance Soror Iota met when she wanted to save the sorority plot, but her line sisters believed that the power and privilege to do so belonged to the big sisters, even though their line outnumbered the big sisters. Nevertheless, membership did not translate directly into having the privilege to eliminate the hazing practices in the local chapter's pledging process.

Now What?

Reflecting on their total experience pledging and overseeing pledging and witnessing the changes during the MIP era, all nine participants expressed a concern for the current state of membership intake for the NPHC fraternities and sororities. They understand that the organizations need protection from and must prevent future hazing incidents and lawsuits, and they believe that collegiate members want to have an experience of pledging similar to the participants (Scott, 2007). Participants have expressed that one of the issues in addressing needed changes in the membership intake process is the leadership structure of NPHC organizations. Bro. Alpha expressed that within his fraternity, decisions seemed to be controlled by one person or a small group of leaders. Soror Iota believes that the national leaders of the organizations should be active in visiting collegiate chapters and review MIP instead of reading reports of possible hazing incidents. In all, their views are that leaders need to build a consensus on a solution instead of making a decision for the entire organization (Bolman and Deal, 1997). In addition, national leaders must be proactive when chapters are conducting membership intake, similar to Soror Iota's suggestion of reviewing chapters that are carrying out the process. Participants also believe that members who do not follow the procedure need to be punished because they have violated the brother/sisterhood they pledged (Crenshaw, 2005; Kimbrough, 2003).

Summary

Chapter 4 reports the results of the research conducted for this study. The chapter begins with a report of information on participants who committed to this project. This includes who they are, where they pledged, and when they pledged and become members of their respective organizations. The chapter continues with data from interviews that

support the themes that emerged from coding. The analysis of emerging themes was generated from triangulating the interview data through time (year, school term), space (where, institution type), and personal (individual factors). The emerging themes (introduction to BGLOs, Crossing the burning sands, relationships, pledging vs hazing, and now what) are aligned with critical theories (CRT, BFT, etc.) and with other supporting information from the review of literature.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Summary

This study is a continuation of previous studies on the experiences of members of BGLOs. The focus of previous studies was on hazing (Crenshaw, 2005; Kimbrough, 2003; Williams, 1992) or talked to members who joined post-1990 (Bankhead, 1994; Weathers, 2003). Because of the time between the person actually pledging and the examination of their experience, the data include information about the participants' experiences, but also of their thoughts on changes through the years and the current state of BGLOs.

Another purpose of this research was to create additional information to inform those that are involved with BGLOs, ranging from the membership (collegiate, alumni, or chapter advisor) to student affairs or other campus officials (Greek Life, etc.). This information should not supplant, but be supplemental to, current research on these organizations to increase an understanding of personal history and experiences of members. This research purpose will not been actualized until this study is presented to audiences through conference or published article.

Limitations

There were several limitations to completing this study and to applying the implications to a broader target population, be they members of BGLOs or BGLO organizations. Although the goal was to have a representative of all nine NPHC organizations, it was difficult to recruit members from the period specified. In all, 11 persons responded to the call for participants for this study. I made contact through

several sources (personal contacts, fellow researchers, e-mail listservs, and fraternity and sorority chapters) to attract persons to the project. Personal contacts yielded the most respondents. Nine persons were interviewed, with three organizations being represented by two members.

E-mail communications requesting assistance were sent directly to my personal acquaintances to identify a potential participant for the study. Correspondence was sent via the Internet to several sources to attract participants. I used the NPHC national members' listserv to reach a large number of NPHC members, but this approach yielded few participants. I also received recommendations of potential participants from other researchers of Black Greek Lettered organizations. Contact with one participant was made via a contact made at a conference.

The interpretation of the research data is only applicable to the individuals interviewed. Therefore, the results of individuals or the entire group cannot be a generalized to one or all NPHC organizations, nor represent a "typical" experience of NPHC membership entrance during years in which pledging was the process for undergraduate membership entry.

During the course of this dissertation, several incidents and charges of hazing were made against member organizations of the NPHC. In October 2009, members of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated at Prairie View A and M University were accused of illegally pledging prospective members, a situation that may have contributed to the death of someone seeking membership through the local undergraduate chapter (Horswell, 2009). This was the first accusation of death associated with hazing against the fraternity. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, which had a hazing incident at a Georgia

university, declared a moratorium on all MIP activities to "review and revise" its membership intake (Mason, 2010).

All nine participants in this study seemed to have a clear understanding of the terms pledging and hazing and delineated the two as opposing actions. Some of the participants who described what they considered pledging and hazing activities also attempted to define the actions of what has been described as hazing in news reports occurring from October 2009 to April 2010. For some, this was not hazing, but something more brutal that has no place in a membership intake or pledging process. Kimbrough (2003) and Scott (2007) have noted that participants in their studies seem to use the terms interchangeably, their target population for their studies were post-1990 or representative of the MIP era of NPHC organizations. I believe the participants of this study have had either the time to reflect on their experiences and develop his or her own definition of pledging and hazing which has led to their distinguishing between the two terms. My reliance on personal contacts, which may have crossed during the MIP era, may have mis-communicated the purpose of the study to the target population based on the perception that hazing and pledging are the same (Kimbrough, 2003; Scott, 2007). Jenkins (2008) noted that at least one participant in a study on Black Greek sorority pledging experiences seemed reluctant to reveal some negative aspects of her pledging experience because of her loyalty to her sorority. Because of organizational loyalty and not wanting to say anything negative, potential participants may have been reluctant to participate in the study if their perception was that the study was about hazing experiences. This may have limited the number of participants and also limited the participants to those with more positive (or perhaps less negative) experiences.

Recommendations and Future Research

As this is the second study of this type that I have conducted, some of the more successful techniques in attracting participants did not work in contacting potential persons from three NPHC organizations. As this proved to be difficult as time progressed in the study, the decision was made to proceed with those interested in participating and to continue attempts to attract a participant from the three organizations not represented. I did make contact with a potential participant from one of the three organizations. However, this person was not available at the agreed interview time and contact had not been reestablished. In continuing this research, I would recommend that future researchers depend upon their own personal contacts among BGLO organizations for identifying possible participants; other forms of identifying and eliciting participants did not work well.

This dissertation should not be a conclusion on the study of BGLO members' experiences in joining their fraternity or sorority. Although there were many challenges in contacting and interviewing participants, similar studies on this topic should be continued for several reasons. One reason is that members' experiences within the same organization vary as evidenced by this study as well as others (Harris, 1998; Weathers, 2001). I believe that there is a need for future research to focus on different populations (i.e., comparing the pledging era to the MIP era within the same region, state, or chapter) to provide more information on what creates the differences in experiences among members within the same organization. A potential research question for both studies would be "What are the individual perceptions of pledging (membership intake process) of brothers/sisters joining a BGLO together?" As this is a study on lived experiences, the

design could be phenomenological (van Manen, 1990) or could be ethnography if I chose to explore my perceptions of my own experiences in MIP (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Another reason for further study is to examine the organizations that were not a part of this dissertation. This would be in addition to the current information, which would mean analyzing the information from all participants for additional or new themes. Due to the timing of this dissertation, I would recommend gathering data from members of these three organizations prior to the end of the year 2010. This would prevent a large lapse in time in gathering and analysis of all collected data (six months to a year).

As not all members of BGLOs are African American/Black or identify as belonging to the Diaspora, there is need to study the membership entrance experiences of members of other racial groups within BGLOs. This would be similar to Bankhead's (1994) study of white women joining BGLOs in the Midwest United States. Bankhead's study was of the overall experiences of this population, but keying in on whether the person (of an ethnicity other than Black) pledged or went through a membership intake process would add more to the research of the subject of pledging in BGLOs. An additional category to add would be persons who are of mixed racial or ethnic heritage who have joined BGLOs and how they make meaning of their experiences through the lens of the culture in which they identify most (one or multiple).

I also want to add participants who represent several populations, such as comparing the experiences of pledging within different decades (1970s, 1980s), pledging at different institutions (public/private, HBCU/PWI), and organization type (fraternity, sorority). By focusing on these populations, additional theories and references could be

used to interpret the data in a more in-depth method that gives more attention to the population type.

This study, I believe, supports the recommendation of Kimbrough (2003) and other researchers or student affairs professionals that there is a greater need for student affairs professionals to study research on BGLOs. At least from when pledging was allowed by the NPHC organizations, there seemed to be lack of oversight by officials at predominantly white institutions of the time taken for the process and a lack of support for these organizations or students who were interested in chartering these organizations on their campus. This study should be used by campus administrators who work with BGLOs to begin the administrator's own inquiry into the organizations they work with, talking with members of current chapters, alumni members, and working to create or improve the partnerships between the campus and these organizations. This study, along with others on BGLOs, should create a better understanding of the culture and needs for these organizations to grow and evolve. This includes reading the research, attending presentations on BGLOS and actively engaging chapter advisors and alumni members. In addition, a campus can show more support for BGLOs through leadership and officer training, and risk management training all chapter members to hold them accountable for following organization and campus rules on membership intake.

<center>Implications</center>

At least three social implications are relevant from this research. The first is that of Black/African Americans as students of color on the college campus. This research adds to current information about these students and the support and leadership opportunities they need and further adds to the purpose of BGLOs to support social and academic pursuits of African Americans students attending HBCUs or PWIs. The second

social implication is how African American males in college make meaning of their experiences on college campuses and access resources in order to persist through to completion. At least one fraternity member did not complete his undergraduate education at the institution where he pledged, but joined the military and completed his bachelor's and master's degree years later. Did his fraternity experience hinder his persistence since one of the founding principles of BGLOs is providing support for members to pursue college studies (Kimbrough, 2003)?

 The last social construct that is relevant is that of African American females in higher education. A special lens such as Black Feminist Theory (Collins, 1990) should be applied when studying this population alone or together with African American males. Although some of the experiences were and could be similar, African American women may have a different view or meaning of the experience, just as Black Greek-Lettered sororities faced the challenge of racism and sexism in expanding their membership (Giddings, 1994).

Closing Comments

I was very excited to take on a project that would put me in direct contact with my "predecessors" in BGLOs. It was an honor to create a report with them. I did feel at times that I would not be able to communicate with them on certain topics about their experiences because I joined my fraternity during the MIP era at a time when most of the activities they experienced were associated with pledging. I overcame this obstacle by talking about my experiences as a member of a BGLO and relating my understanding of pledging from research and conversations with members of BGLOs.

I would like to continue in this area of research for the next five years to compile more data and try other methods of qualitative analysis to present the data for

organizations and student affairs professionals. As stated in chapter 1, BGLO members who pledged during this time are declining in number and availability, as more members may not stay financially active or are willing communicate through the Internet (e-mail, social networking, etc.). The current time presents the best opportunity to collect the experiences and study the people who make up the membership of these organizations and to understand pledging as opposed to members who "pledged" post-1990 in a process that was not sanctioned by the NPHC organizations. For NPHC organizations, questions such as "What now?" and "Is it time for BGLOs to cease existence?" (Jones, 2004b) are important, and more research is needed on the progression of BGLOs from founding to pledging to MIP (Kimbrough, 2003). Persons who pledged into these organizations offer the unique perspectives of seeing pledging and MIP and could offer much needed information on the current direction of NPHC organizations in preventing hazing incidents or deaths.

In the participants' reflections on their experiences pledging and observing the change to MIP, there seems to be consensus that there is a difference in the principle purpose of persons pledging a BGLO and the actual outcomes of their pledging experiences. Even for some of the participants, pledging did not create lifelong fictive kinship networks (Harris, 1998) among members of their line, but did create an allegiance to the larger organization. These members also see the current situation with BGLOs as problematic, as the national fraternities and sororities try to maintain a continuous stream of college members while facing increased lawsuits for hazing incidents. One organization has issued public statements suspending collegiate MIP. The president of the organizations expressed publicly his dissatisfaction with the current MIP

and placed his organization's program under moratorium (Mason, 2010). Will other BGLOs make such a public omission and work together under the NPHC to revise their membership intake process or keep the results, failures, or solutions to themselves?

In the past decade (2000-2010), the number of research publications on BGLOs increased and became available to more mainstream audiences. It is my hope that this will continue and encourage more persons to study and examine BGLOs. As I continue my research, I eagerly await to see who will come after me and what other perspective are presented on organizations that have affected the lives of persons for over 100 years, including my own.

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Appendix A

Study of Black Greek Lettered Organizations Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Antonio Jenkins, Doctoral Student in Higher and Adult Education, University of Memphis

Advisor: Dr. Katrina Meyer, Associate Professor, Higher and Adult Education, University of Memphis

Purpose: The study is an examination of the pledging experiences of women in Black Greek Letter organizations between the years of 1970-1989 from the perspective of men and women who pledged in collegiate/undergraduate chapters during that time.

Duration: The interview should take approximately 45-65 minutes, depending on the amount of detail you wish to provide. The PI will contact you with follow-up questions to clarify any interpretation of your words.

Procedure: After you have given consent to be interviewed and your signed consent form has mailed to the Principle Investigator, you will be contacted by phone at the time and date you have chosen.

Risks: No risks are anticipated.

Compensation: No compensation provided.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality will be assured in two ways. Details of your participation (research notes and signed consent forms) will be stored in separate locations for five years after completion of the study. Only the PI will have access to this information, and after five years, this information will be destroyed.

Contacts: If you have any questions about the research, please call Antonio Jenkins at (901)239-2431 or Dr. Katrina Meyer at (901)678-2466.

Participation: Involvement in this study is voluntary. You may discontinue participation in the study at any time without penalty by telling the PI, and direct the PI to destroy all notes pertaining to your answers.

Findings: If you so indicate below, you may receive, a copy of the findings of the study after the final paper is prepared for submission to a journal.

Copy of Forms: Once your signed consent form is received, a copy of the consent
                      form will be mailed to you.

Signature   Date

Desire Copy of Findings? ____ Yes   _____No

Return Consent Form to:

Antonio Jenkins
2848 College Drive,
Box 1242
Blair, Nebraska, 68008

Appendix B

Participant Inquiry to Chapters

May XX, 2009
Chapter Name
Sorority/Fraternity Name

Greetings members of the [chapter name] of [sorority/fraternity name]:

My name is Antonio Jenkins. I am currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Memphis in the department of Leadership concentrating in Higher Education. My research interest includes college student affairs, Black Greek-Lettered organizations, and organizational leadership.

I am conducting a dissertation study on Black Greek-Lettered organizations (BGLO) of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC). My dissertation is an inquiry in the personal experiences of men and women pledging BGLO during the years of 1970-1989. Through interviews, I will document the experiences of a representative of each NPHC fraternity and sorority. The interviews will include the choice of pledging the organization to the time before the initiation ritual or process.

I am requesting your help in identifying members of your organization that pledged between the periods of 1970-1989 that would serve as a good resource for conducting this project.

There are three reasons why I am conducting this project:

1. To increase available research literature about pledging BGLOs, specifically about the pledging prior to membership intake process (MIP).
2. To better understand the experiences of men and women pledging prior to 1990 and give a voice to members from this era. The interviews will give them a chance to share their experiences freely, without comparison to current membership intake procedures.
3. The experience or information may relate to current trends or culture within these organizations and it can also aid chapter advisors, campus administrators, and new leaders within the organizations.

The results of the project will be submitted for publication in referred journals. The articles will be summaries of the research and not the project in its entirety. Information about the individual, names mentioned, the chapters, or institution where the pledging occurred will be changed for the published materials and the interview notes. Any information that would identify the sorority will be removed from the article submissions and interview notes.

If there are any questions, concerns, or special request, I can be reached by mail:
adjenkns@memphis.edu or phone: 901-239-2431

I would like to thank you for your time and the opportunity to work with you on this project.

Antonio Jenkins
Doctoral Candidate
University of Memphis

Appendix C

Participant Inquiry to Individual

May XX, 2009
Participants Name
City, state, zip code

Dear Mr. /Ms [Participant's name]

My name is Antonio Jenkins. I am currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Memphis in the department of Leadership concentrating in Higher Education. My research interest includes college student affairs, Black Greek-Lettered organizations, and organizational leadership.

I am conducting a dissertation study on Black Greek-Lettered organizations (BGLO) of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC). My dissertation is an inquiry in the personal experiences of men and women pledging BGLO during the years of 1970-1989. Through interviews, I will document the experiences of a representative of each NPHC fraternity and sorority. The interviews will include the choice of pledging the organization to the time before the initiation ritual or process.

I am requesting your assistance of as a member of [organization name] to be a participant of this project. That pledged between the periods of 1970-1989 that would serve as a good resource for conducting this project.

There are three reasons why I am conducting this project:

1. To increase available research literature about pledging BGLOs specifically about the pledging prior to membership intake process (MIP).
2. To better understand the experiences of men and women pledging prior to 1990 and give a voice to members from this era. The interviews will give them a chance to share their experiences freely, without comparison to current membership intake procedures.
3. The experience or information may relate to current trends or culture within these organizations and it can also aid chapter advisors, campus administrators, and new leaders within the organizations.

The results of the project will be submitted for publication in referred journals. The articles will be summaries of the research and not the project in its entirety. Information about the individual, names mentioned, the chapters, or institution where the pledging occurred will be changed for the published materials and the interview notes. Any

information that would identify the sorority will be removed from the article submissions and interview notes.

If there are any questions, concerns, or special request, I can be reached by mail: adjenkns@memphis.edu or by phone: 901-239-2431

I would like to thank you for your time and the opportunity to work with you on this project.

Antonio Jenkins
Doctoral Candidate
University of Memphis

Appendix D

Sample Follow-up Questions

1. How did you learn about Black Greek-Lettered organizations (BGLOs)?

2. What influenced you to pledge?

3. What was your classification (freshmen, sophomore, junior, etc.) when you

    pledged?

4. How many were on your line/ship?

5. What was the daily routine for your line?

6. How many people crossed on your line?

7. When (year/term) did you pledge?

8. How did people treat you after you crossed?

9. How was the relationship with the big brothers/sisters?

10. How long did you pledge?

11. Is there a difference between pledging and hazing? If so, what is it?

12. What was your experience as a neophyte member of your fraternity/sorority?

13. Is anyone in your family a member of a BGLO?

14. Did you pledge a line while you were a collegiate?

15. Reflecting on your pledging experience and witnessing the change to the

    membership intake process, what do think BGLOs should do with MIP (Now

    what)?

16. Do you have any questions for me?